

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:

Presence and participation	10%
Oral presentation	10%
Test (1.5 hours)	15%
Short essay (1000 words)	15%
Long essay (2500 words)	20%
Final examination (3 hours)	30%
Total	100%

Course Schedule

Week one

Introduction: What's in a Label? Lesbian vs. Queer

Linda Garber, "The Curious Persistence of Lesbian Studies" in Ashgate Companion

Lisa Duggan, "The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Lesbian and Gay History."

GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 2 (1995): 179-91.

Week two

Feeling Backwards: The 1920s and Early Lesbian Visibility

Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* [extracts]

Vita Sackville-West, *Diaries* [extracts]

Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Introduction

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

Kollman and Waites, "The Global Politics of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Human Rights" (2009)

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