

**The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies  
Western University**

**GSWS 2167: Queer(ing) Popular Culture  
Winter 2022**

**\*\*TENTATIVE SYLLABUS\*\***

**Weekly Meetings:** Monday 4:30 PM – 7:30 PM

**Location:** TBD

**Instructor:** Amy Keating

**Office Hours:**

**E-mail:** [akeatin@uwo.ca](mailto:akeatin@uwo.ca)

**Course TA: Julia Garcia**

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Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are 3 local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.

**Course Description:**

How are Queer individuals represented in popular culture? Images of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals in media, including news, film, and television, produce particular ideas of queer identity. This course examines the historical and contemporary presence of queer individuals within popular culture and popular culture produced for and by 2SLGBTQ+ people. Course materials consider 2SLGBTQ+ representations (and lack thereof) over the past century through an intersectional lens exploring who has been left out, the burgeoning “mainstreaming” of queer representation, what stories continue to be ignored, and the interplay between pop culture, societal understandings of identity, and cultural norms. The content explores common stereotypes as well as how representations have shifted over time for queer and trans people, with attention to the importance of considering historical context. Students will consider a wide variety of pop culture materials and will be encouraged to seek representations beyond the course content for assignments and further thought. Content will span the genres of music, comedy, film, fashion, YouTube videos and podcasts.

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a breadth of knowledge and understanding of the history of queer and 2SLGBTQ+ identities in North American popular culture

- Comprehend the importance of studying pop culture and its relation to societal norms of gender and sexuality, and historical context
- Evaluate queer representations in historical and contemporary popular media through an intersectional and queer lens
- Analyze the dialogical relationships between media representations, social stigma, and systemic marginalization of 2SLGBTQ+ groups and persons
- Articulate thoughtful criticisms and potential for growth for queer pop culture in its past *and* present iterations
- Acknowledge the “mainstreaming” of queerness as a complex issue with positive and negative repercussions for 2SLGBTQ+ identities and rights

**Required Texts:** Texts available via course OWL site under “Course Readings.” Web links for video clips, news articles, social media posts, etc., may be found under the “Resources” tab in the “Web Links” folder.

**Evaluation:**

1. Online Forum Participation	10%
2. Assignment #1	15%
3. Midterm	20%
4. Assignment #2	25%
5. Exam	30%

**1. Online Forum Participation: Ongoing (10%)**

Students will be expected to post 150-200 word responses to the week’s readings and content prior to the class meeting (by 4 pm on Monday) for at least *six* of the weeks.

**2. Assignment #1: Due January 24 (15%)**

Students will complete a 3-page assignment on a piece of 2SLGBTQIA+ pop culture of their choice that was released *before* the year 2000. Their work will respond to prompts made available through OWL. Students should reach out to the instructor or TA if they have questions or concerns regarding their subject choices.

**3. Midterm: In class February 14 (20%)**

The class will hold a midterm addressing the concepts from the first half of the course.

**4. Assignment #2: Due March 14 (25%)**

Students will complete a 5-page assignment on a piece of 2SLGBTQIA+ pop culture of their choice from *any* time period that they personally find intriguing. In-depth details for this assignment will be made available through OWL.

**5. Exam: During final exam period (30%)**

**Course Website:**

All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website through the Western OWL portal. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

**Course Policies:**

**Formatting Policy:** All written assignments must be formatted in a document (PDF or .docx) with 1-inch margins, in 12 point, Times New Roman Font, double spaced. The date, your name, course title, and instructor name must be visible on the first page.

**Email Policy:** The instructor will respond to any emails within 48 hours during regular business hours. Please be aware that emails sent after 5 pm on Friday might not receive a response until Monday at the earliest.

**Medical Policy:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see:

<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg1117.html> and  
<http://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>.

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

**Prerequisites:**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This 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. (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>).

**Turnitin:**

All required papers will 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 licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>.) (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

**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 the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>  
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>

**Note for students with disabilities:** Please contact [ws-ugrad@uwo.ca](mailto:ws-ugrad@uwo.ca) if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material

and/or physical space accessible to you. You may also contact [ssd@uwo.ca](mailto:ssd@uwo.ca) to find out the full range of services available to you.

**Late assignments:**

All assignments must be submitted through the appropriate assignment tab via the course website (OWL) by 11:30 pm on the due date. Hard copies are not required at this time. Late assignments without a valid reason will be deducted a 2% penalty per day (exclusive of weekends).

**Missed assignments and academic accommodation:**

Academic Accommodation must be requested within 28 days of the missed assignment. Please consult your instructor if an assignment is missed.

**Grading Policy:** A grading rubric for the Gender, Sexualities, and Women’s Studies department will be available on the course website. The instructor/grader will be happy to discuss any grading concerns. **However**, please follow the “24/7” rule. The student must *first* wait a minimum of 24 hours, and no longer than one week, after receiving the grade *and* review all comments already provided prior to contacting the instructor or TA regarding any concerns.

**GSWS 2167B – Queer(ing) Popular Culture**  
*Course Schedule (Winter 2022)*

**Week 1: January 3, 2022.**

***Introduction to Queer(ing) Pop Culture***

**Week 2: January 10, 2022.**

***2SLGBTQIA+ Identities in North American Pop Culture***

DeClue, J. (2020). Theorize for what? Reading Black Queer film and popular culture. *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International*, 9(2), 43–54.

Lee, B. (2018). Pop Out! Mass media and popular culture. In M. J. Murphy & B. Bjorngaard (Eds.), *Living Out loud: An Introduction to LGBTQ history, society, and culture* (First, pp. 249–288). Routledge.

