

21st CENTURY QUEER CINEMA

FILM 3352G & GSWS 3333G—Queer Cinema

Western University—Winter Term 2026

Screenings: Asynchronous weekly screenings—links posted on OWL

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 10:30 am-12:30 pm (UC-1405)

Dr. Joseph Wlodarz

Email: jwlodarz@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 pm (in-person—UC-4411)

Thursdays 12:00-1:00 pm (online) & by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The early 21st century was a key moment of transition and transformation in queer cinema and queer politics. Following the activist and experimental work of the New Queer Cinema, Hollywood films (*The Birdcage*; *In and Out*; *Boys Don't Cry*) and television programs (*Ellen*; *Will & Grace*; *Queer as Folk*) played a major role in mainstreaming LGBTQ+ visibility in the late 1990s. This expanding visibility was also closely tied to legal battles for gay marriage, medical breakthroughs in the AIDS pandemic, and an embrace of the queer consumer market. But while the unprecedented critical and commercial success of 2005's *Brokeback Mountain* seemed to mark the popular crossover of queer cinema, queer critics and scholars also noted the film's limitations in relation to the diverse range of modern queer communities and politics.

Building on the *Brokeback* phenomenon, this course will examine persistent tensions between the margins and the mainstream in relation to *global* queer cinema production of the 21st century. We will begin by analyzing tensions between the radical potential of "queer" vs. the assimilationist tendencies of gay politics in relation to the legacy of New Queer Cinema. We will then consider how representations of the queer past shape and inform contemporary queer politics, relations, and affects. The following section of the course builds on this historical approach by framing the AIDS pandemic and AIDS activist movement in relation to recent explorations of gay male sexual desire and strategies of screening sex. The crucial role of transgender experiences and identities in contemporary queer politics will then anchor the next section of the course, which will also set up our discussion of the complex (and controversial) phenomenon of queer childhood. Our screenings for the earlier sections of the course will be drawn from the U.S., U.K., France, and Brazil, while the final section of the course will focus specifically on queer lives and films from the Global South. Course readings will also complement our screenings by tending to a range of concepts/issues in contemporary queer theory, including homonormativity, homonationalism, queer migration/diaspora, queer temporality, queer spirituality, and trans-informed approaches to gender and sexuality. Throughout the course we will grapple with the ever-shifting parameters of queer cinema as well as the political and cultural efficacy of the concept of "queer" itself.

Course Objectives: This course will analyze contemporary forms, issues, and politics of queer cinema around the world in relation to recent issues/developments in the field of queer theory. It will situate films from the Global North and Global South in relation to the broader history of queer filmmaking *and* to the more localized national, political, and cultural factors that inform

these diverse cinematic approaches to screening queerness.

Learning Outcomes: In addition to enhancing your critical thinking skills through class discussion and in-class written assignments, you will gain valuable knowledge about queer cinema, queer theory, and global politics/cultures that can be applied to a variety of research areas in the humanities as well as your broader social and professional lives.

COURSE TEXTS

Readings from E-Journals and scholarly books available through Western library [on OWL].

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Attendance and Participation [10%]
- Discussion Leading (Questions and Clip Analysis) [15%]
- Weekly Quizzes on Readings and Screenings (*see note below) [50%]
- Final Exam [25%]

Course Content: Course Assignments, Lecture slides, OWL readings, and Streaming Links will be posted on the OWL site for the course: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/> Use the weekly units and related tabs to access the course content for each week. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If you need assistance with the course OWL site, you can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

****Note: Although I will send mass emails to the class through OWL, you should use my Western email account for any correspondence.***

Students must also use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors.

Electronic Devices: No electronic devices/aids of any kind (e.g. cell phones, tablets, smart watches) are permitted during in-class quizzes and exams.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): To foster independent, critical thinking and to help students develop traditional research skills, AI tools, such as ChatGPT, should *not* be used in this course. In all submitted coursework, students are expected to critically evaluate obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop *their own* ideas, arguments, and perspectives.

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all 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.

Discussion Leading: Working with 1-2 of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion once during the term on the weekly screenings and readings. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for presenting specific questions 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 co-presenter(s) 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/Screening Quizzes: Beginning Week 2, there will be 12 reading/screening quizzes during the term. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will last roughly 30 minutes. Be sure to arrive promptly. You will provide written responses to questions about key concepts from the course readings. You will also be asked to apply these concepts to the weekly course screenings. Quizzes may include a clip analysis from the weekly screenings. ****Your best 10 of 12 quizzes will count towards your final grade.***

Final Exam: The final exam is a 3-hour exam administered during the formal exam period. It will be focused on longer essay-length questions but may also include clip analyses. I will provide further details and a study guide in the last weeks of the course.

Note on Screenings: You are required to view weekly screenings before each Wednesday lecture/discussion. All weekly film screenings will be available via streaming sources. Links to the weekly screenings will be found on OWL alongside a screening introduction and related screening questions. Screening Introductions/Links will be posted by Monday afternoons at the latest. I encourage you to view the films on as large a screen as possible so that you can pay close attention to the visual style and formal construction of the films. Most screening links will also have optional subtitles/closed captions that you will be able to turn on.

Note on Course Content: Given the topic, you can expect the course material to deal with sex and sexuality in a frank and direct manner. We will be viewing a variety of films and videos with explicit depictions of bodies and sexual acts. In line with the goals of queer theory and queer politics, the course is meant to interrogate and to counter skittishness, ignorance, moralism, and silence in relation to the expression and representation of sexuality.

Recordings: Participants in this course are ***not*** permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. You should also remember that the course lectures are ***not*** in the public domain but are each instructor's intellectual property. They should not be shared or distributed outside the course in any manner.

