

The Queer American Novel

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English 359, Section 001
Fall Semester 2015

Office: Simpkins 109
Hours: M, 3:00-4:00; TTh, 3:30-5:00

TTh, 12:30 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.
Simpkins 214

Prerequisite: English 180

Texts

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. ISBN: 1879960184

Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room*. ISBN: 0345806565

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. ISBN: 0811216713

Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*. ISBN: 0802122078

Capote, Truman. *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. ISBN: 0679745645

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues*. ISBN: 1555838537

McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. ISBN: 1555530249

Rechy, John. *City of Night*. ISBN: 0802121535

Schulman, Sarah. *Girls, Visions, and Everything*. ISBN: 1580050220

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. ISBN: 0156028352

There will be articles to download on WesternOnline.

Course Description & Objectives

This multicultural seminar centers on ten American novels of the twentieth century that explore sexuality and gender outside American cultural norms. These novels also queer American understandings of race and class, putting into question what the borders of the nation might be and how the American story should be told.

This course not only assists students in becoming engaged and competent readers of fiction, but also it teaches them to read queerly; that is, to read with skepticism toward what we have been taught is normal, appropriate, or wholesome, or the right way to end the story. Students will learn and apply important terms and methodologies developed in the fields of queer studies and queer theory, though these too should be treated with skepticism. The Queer American Novel also asks students to respond creatively to what they read.

Requirements

The Queer American Novel involves a five-page midterm essay, a final eight-page essay, and two creative assignments. You will receive instructions for each, and you have the option of rewriting all except the last. Send all assignments and homework to me through email as Microsoft Word attachments. If I don't have assignments at the beginning of class, they will be counted late. Writing should be paginated and double-spaced in a standard-sized font. Handwritten work gets zero credit, with no opportunity to redo it.

Students will be responsible for leading small group discussions on a rotating basis. When it is your turn, you will prepare five typed, double-spaced questions for discussion and send them to me by email before the beginning of the class. You need to have your own copy in the classroom, electronic or print. There will also be in-class and homework exercises.

Absences will not be taken lightly, only excused with a doctor's note or other suitable documentation. Please refer to <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student/> for student rights and responsibilities. Everyone *must* actively participate. Lack of participation will damage your grade. This means doing the homework, completing the readings, and joining in class discussion.

Grading

Participation	10%
Homework	10%
Discussion Questions	10%
Creative Assignments	20%
Midterm Essay	20%
Final Essay	30%

Unless excused, late essays receive a one-time, one-letter grade reduction (12:31 p.m. on the due date is late). I will grant an extension for almost any reason, but only if the student contacts me *at least 24 hours in advance*. Plagiarism will result in an "F", and I will report the student for academic discipline. See WIU's Policy on Academic Integrity at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. Unexcused absences will affect the participation grade, and four of them is an automatic "F" for the course. Do not expect an "A" if you don't talk regularly in class.

Please take the opportunity to meet with me in Simpkins 109, during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings and your writing. If something about the course bothers you, please don't wait until the end, when it is too late to change it.

The Writing Center

The University Writing Center can assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The tutor's job is to add another voice in response to your writing. The one-on-one assistance available at the Writing Center can help with generating ideas, suggesting organization, and even working through grammatical issues. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3rd Floor, West Side). Call for an appointment (298–2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. For more information on other locations, see www.wiu.edu/uwc.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Schedule

I give each day's assignment at the end of class. Do not pack your bags until everyone has had a chance to write it down. Contact me by email if you cannot attend.

Week 1: August 25 & 27

Introduction to the Course. *Home to Harlem*.

Week 2: September 1 & 3

Home to Harlem.

Week 3: September 8 & 10

Nightwood.

Week 4: September 15 & 17

Nightwood. Other Voices, Other Rooms.

Week 5: September 22 & 24

Other Voices, Other Rooms.

First Creative Assignment due Tuesday, September 22.

Week 6: September 29 & October 1

Giovanni's Room.

Week 7: October 6 & 8

Naked Lunch.

Week 8: October 13 & 15

Naked Lunch. City of Night.

Midterm Essay due, October 15.

Week 9: October 20 & 22

City of Night.

Week 10: October 27 & 29

City of Night. The Color Purple.

Week 11: November 3 & 5

The Color Purple.

Week 12: November 10 & 12

The Woman Who Owned the Shadows.

Week 13: November 17

Girls, Visions, and Everything. **Class is canceled for November 19.**

Thanksgiving Break.

Week 14: December 1 & 3

Girls, Visions, and Everything. Stone Butch Blues.

Week 15: December 8 & 10

Stone Butch Blues. **Second Creative Assignment due December 8.**

Final Exam Week

Final essay due on Monday, December 14 at 5:00 p.m. (Due December 11 at 10:00 a.m. if you want comments)