

INTRODUCTION TO QUEER STUDIES

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Queer Studies 100, Section 001
Spring Semester 2016

Office: Simpkins 109
Hours: MW, 2:00-3:00 p.m.
TTh, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

M, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Simpkins 308

TEXTS

Aoki, Ryka. *Seasonal Velocities*.

Bechtel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*.

Bordo, Susan. *The Male Body*.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*.

Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

Gibson, Michelle A., et al. *Finding Out: Introduction to LGBT Studies*.

Kaufman, Moisés. *The Laramie Project*.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

Wojnarowicz, David. *Close to the Knives*.

We will also watch films, view artworks, and listen to music. There will be material to download from my website and on WesternOnline.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

What are “Queer Studies”? For cultural conservatives, these words signify at best the decline of academic study into the trivial and the obscene, and at worst the recruitment of innocent youth into a life of depravity, despair, and disease. Many self-identified lesbians and gay men, moreover, object to the word, “queer.” Some argue that it has an implicit masculine bias, like the word, “gay,” before it; others find it an ugly term of derogation; still others see it as too inclusive, deeply uncomfortable with the fact that certain practicing heterosexuals have appropriated “queer” as the adjective of choice for their own activities. Often queer activists outside academia disparage “queer studies,” along with its kissing cousin, “queer theory,” as ivory tower mumbo-jumbo, useless to people’s everyday struggles. Even queer studies supporters disagree about what this relatively new field should become, a field of study just established at WIU.

Yet the discipline of queer studies provides indispensable tools for studying sexual diversity, the diversity that this class will explore in a variety of media, including literature, film, and visual art. The course will also provide historical context and delve into political controversies. Queer studies does not simply affirm non-normative sexuality and gender, but interrogates the meaning of human eroticism in all of its forms, including the heterosexual and cisgender. Queer studies offers powerful modes of social critique. Perhaps this conjunction of sex and study appears nonsensical, or silly. Listen, then, to the words of Audre Lorde: “Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives. And this is a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe.”

REQUIREMENTS

Introduction to Queer Studies (IQ) involves two five-page close reading essays, one personal narrative, and a final, self-reflective essay. You will receive an assignment sheet for each. All assignments and homework should be forwarded to me before the start of class by email as Microsoft Word attachments.

For most classes, I will assign two to four students, on a rotating basis, the responsibility to fashion five typed discussion questions. The questions should be sent to me as Microsoft Word attachments before class begins.

Participation means doing the readings and joining in class discussion regularly.

See <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for student rights and responsibilities.

GRADING

Participation:	20%
Homework:	10%
Discussion Questions:	10%
Personal Narrative:	10%
First Essay:	20%
Second Essay:	20%
Self-Reflective Essay:	10%

Missing classes, or arriving late, will affect the participation grade. *A student with more than two **unexcused** absences automatically fails the course.* I am lenient, though: if you give me a valid reason to miss, or to have missed, a session, I will probably excuse you (I may ask for documentation.).

All essays, except the Self-Reflective Essay, can be rewritten.

Please take the opportunity to meet with me during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings, or your writing. I very much appreciate any kind of feedback about the course.

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 am open to making changes to keep the learning situation active and dynamic. There will be a break for 15 minutes around the middle of each session.

January 25: Introduction to the course. Audre Lorde handout. *Paris Is Burning* (video).

February 1: *Finding Out*: Chapters 1 & 2; *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, 1-124.

- February 8: *Finding Out*: Chapters 3 & 4; finish *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*; *52 Tuesdays* (video).
- February 15: *The Laramie Project*; *52 Tuesdays* (video).
- February 22: *Finding Out*: Chapters 5 & 6; *The Male Body*, 3-104.
Essay One due.
- February 29: *The Male Body*, 153-225. Video TBA.
- March 7: *Finding Out*, Chapters 7 & 8; *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, xxix-38 (Prefaces & “The Sexual Aberrations”).

SPRING BREAK

- March 21: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 39-109 (“Infantile Sexuality” & “The Transformations of Puberty.”)
Personal Narrative due.
- March 28: *Finding Out*, Chapters 9 & 10. *History of Sexuality*, 3-73. *Seasonal Velocities*, 3-29.
- April 4: *History of Sexuality*, 75-114. Finish *Seasonal Velocities*.
Ryka Aoki reading on April 7 at 5:00 p.m., at Taylor Hall on Courthouse Square (Attendance Mandatory)
- April 11: Finish *History of Sexuality*. *Fun Home*, 1-86.
- April 18: *Finding Out*, Chapters 12 & 13. Finish *Fun Home*.
- April 25: *Close to the Knives*, 3-63. *Damned in the USA* (video).
Second Essay due.
- May 2: *Finding Out*, Chapters 14 & 15. *Close to the Knives*, 64-110; 111-23; 138-42.

Self-Reflective Essay due on Monday, May 9 at 1:00 p.m., or Thursday, May 5 at 10:00 a.m. for comments.