

## **BEFORE STONEWALL: QUEER CINEMA and AMERICAN CULTURE from WWII to GAY LIBERATION**

Film 3352F/WST 3345F—Queer Cinema

Western University—Fall 2018

Screening: Tuesdays 5:30-8:30 pm (UC-1401)

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 5:30-7:30 pm (UC-1405)

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Although the Stonewall rebellion has long served as a foundational moment in the history of gay liberation and queer visibility, its iconicity tends to overshadow the crucial transformations of queer identity, community, culture, and politics that took place in the U.S. and abroad from WWII to that fateful summer night in 1969. For not only did the postwar era witness the development of queer urban spaces and homophile political groups, but it also marked a significant expansion of queer visibility in literature, theater, and cinema. Examining the conventions *and* the gradual undoing of what Vito Russo famously called “the celluloid closet,” this course will explore key shifts in queer representation in American cinema of the postwar era. We will analyze the queer typology (sad young men, dangerous dykes, queer killers, etc.) of a variety of Hollywood genres (horror, noir, melodrama) as well as the often subversive work of figures like Tennessee Williams, Carson McCullers, and Alfred Hitchcock in the context of Cold War homophobia and gender normativity. We will then frame the eventual breakdown of Production Code restrictions on “sexual perversion” in relation to the development of queer alternatives via avant-garde, underground, and documentary cinema. The final section of the course will concentrate on a group of films from the Stonewall era that will allow us to grapple with the aesthetic, cultural, and political consequences of the shift from silence and oppression to an era of presumed liberation. What’s gained—and perhaps lost—for queer subjects in the transition from invisibility to visibility, from subculture to mainstream, and how has this key historical moment shaped our contemporary notions of queer culture and identity?

**Course Objectives:** This course explores the history of queer artists, communities, and politics in the U.S. in relation to the forms, genres, and industrial strategies of the Hollywood studio system. In its exploration of narrative, documentary, and experimental film and video, the course also analyzes the politics of cinematic representation in relation to key debates in queer theory.

**Learning Outcomes:** In addition to enhancing your critical thinking and historical research skills through class discussion and papers, you will gain valuable knowledge about queer cinema, queer theory, and American history that can be applied to research areas in the humanities as well as to a variety of social and professional contexts.

## COURSE TEXTS

—Readings from E-Journals/Books available on OWL

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Class Attendance and Participation [10%]
- Discussion Leading [10%]
- Reading Quizzes [30% total]
- Queer Film Analysis *or* Digital Media Project (1500 words) [20%]
- Final Research Paper (2500 words) [30%]

**Attendance and Participation:** You are required to attend all class meetings and screenings for the full duration. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the weekly reading assignments, and with your course readings and textbook in hand. Thoughtful participation is highly encouraged and will improve your final participation grade. Lateness, early departures, not having the appropriate readings, texting, or other disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade. More than **THREE** *unexcused* absences will result in a zero for your final participation grade. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through the Dean's office (see below)—will be considered for paper extensions or exam rescheduling. ***If you are absent for TEN or more classes (excused or unexcused) you will automatically fail the final exam and the overall course.***

**Laptops, Tablets, Cell Phones:** Laptops/tablets/cell phones are *not* to be used during screenings. You will need to take notes using paper and pens, so be sure to bring these materials to class. Exceptions *may* be granted in the case of students with special needs, but this will only come with official approval from the Dean's office. Laptops/tablets will be permitted during lecture, but only on a probationary basis: if the instructor is distracted two times during the semester by non-note-taking/internet laptop use, the instructor will ban ALL use of laptops/tablets for the remainder of the year. In addition, be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from text messaging during class. This counts as disruptive behavior and will lower your final participation grade.

**Discussion Leading:** Working with at least one of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion once during the term on the weekly screenings. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for presenting a specific question about the film and/or the course readings as well as engaging your fellow students in a discussion about that element. You will need to coordinate with your group member(s) in order to prepare and organize the discussion questions/material, and in most cases I will assess the group as a whole based on the overall quality of the discussion leading.

**Reading Quizzes:** There will be four reading quizzes during the term (see schedule). Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of lecture/discussion classes and will last roughly 25-30 minutes. Be sure to arrive promptly. The quizzes will consist of an identification section (key concepts, figures, etc.), short answer questions, and/or a short

essay question based on the course readings. ***\*Note: Your four quiz grades will be averaged to calculate your final quiz grade for the course. If you receive a passing grade on ALL FOUR quizzes, however, I will drop your lowest quiz score and average the remaining three to determine your final quiz grade.***

**Paper Assignments:** You will have at least one (possibly two) paper assignments for the course. The first paper will ask you to examine the coding of queerness (narratively, formally, ideologically, etc.) in a WWII-era queer film that we are *not* screening in the course. The final paper for the course is a more extensive research paper that will provide you with an opportunity to explore key films, figures, and/or cultural events from either the pre-Stonewall OR the gay liberation period in a North American or international context.

