

RHMS 375: Queer Film and Television | Fall 2018

TH, 6-9pm JRHH 258

Screening: Mondays, 6-9pm, Miller 102

Instructor: Melanie Kohnen

email: mkohnen@lclark.edu

Office: JRHH 368

Office hours:

Monday, 4:30-5:30pm

Thursday, 2:30-3:30pm and by appointment

Course Description:

This class explores how LGBTQ and queer identities, lives, and communities have become visible in and to mainstream America through the media of film and television. In turn, we will also examine how media representations of LGBTQ and queer Americans have shaped conversations of what it means to be queer in the United States.

As our class examines key issues related to queer visibility, we will discover that queerness has always been at the heart of the media even in times when LGBTQ stories and characters were supposedly invisible. As we trace the history of queer film and TV, we will discover a variety of formal and narrative strategies for rendering queerness visible on screen. We will also focus on how being able to discern queerness often relates to "seeing" (or not) race, as the histories of sexuality and race are closely entwined in American culture. We will examine a wide range of texts, including classic Hollywood films, independent film, a variety of TV shows, and activist documentaries. In our discussions, we will pay particular attention to the normalization of LGBTQ identities in and through the media.

Goals:

- Understand the historical development of LGBTQ representation in film and television
- Understand different formal elements used in film and TV to represent LGBTQ characters and narratives
- Understand possibilities and constraints of mainstream and independent media when it comes to LGBTQ representation
- Become familiar with scholarship in LGBTQ media
- Become familiar with basic video editing skills and understand the principles of videographic criticism

Queer films opening during the semester:

The Miseducation of Cameron Post, now at Cinema 21

Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood, now at Cinema 21

Lizzie, 9/14

1985, 10/26

Boy, Erased, 11/02

Bohemian Rhapsody, 11/02

Queer Art:

[Between](#) at Portland Art Museum (until 10/14): "This exhibition aims to queer the curatorial process, taking into account current visibility politics and presenting the work of LGBTQIA2S+ artists in ways that challenge normative art world conventions."

Required Media:

1. Barker, Meg-John and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History* (at the bookstore)
2. Readings are available online via links in the reading schedule or as PDFs on Moodle.
3. Adobe Premiere or other editing software.

Assignments and Requirements:

Case Studies (100 points)

Each week starting in Week 5, a student will present an additional film or TV program that corresponds to the topic of the week. You will curate a 3-4min. clip in the style of [In Media Res](#). That is, you select a scene from a film or TV program and analyze it in a 10-minute presentation. The clip and a one-paragraph write-up will become part of our class archive on Vimeo.

Screening Journal (200 points)

You will keep a paper journal throughout the semester in which you record your reactions to our screenings. We will take time after each screening to write down initial thoughts and questions; you will use these thoughts to prepare for discussing the screenings in the Thursday class meeting. I will collect your journals at random points of the semester.

Videographic Projects (600 points)

Over the course of the semester, you will complete three short videographic projects on the following topics: queer visibility during the Production Code era, queer visibility in mainstream or independent film/TV, and a topic of your own design. Each video will be about 5-8min long and be accompanied by a short essay.

Videographic Exercises (Pass/Fail)

During the first weeks of class, you will complete exercises that introduce you to the craft of video editing. If you fail to complete these exercises, I will deduct 25 points from your participation grade as you won't be able to participate in our workshops without completing these exercises.

Participation (100 points)

In-class discussions are an important aspect of this course. Consequently, your participation is crucial to the overall success of the class. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion. This means you

should not only have completed the readings, but be ready to discuss and engage the reading's major arguments—the reading responses will help you with accomplishing that. During class discussions, I will frequently ask you to suggest passages that we should examine in more detail; you should be able to identify these passages quickly by either underlining, marking the page, or taking notes in advance of class.

Good participation means contributing thoughtful comments and questions that refer to readings, screenings, and core concepts during our class discussion. The quality of your remarks is at least as important as the quantity of your remarks.

In addition to taking part in class discussions, you can also meaningfully participate in class by sending me links to interesting popular and academic articles relevant to our course and by coming to office hours to discuss assignments or to chat about topics related to our course.

Reading Schedule

Films marked with * are on reserve at the library.

Week 1

09/06

- Introduction and Course Overview

Screening: Screening: *The Celluloid Closet*.* Story by Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman and Sharon Wood. HBO, 1996.

Week 2 Foundations

09/10

Screening: *Rope** (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948)

Videographic Criticism I

Install Adobe Premiere on your laptop before class. [this link](#) takes you directly to the download page for Premiere. Choose the free 1-week trial. If it asks you about a specific plan to try out, choose "Single App Individual" for Adobe Premiere.

