

PREVIOUS COURSE OUTLINE

University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexualities and Women's Studies
Winter 2025

GSWS3173G: Introduction to Queer Theory

We are located on the traditional land of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawapiskat peoples and we complicate the meaning of this location in our course.

Instructor:	Dr. Kate Korycki
Email:	kate.korycki@uwo.ca
Class Meeting and Location:	Tuesday 10:30-1:30 in TC201
Zoom Office hours:	After class and on Thursday 10:00-11:00 am (on zoom)
Class Website:	https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home/69177

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

This course explores the foundational and cutting edge texts of queer theory and considers how they help us think about the world at large. In other words, the course investigates what is theory and why do we do it, and it asks how queer theory in particular helps us think about social realities in the present. Most specifically, we ask, what is a sexuality, both historically and now, and how does it connect with the notions of 'normality' (& deviance'), visibility (& invisibility), regulation of gender, sex and body. We then investigate how queer theory helps us think about climate collapse and migration, growing fascism and war, but also new forms of solidarity and resistance marshalled to face them.

In terms of content, the students will (1) gain familiarity with the foundational and cutting edge texts of queer and feminist theory, and (2) explore how queer theory helps us understand the broad political, economic and social forces that organize our lives. In terms of skills, the students will practice (3) exploring ideas by reading, thinking, writing, listening and sharing; (4) researching and answering analytically significant questions; (5) writing with integrity, clarity and precision; (6) exercising time- and grade-management.

Readings:

- Students will find ALL readings in the Course Reading tab on OWL – the particulars are listed in the weekly schedule below. Library access makes the readings free.

- Students are asked to pick **ONE** of two books to read whole – they may buy it new or used, or they may borrow it: 1) Alison Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes to Watch out For* (listed on Amazon as \$24.99 for a new paper copy), **OR** 2) Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (listed on Amazon as \$22.99 for a new paper copy).

Assignments and Expectations:

In this course, curiosity about the material and struggling to understand, transforming the ways in which we see the world, analyzing and grappling with complexity are encouraged, nurtured and rewarded. This means that getting things right is less important than thinking deeply about them! Further, the students are expected to have read and thought about the assigned readings; they are expected to write about them weekly during class; and they are expected to talk/clarify their understandings in our weekly class.

Note: It is NOT possible to pass/do well in this course without reading, thinking, writing and/or talking in each class! Also, the classes build on one another, so, if a student misses a class, it is important that s/he/they reads the assigned material and asks a colleague to share notes from the class meeting (it is not appropriate to ask the professor for this).

Assignments include weekly **in-class attendance, writing & talking** based on readings (maximum 30 points), a **2500-word research paper** submitted for review in **three stages** (maximum 10, 20 and 20 points each), an **open book quiz** on the last day of class (maximum 10 points), and a short **presentation** of your research findings to class (maximum of 10 points).

Deadlines: all in-class work is done during class time; IF you miss a class, you may submit a detailed but brief (no longer than 400 words) summary of all the weekly readings by Friday of the missed week (this allows you to make up class writing points, there is no make up for class talking, except talking more in future classes).

Version 1 of the paper is due on **February 7** (500 words), paper version 2 is due on **February 28** (1,200 words), paper version 3 (2,500 words) is due on **March 28**. Detailed guidance and requirements will be posed on OWL Assessment tab by second week of the course and discussed in class.

All writing assignments are **due** on or before 11:59pm on the dates specified above. They can be submitted earlier, and will be accepted until 11:59pm of the Sunday following the due date. The built-in accommodation is there to help deal with emergencies and health related delays. There will be no penalty for submitting the work between the due date and end of grace period, but there will be no further extensions either. Version 2 of the paper is designated as requiring medical certificate to be considered for accommodation.

Quiz will take place on **March 25** in class (or Accommodated Exams office – this has to be arranged at least 10 days prior to the quiz). The quiz is optional so there is no makeup for it.

Presentations will take place on **April 1** in class. If you cannot avoid missing this class, you may present in office hours on zoom on April 3.