***\*\*While daily late penalties apply (see below), papers that are over ONE week late will automatically receive a zero.***

**Digital Media Project:** In lieu of the midterm paper assignment, you will also have the opportunity to produce a queer-themed digital media project either individually or as a group. These projects may take a variety of forms, but they should be focused on queer representation in film and media from WWII to the Stonewall-era in American culture. We will both screen and discuss the videos produced in class.

**Late Work:** Course papers must be turned in complete and on time. In order to be fair to the entire class, I will not grant individual extensions on paper assignments, so be sure to budget your time accordingly. Late papers will be penalized 5% points per day late (including weekends), except in the case of *properly documented* medical emergencies or illnesses (see below).

**Note on Screenings:** You are *required* to attend weekly screenings on Tuesday afternoons at 5:30 pm (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, no talking, no laptops, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the film in the study center [UC 1126] sometime before Wednesday's lecture. You may contact the Film Library Assistant, Rebecca Nguy (rnguy3@uwo.ca) (Phone: x85730), to do so.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1—September 11/12—Coding Queerness in Hollywood Cinema**

**Screening:** *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933, 97 min.)  
& *Meeting Two Queens* (Cecilia Barriga, 1991, 14 min.)

**Reading:** Dyer, "Seen to Be Believed"  
& Benschhoff/Griffin, "Introduction" and "From Pansies to Predators"  
in *Queer Images*

**Week 2—Sept. 18/19—In the Shadows: Queer Noir**

**Screening:** *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944, 88 min.)  
& *Rope* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948, 80 min.)

**Reading:** Dyer, “Queer Noir”  
& Miller, “Anal *Rope*”

**Week 3—Sept. Jan. 25/26—Camp, Gay Fandom, and the Hollywood Musical**

**Screening:** *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953, 91 min.)  
& Judy Garland Clips

**Reading:** Cohan, “Introduction” to *Incongruous Entertainment*  
& Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here”  
& Waugh, “Physique Cinema, 1945-1969”

**\*\*QUIZ #1 on Wednesday Sept. 26 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

**Week 4—October 2/3—Gender Trouble: Exploitation and Social Problem Cinema**

**Screening:** *Caged* (John Cromwell, 1950, 96 min.)  
& *Glen or Glenda* (Edward Wood, Jr., 1953, 68 min.)

**Reading:** Stryker, “A Hundred Years of Transgender History”  
& Butler, “Introduction” to *Undoing Gender*  
& Mayne, “Caged and Framed”  
& Benschhoff/Griffin, “Exploitation or Art?”

**Week 5—Oct. 9/10—READING WEEK**

**Week 6—Oct. 16/17—Adapting Tennessee Williams, Coding Gay Desires**

**Screening:** *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Richard Brooks, 1958, 107 min.)

**Reading:** Noriega, ““Something’s Missing Here!””  
& Bronski, “The Eroticized Male Body” (excerpt)  
& Savran, “Tennessee Williams 1”

**\*\*QUIZ #2 on Wednesday Oct. 17 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

**Week 7—Oct. 23/24—Troubled Teens: Screening Queer Youth**

**Screening:** *Tea and Sympathy* (Vincente Minnelli, 1956, 122 min.)  
& *Fireworks* (Kenneth Anger, 1947, 14 min.)

**Reading:** Gerstner, “The Production and Display of the Closet”  
& Bruhm/Hurley, “Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children”

**\*Queer Film Analysis Essay or Digital Media Project Due  
Wednesday Oct. 24 at the Beginning of Class\***

**Week 8—Oct. 30/31—Apparitional Lesbians and other Queer Horrors**

**Screening:** *The Haunting* (Robert Wise, 1963, 114 min.)

**Reading:** White, “Female Spectator, Lesbian Spectre”  
& Benschhoff, “The Monster and the Homosexual”

**Week 9—November 6/7—Rumors, Gossip, and the Closet**

**Screening:** *The Children’s Hour* (William Wyler, 1961, 107 min.)  
*Rock Hudson’s Home Movies* (Mark Rappaport, 1992, 61 min.)

**Reading:** Benschhoff/Griffin, “Fear and Loathing in Postwar Hollywood”  
& Erhart, ““She Could Hardly Invent Them!””  
& Love, “Introduction” to *Feeling Backward*

**\*\*QUIZ #3 on Nov. 7 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

**Week 10—Nov. 13/14—Underground Cinema and Queer Spaces**

**Screening:** *Scorpio Rising* (Anger, 1963, 28 min.)  
& *Flaming Creatures* (Smith, 1963, 43 min.)  
& *My Hustler* (Warhol, 1965, 67 min.)