- Browse [\[in\]transition](#), the academic journal dedicated to video essays, to get a first insight into what kinds of video essays scholars produce.
- Examples:
 - [What is Neorealism?](#) by Kogonada
 - [Of Love and Longing](#) by Allain Daigle
 - [Queer Femme Friendships in Frances Ha and Tangerine](#) by Abbey Griscom

09/13

Exercise I due at noon

- *Queer: A Graphic History*, 3-31.

- Doty, Alexander. Pages 1-13 of Introduction to [*Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon.*](#) (e-book via Primo). New York: Routledge, 2000.
- [The Fantasies of Alice and Dorothy: Exploring "Falling" and "Escape" as Queer Tropes](#) by Paige Salavea
 - Recommended for more in-depth background on LGBTQ history: Hilton-Morrow and Battles, Ch. 2: Historical Context, 35-69.

Further reading:

- Storycorps, [Remembering Stonewall](#) (podcast)
- National Park Service, [LGBTQ America](#)
- [Series of historical photographs](#)
- [Independent Voices](#): Open Access Collection of Alternative LGBTQ Press
- Library of Congress streaming video: [The Second Largest Minority](#) (1968); [Gay and Proud](#) (1970)

Week 3: (Queer) Hollywood Cinema

09/17

Screening: *Carol** (Todd Haynes, 2015)

- Videographic Criticism II: text, transitions, multi-screen

09/20

Exercise II due at noon.

- Kohnen, Melanie. "Visions of History: Queerness and Race in Hollywood Cinema from the Production Code to X-Men." In: *Queer Visibility, Representation, and Race in American Film and Television: Screening the Closet*. Routledge, 2015: 38-70.
- White, Patricia. "'Sketchy Lesbians': *Carol* as History and Fantasy." *Film Quarterly* Vol. 69, Issue 2 (Winter 2015): 8-18.

Further reading/viewing:

- *Rebel Without a Cause** (Nicholas Ray, 1955); *Some Like It Hot** (Billy Wilder, 1959); *All About Eve** (Joseph L. Mankiewic, 1950)
- The Myth of Stonewall and Collective LGBT Memory (video essay by Frankie Lorenzini): <https://vimeo.com/215492705>

Week 4: Hollywood Cinema after the Production Code

09/24

Exercise III due at noon.

Screening: *The Boys in the Band** (William Friedkin, 1970); 70s TV

09/27

- Bell, Matt. "Introduction: On Returning to *The Boys in the Band*." In: *The Boys in the Band: Flashpoints of Cinema, History, and Queer Politics*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016: 1-27.
- Włodarz, Joe. "'We're not all so obvious': masculinity and queer (in)visibility in American network television of the 1970s." In: *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics*. ed. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham. Routledge, 2009: 88-118.

Further reading:

Pugh, Tison. *The Queer Fantasies of the American Family Sitcom*. Rutgers University Press, 2018.

[Portland Queer Film Festival](#), September 26, 28-October 4, 2018. We are attending [Call Her Ganda](#) on Sunday, September 30 at 6pm.

Week 5: AIDS: Contested Territories

10/01

Screening:

- Excerpts from [Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of Act Up](#) (James Wentzy, 2002).
- *Philadelphia** (John Demme, 1993)

10/04

- *Queer: A Graphic History*, 51-54.
- Crimp, Douglas and Adam Rolston. Selections from *AIDS Demographics*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1990. (PDF)
- Kohnen, Melanie. "Toward the 'Gay 90s:' Redefining Queer Visibility Through the Lens of AIDS." (PDF)
- Look at: [AIDS in New York](#) (Prezi)

Case Study Presentations: *Longtime Companion**, *An Early Frost**, *Beats per Minute**, *Designing Women**, "Killing All the Right People"

Further reading/viewing:

- Gonsalez, Marcos Santiago. [The Sensory Inexplicable: Encounters with David Wojnarowicz exhibits ask how to feel the history and experience of AIDS in America](#). The New Inquiry, 2018.
- Grover, Jan Zita. "AIDS: Keywords." *October* Vol.43: AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism (Winter 1987): 17-30.
- Patton, Cindy. *Inventing AIDS*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP** (documentary, 2011); *How to Survive a Plague* (David France, 2012) (Netflix); *We Were Here* (David Weissman, 2011) (Netflix); *The Normal Heart** (Ryan Murphy, 2014).

Week 6: New Queer Cinema

10/08

Screening: *The Watermelon Woman** (Cheryl Dunye, 1996).

Screening and Discussion of project drafts.

- Queer: A Graphic History, 59-62.
- Rich, B. Ruby. "[New Queer Cinema: Director's Cut](#)." In: *New Queer Cinema: Director's Cut*. Duke University Press, 2013: 16-33.

