

WGSS 250A: Queer Theory, Queer Lives

Fall 2021: TR 10:00-11:30 in JSC 315

Taught by: Dr. Jess River Vooris AKA “Prof V” or “Dr. River”

Pronouns: they/them [\[learn more here\]](#)

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Office: Asbury Hall 205C

Office Hours: 9 am-noon on Mondays/Wednesdays and 4-6 pm on Thursdays.

COURSE DESCRIPTION/REQUIREMENTS:

This interdisciplinary course explores the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, and polyamorous people and the discrete and inter-twined meanings of sexuality, gender expression, and gender identity. Students will get a primer in the "alphabet soup" of LGBTQIA terminology, learn about the history of LGBTQ rights within the United States, and explore contemporary debates within the LGBTQ community, around such questions as same sex marriage, bathroom regulations, and hate crime laws. We also consider the intersections between black lives matter, queer rights, and disability activism. Class texts are from many different disciplines and will include theory, poetry, comics, short films, and music.

This course will meet twice a week for a discussion-based class. Please visit me during my office hours (virtual or in person when covid conditions allow) as I would love to learn more about what you are thinking and learning (in this class and at Depauw more generally), and I am happy to answer any question you have about class and class materials.

Be sure to let me know during office hours or via email if you need support, or any specific accommodations, the sooner the better. Students with disabilities or who need time from class to observe religious holidays, please contact me as soon as you can to make any arrangements necessary.

Acknowledgements: Thank-you, Katie King for your examples of feminist pedagogy, and the importance of taking risks when learning. Thank-you, Alexis Lothian, for the original Intro to LGBTQ Studies Syllabus that inspired this one, Rebecca Barrett-Fox and Mimi Khúc for your guidance around accessible teaching, and Lydia Wilson Marshall for Depauw-specific resources.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Explain key concepts related to gender and sexuality: including but not limited to: gender, sex, sexuality, intersectionality, heterosexism, monosexism, homophobia,
- Identify different ways that LGBTQ people have resisted social norms and have created change in their own lives throughout various historical time periods
- Read, write and critically engage with a variety of texts and media forms, analyzing what they say about LGBTQ people

- Engage in discussion and debate with their classmates in a critical but respectful manner.

Required Materials

- The movie [Major!](#) (2016) Directed by Annalise Ophelian. For rent: \$3, or available to buy: \$10. Feel free to connect with classmates and watch together!
- All other required course materials will be uploaded as PDF's or links on Moodle.

How the course will be organized

- This is a discussion course that meets on campus twice a week

Each week students should:

- Carefully read/watch/listen to the class materials and take notes on them
- Come to class prepared to talk and share your thoughts with others

This course is unique because

- There is usually a mix of students from different years, majors, backgrounds
- Some folks already have knowledge about LGBTQ identities and communities, and others don't know much about LGBTQ people and history
- Together we will create an open community where we can learn from each other

Creating a community of learning means we must:

- Build a space where each member of the class feels comfortable about sharing their thoughts.
- Understand that we may not always agree, but that disagreement can be a positive, productive part of learning
- Listen carefully to each other and treat each other kindly and with respect.
- Remember that we all have something to contribute, every one of us is learning (including me!) and it is okay to ask questions.
- Understand that learning means taking risks, trying new things, playing around, guessing at times, making mistakes and recognizing that sometimes we won't get it right the first time.

Note: Part of my role as a professor is to guide your learning. I may interrupt if someone is using outdated language or saying something harmful, and I may suggest a way of re-wording a question or statement to be more inclusive. Please take these moments as an opportunity to grow and learn—hopefully this is one reason you are in this course!

Communication for the Course

Moodle: Class readings, an updated syllabus, course schedule, and announcements will be kept on Moodle.

Note: Moodle keeps track of when you log in, what links you click, and how long you keep any part of the Moodle open. This means I can tell if you haven't logged in for a week, or if you never opened a particular file.