**Reading:** Staiger, “Finding Community in the Early 1960s”  
& Davis/Needham, “Introduction” to *Warhol in Ten Takes*

**Week 11—Nov. 20/21—Documenting “Deviance”**

**Screening:** *CBS Reports: The Homosexuals* (March 7, 1967, 45 min.)  
& *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke, 1967, 105 min.)

**Reading:** Alwood, excerpts from *Straight News*  
& Gustafson, “Putting Things to the Test”  
& Butt, ““Stop that Acting!””

**Week 12—Nov. 27/28—Coming Out Under Fire: Gays in the Military**

**Screening:** *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (John Huston, 1967, 108 min.)

**Reading:** Benschoff, “Representing (Repressed) Homosexuality...”  
& Hsu, “Desiring Brotherhood”

**\*\*QUIZ #4 on Wednesday Nov. 28 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

**Week 13—December 4/5—Anticipating Stonewall: Gay Bars on Screen**

**Screening:** *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968, 138 min.)

**Reading:** Hankin, “Lesbian Locations”  
& Love, “Epilogue: The Politics of Refusal”

**\*\*Final Research Paper Due Wednesday Dec. 5 in Class\*\***

**POLICIES and REGULATIONS**

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. For Film Studies regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at [www.uwo.ca/film](http://www.uwo.ca/film)

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. In this course, citation of all material other than students' own ideas must be completed according to the guidelines established in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. For additional information on plagiarism see:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Plagiarism Checking:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing

agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com. You should register immediately as a new user by going to <http://www.turnitin.com>. I will provide you with the Class ID # and password as soon as possible. Assignments not handed in to turnitin.com will receive a 0.

**Prerequisites:** Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and or assignments must apply to their Academic Counseling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Official accommodation is also required for ALL missed assignments (including quizzes).*

Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

For information on the examination services provided by the Student Development Centre, please visit [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

**Disabilities:** Please consult with me during the first three weeks of class regarding disabilities that might require special accommodations.

**Complaints:** If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must first discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the English Department chair. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

**Office Hours:** I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly office hours (posted above). If you have an occasional conflict, feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative time to meet. I will also be available via email M-F from 9-5 and will do my best to respond to your email within two days. *\*Please note, however, that I may not respond to questions about the course that can be answered by simply reviewing the course syllabus.*

## GRADING CRITERIA

### A+ (90-100):

**Argument:** Clear development of a specific, challenging and original thesis. The writer has taken significant risks successfully; in the resulting piece, distinctive ideas and content have discovered their necessary distinctive form. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

**Presentation, structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

**Research/scholarship:** Evidence of effective, extensive and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

### A (80 to 89):

**Argument:** The writer has taken risks and most of them succeed. Clear development of a specific and challenging thesis, with proper paragraphs. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

**Presentation, structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

**Research/scholarship:** Evidence of effective and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

### B (70 to 79):

**Argument:** Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs. Adequately detailed reference to texts. Ability to expound reasonably sophisticated ideas with clarity.

**Presentation/structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. A few typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with reasonable range of sentence types and full range of punctuation. Style not too wordy, with errors relatively few and minor.

**Research Scholarship:** Evidence of adequate research, with proper documentation of sources.



**C (60 to 69):**

**Argument:** Reasonably clear development of a thesis, with proper paragraphs. Basic ability to expound ideas, whose development might be rather thin. Effort to support points with references to the text. Tendency to replace analysis with descriptive retelling of plot.

**Presentation/structure:** Presentation showing lapses in tidiness and/or proofreading. Poor use of paragraphs.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, but perhaps overly simple, with tendency to avoid punctuation besides period and comma. Errors relatively few, but occasionally serious, with evident misunderstanding of some point of elementary grammar (comma splices, fragments, semicolon errors, subject-verb disagreements, poorly integrated quotations)

**Research/Scholarship:** reasonable effort at documentation, but rather thin.

**D (50 to 59):**

**Argument:** Difficulty with paragraphing or consecutive thought. Ideas inchoate but clouded by weak expression. Overgeneralization with inadequate support, or examples that run to lengthy paraphrase, with little or no analysis.

**Presentation/Structure:** Very poor to non-existent use of paragraphs. Inadequate and inaccurate documentation. Multiple typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Errors of grammar or diction frequent enough to interfere with understanding.

**Research/Scholarship:** Little serious effort to research the topic.

**F (49 and below):**

**Argument:** Ideas too simple for level of course. Argument completely incoherent. Erroneous content showing little or no understanding of subject.

**Presentation/Structure:** Very sloppy proof-reading. Documentation virtually non-existent.

**Language Skills:** writing frequently ungrammatical.

**Research/Scholarship:** Non-existent. Content largely “borrowed” from sources with no individual distillation, but no apparent attempt to deceive. Failure to follow the course assignment and guidelines.

**0 (Report to Department)**

Plagiarism with intent to deceive