10/10: 1st project due

10/11 Fall Break

Further viewing/reading:

- *My Own Private Idaho** (Gus van Sant, 1991), *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998, Netflix), *My Beautiful Laundrette** (Stephen Frears, 1985); *The Wedding Banquet* (Ang Lee, 1993); *Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema** (documentary, 2006)
- Richards, Stuart. "A New Queer Cinema Renaissance." *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (2016): 215-229.

Week 7: 1990s/2000s: Into the Mainstream

10/15

Screening: *Ellen*, "The Puppy Episode" (1997), *Moesha*, "Labels" (1996), *Glee*, "Sexy" (2011); Video Essays: [The Ideal Man](#) by Gracie Petrie; [What are you laughing at?](#) by Liza Bock

10/18

- Hilton-Morrow, Wendy and Kathleen Battles. "Visibility." In: [Sexual Identities and the Media](#). (e-book): 69-98.
- Martin, Alfred. "Scripting Black Gayness: Television Authorship in Black-Cast Sitcoms." *Television and New Media*, Vol. 16, Issue 7 (2015).

Case Study Presentations:

*The L Word** (Netflix), *Modern Family* (Hulu), *Brokeback Mountain**, *Will & Grace* (Hulu), *Queer as Folk* (Netflix)

Further reading:

- Becker, Ron. "Gay Material and Prime-Time Network Television in the 1990s." In: [Gay TV and Straight America](#). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006: 136-189.
- Duggan, Lisa. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." In: Castronovo, Russ and Dana D. Nelson (eds). *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002): 175-195.
- Doyle, Vincent. *Making Out in the Mainstream: GLAAD and the Politics of Respectability*. McGill-Queens University Press, 2016.
- Pugh, Tyson. *The Queer Fantasies of the American Family Sitcom*. Rutgers University Press, 2018.*

Week 8: Subtext

10/22

- Kohnen, Melanie E.S. "The Adventures of a Repressed Farmboy and the Billionaire Who Loves Him: Queer Spectatorship in *Smallville* Fandom." In: Sharon Ross and Louisa Stein. *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom*. McFarland, 2008: 207-224.

Screening: *The Eagle** (Kevin Macdonald, 2011); fan vids

Case Study Presentations

*Clouds of Sils Maria**; *Hannibal*; *Xena: Warrior Princess*; *Smallville**

10/25 No Class – Professor Kohnen attends the Fan Studies North America Conference

Further reading/viewing:

- Berlin, Marina. ['Black Sails' Depicts the Untold Story of Queer Pirates](#). Vice, April 2017.
- Doty, Alexander. "Introduction: What Makes Queerness Most?" In: *Making Things Perfectly Queer*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993: xi-xix.
- Becker, Ron. "Guy Love: A Queer Straight Masculinity for the Post-Closet Era?" In: Davis, Glyn, and Gary Needham. *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009: 212-141.
- *Fried Green Tomatoes* (Jon Avnet, 1991); *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999); *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999); *X-Men: First Class* (Matthew Vaughn, 2011)

Week 9 Intersections

10/29

Screening: *Moonlight** (Barry Jenkins, 2016); *Saving Face** (Alice Wu, 2004)

11/01

Discussion of project drafts.

- *Queer: A Graphic History*, 42-43; 47; 133-147.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother." In E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (eds), [Black Queer Studies](#), 124-161.
- Recommended:
 - [New York Film Festival: Making of Moonlight](#), a conversation with the creative team behind the film (video)

Further viewing/reading:

- *Mosquita y Mari** (Aurora Guerrero, 2012); *Pariah* (Dee Rees, 2011, on Netflix)
- [Interview with Aurora Guerrero](#). Popmatters, 2012.
- Danielson, Marivel. "Queering Home". In: [Homecoming Queers: Desire and Difference in Chicana Latina Cultural Production](#) (e-book via Primo). Rutgers University Press, 2009: 1-9.

Week 10 Trans*

11/05

Screening: *Tangerine* (Sean S. Baker, 2015)

11/08

Individual and group discussion of project drafts.

- *Queer: A Graphic History*, 79-82; 141-148.
- Gossett, Reina, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton. "Known Unknowns: An Introduction to Trap Door." In: *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*. MIT Press, 2017: xv-xxiii.
- Miss Major Griffin-Gracy and CeCe McDonald. "Cautious Living: Black Trans Women and the Politics of Documentation." In: *Trap Door*, 23-39.
- [Reina Gossett - David France dispute](#)

Recommended:

- Green, McKinley. [Tangerine](#). *Queer Studies in Media & Pop Culture*, 2016, Vol.1(1).
- [Sense8 Roundtable](#). *Spectator* 37:2 (Fall 2017): 74-88.