Email: Please send email to jessicavooris@depauw.edu if you have questions/comments about the course, readings, or want to make an appointment to meet with me. Please include the course number and a relevant subject heading with your email. **Example:** WGSS 250A, question about Hanne Blank reading

Note: email sent after 7 pm may not be responded to until the morning, and I will not be checking email frequently on the weekends. Please give me at least 24 hours to respond, however, if you don't hear from me in 48 hours, do send a reminder email! (If you email after 7 pm on Friday, I may not reply until Monday morning).

On Campus Classroom Policies

- Per Depauw policy, masks are required in class.
- Please respect physical distancing as much as possible, while also interacting with the space in a way that best meets the needs of your body. You are welcome to sit on the floor if you need to, stand up to stretch, or take a brief break from class by stepping outside.
- Please do not eat or drink in class due to covid precautions (you can leave the class to drink/eat if you need to tend to your body in that way)
- Technology: computers/phones are useful tools for learning, but can also be distracting to others. Please be thoughtful and intentional about your use of computers/phones during discussion
- You are welcome to knit, draw, play with (quiet) fidgets, again just be mindful of others

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE

Graded Assignments

20% Class Attendance/Participation
5% Class Community Points
10 % Active Engagement points
20% Personal Reflection Essay
25 % Historical Research Project
20% Activist Manifesto/Outreach Letter

Grades

A 94 and higher
A- 90-93
B + 87-89
B 84-86
B - 80-83
C + 77-79
C 74-76
C - 70-73

See Depauw's website for more info on [grading scales](#). I will also explain in more detail what the expectations are for each assignment in the handouts and on Moodle.

Graded Assignments:

20% Class Attendance/Participation

This is a discussion-based course, and your participation is important. You are expected to come to class having read and taken notes on the material, and to be ready to discuss the material. The success of the class will depend on everyone sharing their ideas and perspectives. If you are someone who has a hard time speaking up in class, note that you can show that you are actively participating through your listening, your reactions to what your classmates are saying, and your note-taking.

Please visit me in my office hours if you are concerned about your participation due to anxiety, neurodivergence, or any other reason. If you are sick, I want you to prioritize your health (and the health of your classmates) over coming to class. Please stay home and rest if you need to, just communicate with me about why you are missing class. Also, please chat with your classmates about what you have missed, email me if you have specific questions about readings, and/or come visit me during office hours to make up for missed class time.

10% Active Engagement Points These are gained through a variety of ways—the first one is filling out the access survey sent at the start of the semester. Other ways include attending my office hours, attending sexuality/gender-related events on campus, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video that is related to class topics that you have found, or by having a conversation with a friend outside of class about class topics.

5% Class Community Points: These are similar to Active Engagement Points and are gained in a variety of ways, but specifically are related to being part of a class community, and taking on an active role in supporting other folks' learning. This includes annotating the syllabus the first week of class, volunteering to be the class note-taker for students who miss class, being a time-keeper for in-class activities, or catching up students who had to miss class on a particular day.

20% Personal Reflection Essay: Drawing from texts that we have read so far on gender, and sexuality, you will pick a moment in your life to analyze. If you do not want to share a personal memory or story, you may choose a passage from a book or another type of media that resonates with you and analyze it for narratives of gender/sexuality. If you choose this option, please verify with me what text/piece of media you will focus on. Please do not write about a friend/family member's gender and sexuality unless you discuss with me how this is related to YOUR gender/sexuality. Written format: 4-5 pages. You are also welcome to complete this assignment as an art project, zine, poetry, video, or podcast. **Due: Sunday, March 13th**

25% Historical Research Project: As an individual, or working in groups of 2-4 students you will choose a historical object/event/group/person to research (based on a list that I provide), and create something (a book/zine/video/podcast/theatre play) to share what you have discovered. This project will require you to engage with both primary and secondary sources. If you want to research something not on the list provided, you must check with me first. **Due: Sunday, April 24th**

20% Manifesto/Activist Letter For this final assignment you will choose something that you care about from all of the different LGBTQ rights/issues that we have covered in class and write a letter to someone explaining the issue and what can be done to create change. 2-4 pages. **Due: May, during finals**

Reading Schedule *Professor reserves the right to change the schedule with prior warning, an updated syllabus will be maintained on Moodle*

