3133F/G: Lesbian Lives and Cultures

Course Description
This course will explore what it means to identify as a lesbian today. With the move away from identity politics and the ascendance of queer as a challenge to identity categories, it will consider the place of lesbianism in contemporary North American culture and more globally. Attention will be paid to a variety of aspects of lesbian lives and to contemporary forms of lesbian experiences in relation to their historical antecedents. Themes will include intersectionality, activism, sex, literature, art and politics.

This course will:

* provide an understanding of marginalized sexual identities in contemporary culture
* help to develop a context for understanding lesbian lives
* provide the critical tools to understand how the categories of sexuality, race and class intersect
* identify some of the critical challenges these intersections make apparent

Texts: Course Package

Assignments:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test (1.5 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short essay (1000 words)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Long essay (2500 words)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination (3 hours)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Course Schedule

Week one
Introduction: What’s in a Label? Lesbian vs. Queer
Linda Garber, "The Curious Persistence of Lesbian Studies" in Ashgate Companion
**Week two**
*Feeling Backwards: The 1920s and Early Lesbian Visibility*
Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* [extracts]
Vita Sackville-West, *Diaries* [extracts]

**Week three**
*Before Stonewall: 1950s Imagining Lesbian Lives*
FiLM: *Carol*, director Todd Haynes (2015)

**Week four**
*Lesbian Utopias: 1970s Separatism and Community Building*
Joanna Russ, "When It Changed" [short story]
Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" [essay]
FiLM: *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, part 2

**Week five**
*Sex, Porn and Politics: The 1980s and the Sex Wars*
Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex" [essay]
Pat Califia

**Week six**
*AIDS Activism and Challenging Identities*
Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" [essay]
Anne Cvetkovich, "AIDS Activism and Public Feelings: Documenting ACT UP's Lesbians," [essay]
FiLM CLIP: *After Stonewall* (1999)

**Week seven**
*Challenging Whiteness: Lesbians and Race*
Audrey Lorde, *Sister Outsider* [extracts], Lorde poem
Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories*
DOCUMENTARY: Audre Lorde/After Stonewall

**Week eight**
*Lesbians and Race 2*
Gloria Anzaldua, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza” [essay]
FiLM CLIP: *Fire*, director Deepa Mehta
Gayatri Gopinath, "Global Sites, Local Contexts" [essay]

**Week nine**
*Lesbian Music, Politics and the Counterpublic Sphere*
Judith Halberstam, "Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy" (Queer Becomings)
Le Tigre, Tribe 8, Pussy Riot, k. d. lang, Indigo Girls, Tegan and Sara, etc.

**Week nine**
Lesbians in the Movies and on TV: Cultural Visibility or Cultural Appropriation?
FILM EXTRACTS: Bound (1996), Spider Lilies (2007), Blue Is the Warmest Colour (2013), L-Word, etc.

**Week ten**
*Global Lesbianism and Human Rights*
VIDEO: Russia Declares Discrimination Newest Olympic Sport (2014)

**Week eleven**
*Lesbians and Weddings: How Important Is Marriage?*
The fight for gay and lesbian marriage equality in Canada; Ireland and the Referendum; gay marriage in the US
VIDEO: Lesbians Will Marry Your Girlfriends (2014)

**Week twelve**
*Kids, Kids and More Kids: The Lesbian Turn to Parenting*
Same-sex parental rights in Canada; has parenting changed lesbian culture?
FILM CLIP: The Kids Are All Right, If These Walls Could Talk 2, part 3

**Week thirteen**
*Oral presentations*
*Conclusions*