Case Study Presentations

Orange is the New Black (Netflix); *Southern Comfort** (Kate Davis, 2001)

Part I of Project #2 due on 11/11 at 11:55pm on Moodle.

Further Reading and Viewing:

- Halberstam, Jack. [Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability](#). University of California Press.
- Green, McKinley. [Tangerine](#). *Queer Studies in Media & Pop Culture*, 2016, Vol.1(1).
- [Mya Taylor and Sean Baker interview about Tangerine](#). NPR Fresh Air, 2015.
- [Sense8 Roundtable](#). *Spectator* 37:2 (Fall 2017): 74-88.

Week 11: Past/Present

11/12

Screening: *Paris is Burning* (Jenny Livingston, 1999), *Pose*, "Access" (2018)

11/15

- hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" In: *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992: 145-156.
- *Pose* reviews (PDF)

Case Study Presentations:

*Far from Heaven** (Todd Haynes, 2002); *Call Me by Your Name** (Luca Guadagnino, 2017); *The Normal Heart** (Ryan Murphy, 2014)

Part II of Project #2 due on 11/18 at 11:55pm on Moodle.

Further viewing:

Longtime Companion (Norman Rene, 1989) vs. *The Normal Heart** (Ryan Murphy, 2014)

Week 12: Family

11/19

Screening: *Master of None*, "Thanksgiving," *Signature Move* (Jennifer Reeder, 2017)

Case Study Presentations:

*Lifting** (Hong Khao, 2014); *Disobedience** (Sebastian Lelo, 2017); *One Day at a Time* (Netflix)

11/22

Thanksgiving

Week 13: Happiness

11/26

Screening: *Black Mirror*, "San Junipero" (2016), [Deconstructing Gender and Sexuality in Steven Universe](#) (video essay by Lauren Grady), *Steven Universe*, "The Answer" and "Reunited"

11/29

- Muñoz, José Esteban. Excerpts from: [Cruising Utopia](#). New York, NYU Press, 2009.
- Romano, Nick. [Steven Universe Creator has done more for queer visibility than you know](#). Entertainment Weekly, 2018.
- [Queer Love in Color](#). NYTimes, June 2018.

Case Study Presentations:

Black Sails

Week 14: #20gayteen

12/03

Screening: *Love, Simon* (Greg Berlanti, 2018); *Dirty Computer* (Janelle Monae, 2018); *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*

12/06

- Jung, Alex. [What's Happening to 'Queer' Cinema in the LGBTQ Film Boom?](#) Vulture, May 2018.
- Dominguez, Pier. [Not All Queer Love Stories Are Called Universal](#). Buzzfeed, 2017.
- Brown, Adrienne. [New Formation: Janelle Monae's Radical Emotion Pictures](#). LA Review of Books, May 2018.

Week 15

12/10

Final Screening: *Selection of your video essays!*

12/11: First half of third project due at 11:55pm on Moodle.

12/18: Second half of third project due on Moodle at 11:55pm.

Assignment Schedule

If not specified otherwise, all assignments are due at 11:59PM on the due date.

Extensions are only available in the case of dire personal circumstances, and you must contact me at least 24 hours before the deadline. If you don't contact me 24hrs before the deadline and don't submit an assignment, you will not receive any points.

Late assignments are graded down half a letter grade per day. I do not accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late.

| Assignment | Due Date | Points |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Videographic Exercises | See reading schedule | Pass/Fail |
| Participation | Ongoing | 100 |
| Screening Journal | Ongoing | 200 |
| Case Study | Ongoing | 100 |
| Project 1 | 10/10 | 200 |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------|
| Project 2 | 11/11 and 11/18 | 200 |
| Project 3 | 12/11 and 12/18 | 200 |
| Total | | 1000 |

A Note on Laptops and Cell Phone Usage

We will develop our technology policy together in the first week.

Absences

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absence during the semester (if your unexcused absences exceed that limit, you put yourself at risk of failing the course). All other absences must be for valid, non-academic reasons, such as personal/medical emergencies, religious holidays, or athletic commitments.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work we have done during class. Also note that showing up more than ten minutes late to class automatically translates into an unexcused absence for that class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

For information on what constitutes academic integrity, see the College's official policies here: <http://legacy.lclark.edu/dept/pathfind/academicinteg.html> If you haven't already done so, take the tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism available here: <http://library.lclark.edu/reference/plagiarism/index.htm>

Accommodations

Please come and speak with me if you are having difficulties with the course material, readings, or assignments. I am also very happy to work with students who are in need of special accommodations. If you anticipate needing special accommodations, contact the Student Support Services Office to discuss your situation. That office will contact me, and we can take appropriate action to make sure all your needs are accommodated.