UNIT ONE: IDENTITIES

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

-Syllabus and Introductions

Thursday, February 3, 2022

-The Gender Book by Hunter Rook (formerly known as Mel Reiff Hill) and Jay Mays

Week Two: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

-Anne Fausto-Sterling's *Sex/Gender* (pg 1-41)

-Purportedly Gendered Body Parts by Dean Spade (2 pages)

- In class: Raising the World and an Intersex Child (NBC News, 7 mins 30 seconds)

Thursday, February 10, 2022

-Hanne Blank, *Straight: A Short History of Heterosexuality*, Chapter 1

-In Class: Heterosexual Questionnaire

Week Three: Homophobia and Sexism

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

- CJ Pascoe "Dude, You're a Fag" (15 pgs)

- Suzanne Pharr "Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, Chapter 1" (26 pages)

Thursday, February 17, 2022

-Gloria Anzaldua "The Conciencia de la Mestiza" (8 pages)

- Mia McKenzie, "To the Queer Black Kids" (2 pgs)

-A Message From a Ten-Year Old Lesbian, "In Her Own Words" (1 pg)

Week Four: Bisexuality, Pansexuality and Queerness

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

Excerpts from *Recognize, The Voices of Bi Men* edited by Eds. Robyn Ochs and H. Sharif Williams

- "With My Feet in Many Worlds" (3 pages)
- "Phallocentrism and Bisexualinvisibility" (3 pages)-
- "Conversations with Parents" (poem, 2 pages)

excerpt from *Notes from a Bi Revolution* by Shiri Eisner (pages 18-47, 30 pages total, up to "politics" section)

Thursday, February 24, 2022

- Queer reading TBA
- Bi vs Pan Tumblr Post (3 pages)
- Nancy Podcast with Tobin Low & Kathy Tu: "The Word Queer" Episode (25 mins 20 seconds)

Week Five: Transgender Identities

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

- Julia Serano, from *Whipping Girl*, "Dismantling Cissexual Privilege" (32 pgs)
- TransGirlNextDoor Comics: The Media, Problematic Men, Happiness, Catcalling

Thursday, March 3, 2022

- Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness*, Ch. 8 (19 pgs)
- Kai Green, "Navigating Masculinity as a Black Trans Man" (blog post, ~4 pgs)
- In Class: Shea Diamond's "I am Her" Music Video

Week Six: Ace and Aro Identities; Being Singled, Being Poly

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

- Not Broken, Not Alone (16 mins documentary)
- Caleb Luna, "Romantic Love is Killing Us" (4 pgs)
- Angela Chen, "How to Create a Three-Parent Family" (8 pages, also in PDF below)

Thursday, March 10, 2022

- Ferrer, Jorge, "Mononormativity, Polypride, and the "Mono-Poly" Wars" *Sexuality and Culture* (19 pages)

DUE: Gender and Sexuality Essay Sunday, March 13th

UNIT TWO: HISTORIES

Week Seven: What is LGBTQ History? (Pre-Historic-1800s)

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

- Finding Out, Chapter 1 (12 pages)
- Mary Weismantel, Towards a Transgender Archaeology (13 pages)

Thursday, March 17, 2022

- excerpt from *Gentleman Jack: The Real Anne Lister* by Anne Choma
- Channing Gerard Joseph, "The First Drag Queen was a Former Slave" on *The Nation*

(recommended/AEP): *Gentleman Jack* (HBO Series), Anne Lister Exhibit

Week Eight: Classification: Behavior vs. Identity

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

- Susan Stryker, *Trans Histories* Chapter 2 (pgs 45-77)
- *Finding Out*, Chapter 3
- Making Gay History Podcast: Magnus Hirshfeld Episode

Thursday, March 24, 2022

- D'Emilio "Capitalism and Gay Identity"
- excerpt *Beyond Community* by Emily Skidmore

Recommended/AEP: Making Gay History: Barbara Gittings, Making Gay History: Harry Hays,

Week Nine: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

- NO CLASS

Thursday, March 31, 2022

- NO CLASS

Week Ten: Towards Liberation

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

- Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, Chapter 3
- *Finding Out*, Chapter 4