**Week 3: January 17, 2022.**

***Queer Coding: Villains, Tragedies, Monsters***

Benshoff, H. (2020). The Monster and the homosexual. In J. A. Weinstock (Ed.), *The Monster theory reader* (pp. 226–240). University of Minnesota Press.

Machado, C. M. (2020). Dream house as queer villainy. In *In the dream house: A memoir* (pp. 46–48). Graywolf Press.

Baume, M. [Matt Baume]. (2021, June 20). *What makes Disney villains so gay?* YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5WpUSEKSbk>

**Streaming in class:**

Epstein, R., & Friedman, J. (Directors). (1995). *The celluloid closet* [Film]. Channel Four Films, & HBO Pictures.

**Week 4: January 24, 2022. Assignment #1 is due (15%)**

***HIV/AIDS Stigma and Media Representation***

Kohnen, M. (2016). Toward the “Gay 90s:” Redefining queer visibility through the lens of AIDS. In *Queer representation, visibility, and race in American film and television: Screening the closet* (pp. 70–109). Routledge.

Cheng, J.-F. (2016). How to survive: AIDS and its afterlives in the popular media. *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 44(1–2), 73–92.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1353/wsqa.2016.0013>

**Week 5: January 31, 2022.**

***Trans Identities in Pop Culture***

Crookston, C. (2021). Can I Be Frank with You?: Laverne Cox and the historiographic dramaturgy of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 27(2), 233–252. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-8871677>

Zamantakis, A., & Sumerau, J. E. (2019). Streaming transgender: Visualizing continuity and change in transgender media representations. In A. Trier-Bieniek (Ed.), *Gender and pop culture* (pp. 25–42). BRILL. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004411586>

**Week 6: February 7, 2022.**

***Sapphics on Screen and Lesbian Representation***

Eaklor, V. L. (2012). The kids are all right but the lesbians aren’t: The Illusion of progress in popular film. *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques*, 38(3), 153–170.  
<https://doi.org/10.3167/hrrh.2012.380309>

Carter, C. (2018). Lesbian chic, femme-ininity and feminist dialogue: Reflecting on *The L Word*. *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture*, 3(1), 67–86.  
[https://doi.org/10.1386/qsmc.3.1.67\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/qsmc.3.1.67_1)

**Week 7: February 14, 2022.**

***Mid-Term Exam (20%)***

**Week 8: February 21, 2022.**

***Reading break, no class***

**Week 9: February 28, 2022.**

***A Look into Drag's Past, Present, and Future***

Hodes, C., & Sandoval, J. (2018). *RuPaul's Drag Race*: A study in the commodification of white ruling-class femininity and the etiolation of drag. *Studies in Costume & Performance*, 3(2), 149–166. [https://doi.org/10.1386/scp.3.2.149\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/scp.3.2.149_1)

Feldman, Z., & Hakim, J. (2020). From *Paris is Burning* to #dragrace: social media and the celebrification of drag culture. *Celebrity Studies*, 11(4), 386–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2020.1765080>

**Week 10: March 7, 2022.**

***Who Killed Disco? Race and Queerness in Mainstream Music***

Nyong'o, T. (2008). I feel Love: Disco and its discontents. *Criticism*, 50(1), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.0.0053>

Wald, G. (2020). “A queer black woman invented rock-and-roll”: Rosetta Tharpe, memes, and memory practices in the digital age. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1855224>

Hobbes, M. & Marshall, S. (Hosts). (2020, August 3). Disco demolition night. [Audio podcast episode]. In *You're Wrong About*. <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1112270/4815227-disco-demolition-night>

**Week 11: March 14, 2022. Assignment #2 is Due (25%)**

***The Butt of the Joke: Problems and Possibilities in Comedy***

Berlant, L., & Ngai, S. (2017). Comedy has issues. *Critical Inquiry*, 43(2), 233–249. <https://doi.org/10.1086/689666>

Emig, R. (2014). Queer humour: Gay comedy between camp and diversity. In D. Chiaro & R. Baccolini (Eds.), *Gender and humour: Interdisciplinary and international perspectives* (pp. 276–287). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315814322>

Gay, R. (2021, October 14). *Dave Chappelle's brittle ego*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/opinion/dave-chappelle-netflix-trans.html?referringSource=articleShar>

**Week 12: March 21, 2022.**

***Representations of Queerness and Disability***

Dapper crip: Disability, queer masculinity, and fashion. (2016, October 26). DapperQ: Ungendering Fashion. <https://www.dapperq.com/2016/10/dapper-crip-disability-queer-masculinity-fashion/>

Davies, A., Maich, K., Belcher, C., Cagulada, E., DeWelles, M., & van Rhijn, T. (2021). A critical examination of the intersection of sexuality and disability in *Special*, a Netflix series. In M. S. Jeffress (Ed.), *Disability representation in film, TV, and print media* (First edition, pp. 44–64). Routledge

Dunn, G. & Raskin, A. (Hosts). (2019, November 5). Disability activist Eva Sweeney, being alone forever and comedy vs. PC culture. [Audio podcast episode]. In *Just Between Us. Forever Dog*. <https://foreverdogpodcasts.com/podcasts/just-between-us/>  
[Required listening only 12:00 min to approx. 31:05 min]

**Week 13: March 28, 2022.**

***Queerbaiting and Mainstreaming Queerness***

Whitney, E. (2006). Capitalizing on camp: Greed and the queer marketplace. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 26(1), 36-46.

Woods, N., & Hardman, D. (2021). ‘It’s just absolutely everywhere’: Understanding LGBTQ experiences of queerbaiting. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 1–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2021.1892808>