Course Structure and Policies:

Weekly class meeting happen on Tuesday between 10:30-1:30pm. In most classes, we will discuss important learning issues: ‘what is a university,’ ‘what is a thesis,’ ‘what is academic integrity,’ ‘what is causality,’ ‘how do we uncover meaning,’ ‘how to formulate a ‘why’ question,’ ‘how to write precisely.’ In each class, we will address what you find unclear in the readings. Come ready with questions.

In each class, we will test your comprehension of the readings, and we will practice writing. Low-stakes writing may happen more than once in a class. The point is to give you time to prepare your answers before you share them with the group and also to sharpen your thinking and understanding, and to practice writing with clarity. Each class will also involve small-group and/or whole class conversations.

In each class, there will be a short lecture, clarifying the readings, and/or a movie.

Our weekly classes are not recorded & posted to OWL. Furthermore, no materials generated in this class may be recorded or copied without permission, or posted to commercial sites. They may be used, with attribution, in students’ learning and writing. Weekly PowerPoint will be posted on OWL on Monday following each class – this is to allow all those to miss the class to submit their writing.

Computer/Phone Use is prohibited. Computer may be used by 2 students who are good at taking notes and who are willing to send the notes to me weekly to be posted on OWL for all to use. Use of a phone in a classroom outside of breaks **WILL** result in lowering of participation points. No computers or phones are permitted during the quiz (unless the student writes in the Accessibility office).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the professor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. The professor will also ask the student to explain the full argument orally. An inability to produce requested materials and answer questions to professor’s satisfaction, may result in a failed assignment.

Discussion Etiquette: In assessing class participation, I look at a) the quantity, and b) the quality of remarks, as well as c) *listening and respect* for the views of others, and d) a spirit of discovery. Our class conversations are explorations, not a competition.

Absenteeism: You do not need to advise me of absences or seek my approval, but note that if you miss more than **two classes**, I will ask that you *speak* with me to decide the path forward. This is in agreement with GSWS policy in which more than two absences put you at risk of having to retake the course. Please note, that two allowed absences are not in addition to

sickness and emergencies you may encounter – the allowed absences are there to accommodate illness and emergency! Please note, I do take attendance.

Contesting a Grade: If you have questions concerning points received on one of your Research Essays, you are welcome to visit me during office hours. If, after our conversation, you wish to contest received points, you should submit a one-page single-spaced, typed request, within two weeks of the returned assignment. The request has to outline the reason why you think you deserve higher points (“needing” a higher grade is NEVER an acceptable reason for grade appeal - as per departmental policy!). Specific reference should be made to the instructions and guidelines for that assignment. The request should include the graded assignment. Students should note that points could go up or down as a result of an appeal. Requests for appeals outside of the two-week window will not be considered.

There are no appeals on the small writing assignments: in-class writing, make-up essay, presentation or quiz.

Communication with the Professor: I strongly encourage and invite talking to each other and me - as opposed to writing. Thus, all students can bring their questions to class or office hours. Email is the most discouraged form of communicating and I take 48 hours (outside of weekend) to respond. Also, there are many emails to which I don’t respond individually – either your question is brilliant, in which case I’ll answer it via a class announcement, or in class; or the answer is in the syllabus, or on OWL, which you are strongly encouraged to read and visit often.

All grade related questions have to be asked in person, not email. If you send an email about a grade, I will assume you are sending me a heads-up about coming to discuss it in office hours.

Weekly Topics

Week 1: Introduction

- In-class film, Laura Poitras (dir.) 2022 *All that Beauty and the Bloodshed*

Week 2: Queer & History

- Michel Foucault. 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*. pp 3-5 & 17-48
- Dan D’Emilio. 1983. “Capitalism and Gay Identity.” In *Powers of Desire*
http://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/readings/demilio_capitalismgayid.pdf

Week 3: Queer & Category, Identity, Boundary, Binary, Relationality (do more on relationality and imlic

- Mary Louise Adams, 1997. “Introduction.” *The Trouble with Normal*. University of Toronto Press: pages 1-17

- Sander L. Gilman. 1985. "Introduction." *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*. Cornell University Press: pages 15-35
- Sander L. Gilman. 1985, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality. Cornell University Press: pages 94-101 (the whole chapter is excellent!)
- Baldwin, James. "Stranger in a Village." In *Notes of the Native Son*
- *Revolutionary Hope: A conversation between James Baldwin Audre Lord*. 1984.
<http://theculture.forharriet.com/2014/03/revolutionary-hope-conversation-between.html>

Week 4: Queer & Gender

- Monique Wittig. 1981. *One Is Not Born a Woman*.
- Judith Butler. 2006. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge: pages 1-36
- Jack Halberstam. 2019. "Raging Bull (Dyke)." *Female Masculinity*.