Thursday, April 7, 2022

- Mia McKenzie, "Resistance is the Secret of Queer Joy"
- Making Gay History Podcast Interviews: 1989 interview with [Sylvia Rivera](#) Part 1 (13 mins) and [Part 2](#) (19 minutes), and [1970 interview with Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson](#) (22 minutes)

Week Eleven: AIDS and ACT UP

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

- Vicki, Eaklor, *Queer America*, "From Reagan to Carter"/"The Challenge of AIDS" (9 pages)
- Movie: [United in Anger: A History of ACT UP](#) (hour and 30 mins)

Thursday, April 14, 2022

- Ron Mohring, *Survivable World*, poems
- Brian J. Louder, "*Pulse and the Power of Queer Tears*" (21 pages)
- [In class we will read Essex Hemphill's "*When My Brother Fell*"]

AEP: Movie: *The Normal Heart*, Instagram: @AIDSmemorial,

Week Twelve: Queer Activism and Same-Sex Marriage Debates

Tuesday, April 19, 2022

- Beyond Same Sex-Marriage (5 and half pages)
- Queer Kids Against Queer Marriage (12 pages)
- Mia McKenzie, "Calling in a Queer Debt" (3 pages)

WATCH/LISTEN (in class):

- Same-Love by Macklemore
- Same Love by Angel Hazel
- I do by Andrea Gibson

Thursday, April 21, 2022

- History Project Workshop

Sunday, April 24th: History Project DUE

Week Thirteen: Black Lives Matter/Black Trans Lives Matter

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

- A Herstory of Black Lives Matter, (online)
- Audre Lorde, *Silence Into Action* (4 pages)
- *Tongues Untied* Movie

Thursday, April 28, 2022

- Movie: *Miss Major*

AEP: *Vow of Silence* by Be Steadwell

Week Fourteen: Queer Indigeneity

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

- Qwo-Li Driscoll poetry
- "A Place in the Middle" documentary (30 mins)

Thursday, May 5, 2022

- Essay by Pinar from *Queer Nature* TBA
- excerpt from *Queer Indigenous Studies*

Week Fifteen: Bodies/Minds, Accessibility and Desirability

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

- Eli Clare, "Disability and Queerness" essay
- excerpt from *The Care We Dream Of*

AEP: Queer ASL Signs by Shannon Rogan on Youtube. Deafies in Drag on Youtube.

Thursday, May 12, 2022

Final Class Wrap-Up

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES:

Citations:

It is important as scholars and writers that we respect the work of others, and that we make sure to cite our sources. I like to think about citations as a way to give credit, as a way to guide a reader to more information, and as a way to be a part of a community conversation.

If you are unsure of how to properly cite your information and how to avoid plagiarism please refer to online guides on MLA, APA and Chicago Style formatting. I do not have a preference for which one you use, but please pick one and use that consistently throughout an assignment. If you still need help with citations, please set up an appointment to talk with me.

Access Statement (words by Mimi Khúc):

"Everyone's access needs matter, and we will try collectively to meet them as they arise. Access needs are needs that when met enable participation in the course to the fullest--therefore they are wide-ranging and can be met in wide-ranging, creative ways. I am committed to making participation as accessible as possible. Please let me know if anything comes up that makes participation feel hard. Perhaps you are unused to thinking about access needs--no worries, that's what this course is supposed to help you develop. We are taught not to have needs, that needs mean we are "weak"; resist this impulse. That is the biggest lesson I want you to take away from this class."

"Access, as Aimi Hamraie has taught me, is relational. This means that creating access and accessibility is something we do together, in relationship and community. It requires a shared commitment to each other's wellbeing and participation in the community space, and requires communication and negotiation and flexibility. We learn each other's needs and try to meet them as best we can, so that we can all participate as much as possible in this classroom space. Everyone has access needs, and these needs change over time. I will try to anticipate as much as possible but I cannot know everyone's needs at all times. When you become aware of your access needs, please communicate them to me. I do not require any documentation or working with any university support services--I believe you, and will work with you to generate structures to meet your needs as much as possible. I repeat: I believe you."

LATE POLICY:

I will always accept late work, however, I will not always have time to provide the same level of qualitative feedback on late-work as I provide on work that is turned in on time. Work

turned in within 24 hours of the deadline will not be penalized. Work turned in after this 24 hour grace period will lose 10 percent of the full amount of points possible.