Office Hours: I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly, virtual 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.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1—January 5-7—The Legacy of New Queer Cinema

Screening: *Weekend* (Andrew Haigh, UK, 2011) [97 min.]

Reading: Aaron, "New Queer Cinema: An Introduction"
& Moor, "'New Gay Sincerity' and Andrew Haigh's *Weekend*"

I. Looking Back, Feeling Backwards: Queer Histories

Week 2—Jan. 12-14—Lesbian Romance and the Lavender Scare

Screening: *Carol* (Todd Haynes, US, 2015) [119 min.]

Reading: Bradbury-Rance, *Lesbian Cinema after Queer Theory* (Introduction & Ch-6)

Week 3—Jan.19-21—Black Queer Fugitivity in Brazil

Screening: *Madame Satã* (Karim Aïnouz, Brazil, 2002) [105 min.]

Reading: Guarana, "Twenty Queers of *Madame Sata*"
& Nemi Nato, *Cannibalizing Queer* (excerpts)
& Dillon, *Fugitive Live* (Introduction)

II. Sex, Resistance, and the AIDS Pandemic

Week 4—Jan. 26-28—Reframing AIDS and Activism

Screening: *BPM* [*120 battements par minute*] (Robin Campillo, France, 2017) [140 min.]

Reading: Castiglia and Reed, "Battles Over the Gay Past"
& Bourdeau, "Robin Campillo's *120 Battements Par Minute*"

Week 5—Feb. 2-4—Cruising, Risk, and Gay Desire

Screening: *Stranger by the Lake* [*L'Inconnu du lac*] (Alain Guiraudie, France, 2013)
[100 min.]

Reading: Reeser, "Alain Guiraudie: Queering Space, Age, Relationality" (excerpts)
& Williams, "Cinema's Sex Acts"
& Hardwick, "Undressed to Kill"

III. *Transgender Lives in Urban America*

Week 6—Feb. 9-11—Queer Spaces/Queer Times

Screening: *By Hook or By Crook* (Harry Dodge & Silas Howard, US, 2001) [95 min.]
& *Tangerine* (Sean Baker, US, 2015) [88 min.]

Reading: Halberstam, *In a Queer Time & Place* (excerpts)
& Henderson, *Love and Money* (excerpts)
& Malone, "Celebrating transness: *Tangerine* and the iPhone"

Week 7—Feb. 16-18—Reading Week—No Classes

Week 8—Feb. 23-25—Border Crossings: Immigrants in the Trump Era

Screening: *Lingua Franca* (Isabel Sandoval, US/Philippines, 2019) [89 min.]

Reading: Gardner & Maclay, *Corpses, Fools and Monsters* (excerpt)
& Handler, "The Story of *Lingua Franca*"
& Inton-Campbell, "Precarity and Motherhood in Philippine Trans Cinema"
& Keegan, "Mirror Scene"

IV. *Representing Queer Childhood*

Week 9—March 2-4—Gender Trouble and the Queer Child

Screening: *Tomboy* (Céline Sciamma, France, 2011) [82 min.]
& *Little Girl* [*Petite fille*] (Sébastien Lifshitz, France, 2020) [85 min.]

Reading: Bruhm/Hurley, "Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children"
& Waldron, "Embodying Gender Non-conformity in 'Girls'"

Week 10—March 9-11—Queer Youth, Sexuality, and Trauma

Screening: *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, US, 2004) [105 min.]

Reading: Osterweil, "Invasion of the Child Snatchers"
& Dossi, "*Mysterious Skin*"
& Amin, "Keyword 5: Pedophile"

V. *Queer Cinema in the Global South*

Week 11—March 16-18—Negotiating Queerness in Kenya

Screening: *Rafiki* (Wanuri Kahiu, Kenya, 2018) [83 min.]
& *Stories of Our Lives* (Jim Chuchu, Kenya, 2014) [62 min.]

Reading: Green-Simms, *Queer African Cinemas* [Ch-4: "Holding Space, Saving Joy"]

Week 12—March 23-25—Sexuality and Spirituality in Thailand

Screening: *Tropical Malady* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Thailand, 2004) [125 min.]

Reading: Fuhrmann, *Ghostly Desires* [Ch-3: *Tropical Malady*]

Week 13—March 30-April 1—Queer Muslim Cinema

Screening: *Joyland* (Saim Sadiq, US/Pakistan, 2022) [127 min.]

Reading: Qureshi, "Queer Cinema's Practicing Muslims..."
& Fernández-Carbajal, *Queer Muslim Diasporas in Contemporary
Literature and Film* (Introduction)

Week 14—April 6-8—Intersectionality and Genre Hybridity

Screening: *Good Manners* [*As boas maneiras*]
(Juliana Rojas & Marco Dutra, Brazil, 2017) [135 min.]

Reading: Guaraná, "Of Lesbians and Werewolves"
& Benshoff, "The Monster and the Homosexual"
& Amin, "We Are All Nonbinary"

****Final Exam: See Winter Term Exam Schedule****

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

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.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students’ personal use within the course, and remain the instructor’s intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor’s content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Accommodation and Academic Consideration Policies

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar’s webpage:
<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

****All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.**

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. **This exception, however, is *not* applicable to the in-class exams for the Fall and Winter terms.

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”
<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Religious Accommodation:

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#) . Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Support Services

Academic Advising:

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence:

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success:

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC:

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or 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. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

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 for such checking 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 <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

***Note on AI/ChatGPT:** Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of AI tools such as ChatGPT to create content that is submitted as one's own. Students are thus required to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding all forms of plagiarism. All course assignments and exams *must* reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work.

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.

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.