Week 5: Queer & Body

- Sylvia Federici, 2020, Chapter 7, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 in *Beyond Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, and Reclaiming the Body in Contemporary Capitalism*
- Franz Kafka. Report to the Academy.
- Susan Striker. 1994. *My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamonix: Performing Transgender Rage*.
https://archive.org/details/MyWordsToVictorFrankenstein_201605

Week 6: Queer & Experience

- Joan W. Scott. 1991. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 17. No 4
- Paul B. Preciado. 2020. *An Apartment on Uranus: A Chronicle of the Crossing*: pages 21-52
- In class: Paul B. Preciado (dir.), 2023, *Orlando: My Political Biography*

Week 7: Queer & Climate Collapse (selection TBD)

- Jack Halberstam. 2023. *Wild Things*
- Donna Haraway. 1985. *Cyborg Manifesto*
- Daisy Hildyard. 2017. *The Second Body*

Week 8: Queer & Moral Panics

- Korycki, Darwish, Anoun: Order from Ashes Podcast, *Who is Afraid of Gender?* (<https://tcf.org/content/podcast/order-from-ashes-podcast-whos-afraid-of-gender/>);
- Hochschild, Chapter 1 AND Chapter 9 from *Strangers in Their Own Land*

Week 9: Queer Solidarity now

- Jasbir K. Paur. 2017, "Introduction" *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke U Press.
- Lisa Duggan. 2002. "The New Homonormativity." *Materializing Democracy* by R. Castronovo and D. D. Nelson (eds.). Duke U Press.
- Dean Spade. 2011. "Chapter 1 - Trans Law and Politics on a Neoliberal Landscape." *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, & the Limits of Law*. Duke U Press.
- Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, Dean Spade. 2011. "Building Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got. *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and Prison Industrial Complex*, edited by Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith. Ak Press
- Audre Lord. Transformation of Silence.

Week 10: Queer in the Past as Queer in the Future?

- Allison Bechdel. *Dykes to Watch our For*
- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

Week 11: Quiz

Week 12: Presentations

Western University & Arts and Humanities' Policies & Supports (don't skip this!)

- Our work in this course is guided by the [University's Scholastic Discipline](#) document and all offences are taken seriously.
- Students with disabilities work with **Accessible Education**, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or other testing. Students with disabilities are encouraged to read the [policy](#) and register with [Accessible Education](#) at the earliest opportunity.
- Students with disabilities relating to writing of exams/tests are asked to register with **Accommodated Exams** – this is a different unit than Accessible Education, but Accessible Education will help you connect with Accommodated Exams. The sign up for exams has to be done 10 days prior to the scheduled exams! If a student changes their mind, and decides to write with the rest of the class, they have to cancel the request for Accommodated Exam, or they will be charged a \$25.00.
- Requests for consideration on specific assignments - or **Absence Declarations** - should be submitted to the [Office of the Registrar](#). As per Senate [policy](#) student may only file such request **ONCE** per course and all consideration requests must be filed within 48 hours of the assignment. Note, that if assignments have built in flexibilities, or if it requires medical documentation and the documentation is not provided, the requests for excused absence are denied.

- **Academic Advising** - as opposed to Accessible Education - offers support whenever students face issues affecting their studies, including guidance on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Academic Advising should be sought at student's home faculty (the contacts for all faculties is found [here](#)).
- NOTE! NO consideration or absence is "approved" until it is approved by the professor in the course!
- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help students improve their learning skills. They offer presentations on 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.
- 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.
- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) to obtain help.
- If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support [here](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.
- FAH required statement on 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 [this](#) website. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca."

Please note: under the new Gender-based and Sexual Violence [policy](#) instructors are required to refer any and all incidents of sexual violence disclosed in class. The student will then be contacted by the GBSV Survivor Support Case Manager and can receive and decline assistance of that office.

- Additional student-run support services are offered by the [University Student Centre](#).