FERPA and Confidentiality

FERPA, the federal law that guards student privacy, prohibits me from discussing your performance in this class with anyone except you without your permission, which must be on file with the university, not simply told to me. To ensure compliance with this law, I will not respond to emails from students unless they originate from university email addresses. Out of respect for the privacy of your classmates, do not record or screenshot any part of this class for use outside of this class, even if you omit identifying information about the speaker or poster.

COVID Plans/Remote Teaching Considerations:

My plan is to teach this course in person when possible, while also being mindful of the seriousness of Omicron, and doing my best to prioritize the well-being of everyone in this class. If significant numbers of our class will not be able to attend in person, we will shift to a remote format. Please keep me informed as much as you can, about any missed classes, so I can plan accordingly.

At this point, I am not planning on teaching in a hybrid fashion (in person AND zoom), although I may re-evaluate if the technology in the classroom would allow this. I WILL be building in class note-taking and presentations, and ways for folks to catch up if they have to miss class, and I DO want you to prioritize your safety and health over attending in person. Folks can also Zoom into my office hours if they have specific questions, or want to go over what they missed from class.

Camera/Mic Policies If We Need to Shift to Zoom

- I encourage but do not require cameras to be on
- Please upload a photo or avatar on your zoom profile if possible
- Please mute your mic when not speaking
- Chat/Text is an excellent way to communicate

If possible, I would like for folks to have their cameras on during any video-conference class sessions. For me, personally, it is easier to engage if I can see people's faces on the screen, and this enables us to try to recreate the sense of being in person while connecting remotely.

However, I understand that there are many reasons someone might not want to, or be able to use their camera, therefore, I do not require cameras to be turned on. Likewise, it's lovely to hear your voices, but the chat is also an excellent way to communicate.

How to Get Help: There are different resources for different problems you may encounter. Be sure to contact the right resource to get help. If you contact the wrong person, this will delay getting your problem solved.

- For help understanding a concept from the course, contact me via email.

- For technical problems with Moodle, like not knowing how to upload an assignment, please contact moodle@depauw.edu for support.
- For all other technical problems with online systems at the university, like how to access your grades, contact our Tech Help at HelpDesk@depauw.edu or 765-658-4294.
- For help dropping or adding a course, contact your advisor or the registrar's office at 765-658-4141.
- For help locating resources for your history research project, contact a research librarian by phone at (765) 658-4444, email at library@depauw.edu, or via chat by going to the library's website: <https://libanswers.depauw.edu/>
- For help finding a peer tutor for this class, email acadpeer@depauw.edu for an appointment or sign up here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center/>
- To improve your writing, set up an on-campus or remote meeting with a writing tutor from our writing center. Sign up using the left-hand menu here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center>
- For support with presentations, public speaking, or even discussion skills, you can find a peer tutor through the S-Center: Sign up using the left-hand menu here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center>
- For help with food insecurity, there are a few options in Greencastle, including: Putnam County Emergency Food: 600 Tennessee St, Greencastle, IN 46135. Contact: (765) 301-4431
- For an appointment with a mental health counselor, contact our campus counseling center. To schedule an appointment, please email counselingservices@depauw.edu or call 765-658-4268.
- If you would prefer to text someone regarding mental health, text NAMI to 741741. If you would like to talk to someone about domestic violence or sexual assault you can contact:
 - Elizabeth Gertz (Coordinator of Sexual Assault/Interpersonal Violence Prevention/Education, Phone: 765-658-1088, Email: elizabethgetz@depauw.edu)
 - Sarah Ryan, (director of the Women's Center) Phone: 765-658-4173, Email: sryan@depauw.edu.
 - **SASA (Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate) Support is available 24/7 at 765-658-4650.**

If you would like off-campus support: Family Support Services of West Indiana has DV programs: <https://fsswci.net/domestic-violence>. If you want to speak to someone anonymously you can call the National Domestic Violence hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Or RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673 or chat: <https://hotline.rainn.org/online>

- If there are other resources you need but don't know where to find, please ask! Or if you have any additional resources that you think should be here—please leave info in a comment!