



Screening Sex

COURSE OUTLINE



This course examines the representation of sexuality in film and video with a specific focus on the history of representation of queer identities in film. The course will begin by considering early cinema's representations of gay men and lesbians, including the production of particular stereotypes, and the effects of the Production Code on Hollywood, particularly in contrast to European cinemas. We will then look at post-Hays Code American filmmaking (both Hollywood and independent), at British, Canadian and Commonwealth filmmaking, at the rise of independent film and video in North America, and the challenge posed by New Queer Cinema in the 1990s to such still stereotypical Hollywood representations as *In and Out* and *The Birdcage*. Along the way, we will consider specific themes, such as coming out, representations of youth, intersections with race and class, and AIDS. The course will finish by looking at films that avoid the mainstreaming of certain types of queer representation (as is the case with films like *Milk*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Kids are All Right* and *A Single Man*), and the effects such films have on the viability of independent queer film making. The final films will thus emphasize the contemporary directions of queer filmmaking outside of Hollywood.

COURSE INFORMATION

Time: Wednesdays 10:30 – 1:30

Location: Check OWL site

Instructor: Dr. WG Pearson

Office: Lawson Hall 3256

Office hours: Thursdays 10:30-11:30 or by appointment



TEXTBOOKS

Geraghty, Christine. *My Beautiful Laundrette*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005. 978-1850434146

Ghosh, Shohini. *Fire*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010. 978-1551523637

Knabe, Susan and Wendy Gay Pearson. *Zero Patience*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011. 978-1551524221

Virtual course pack, available on OWL Sakai.

N.B. The two Queer Film Classics books from Arsenal Pulp Press are short works on individual films; they cost \$14.95 from the publisher and less from Chapters Indigo and Amazon.ca; they are also available on Kindle.

The Turner Film Classics book on *My Beautiful Laundrette* is in short supply. The bookstore has only a few copies. If you can find it second-hand for a reasonable price, that would be your best bet.

The Weldon Library has copies of all the books. The course pack, available online, is free of charge.

NB. None of these books are more than 35,000 words, so the equivalent of two academic articles.



Figure 1 Deepa Mehta filming on location


Assignment Summary with Deadlines

1. Contribution/participation -- 10%
2. In-class presentation/discussion leadership -- 20% (due as assigned)
3. Film context report (undergrads) or seminar response (grads) -- 10% (due as assigned)
4. Thesis statement and annotated bibliography - 10% (due November 8)
5. Research essay – 50% (due December 7)



“That’s one of the things that ‘queer’ can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.”

Eve Sedgwick,



“It is interesting to note that the newer festivals around the globe are mostly called queer film festivals. This has to do with the circulation of the concept of queer with globalisation. However, the term does not always convey the same meaning after a cultural transfer, but rather is informed by local politics. Sometimes the term queer brings a new concept of lifestyle and sexuality to a place, where it is locally transformed in meaning and merged with the existing culture. Other times the term queer offers a certain kind of security from persecution or violence because it is either unknown or does not convey the same abject connotations as the equivalent words for 'gay' and 'lesbian' in the local language might. As in all processes related to globalisation, the transfer of the term queer brings with it a whole set of issues involving cultural import and displacement of meanings.” Skadi Loist, “A Complicated Queerness: LGBT Film Festivals and Queer Programming Strategies” (160).

Assignment Details

1. Contribution/Participation

As an upper year seminar course, the emphasis is on discussion. Participation is marked primarily in terms of the quality of the **contribution** you make to discussion, so bear this in mind. Also, this form of learning is reliant on good discussion, so it is important to develop a respectful and productive classroom atmosphere. You are welcome to disagree with each other (and with me), but you should do so in a respectful and professional fashion.

2. Presentation/Seminar Leadership

Graduate and undergraduate students will be paired as far as possible for weekly presentations and discussion leadership. As part of this exercise, the undergraduate student will prepare a report on the context of the film (this may involve looking into its historical setting, societal attitudes to LGBT people and issues, modes of representation, other films that deal similarly or differently with the topic, etc.). The undergraduate student will present a summary of the context report as part of the presentation. The graduate student will concentrate primarily on theoretical approaches to the film/s and may take context into account in more interpretive ways. Both students in the group should work to come up with some starter questions for discussion and should think about ways to facilitate discussion. Please note that this is a seminar, not a lecture, course, so the majority of the time should be spent in discussion rather than on the presentation. Presentations should be limited to a total of 30 minutes so as to leave adequate time for discussion.

2. Context Report/Seminar Response

The undergraduate student will hand in a written copy of their context report, ensuring that it answers all the basic questions (see “Context Report” on OWL) and also ensuring that it is formatted as an essay and includes proper citations and a works cited. The graduate student will write a report on another group or individual’s presentation, according to the assigned schedule. This report should *briefly* summarize the presentation and may include class discussion; however, the bulk of the report should respond to the ideas, theoretical perspectives, and interpretation of the film as evidenced by the presentation and by the questions used to facilitate discussion. The graduate student will hand printed copies of the response both to the instructor and to the presenters. Proper academic apparatus is required. The expectation of this assignment is that responses will be constructive and dialogic, not negative.

3. Thesis Statement and Annotated Bibliography

All students will submit a thesis statement of between 200 and 250 words along with an annotated bibliography of at least six academic sources. The essay may be on any topic in queer cinema and will be subject to approval of the instructor based on the TS&AB.

5. Research Essay

Both undergraduate and graduate students will submit a final research essay. Please note that both the length requirements and the due dates are different. However, the expectation that you will undertake serious research for the essay is common

to both cohorts. Graduate students, in particular, are advised to format their essay according to the submission guidelines of a professional journal of the student's choice. Undergraduates may do this if they wish, so long as they do not exceed the length requirement for the essay. Your citation style may be dictated by the journal's guidelines; whatever you use, please do so consistently.

Learning Outcomes



The course will enable students to:

- gain a perspective on the study of queer cinema and its place within the history of film more generally
- understand the complications of distinguishing between “lesbian and gay,” LGBT, and queer cinema
- understand how sexuality, particularly queer sexuality, has been historically represented on film and how ideas about the representation of sexuality have varied over both time and place
- consider how the representation of sexuality operates in relation to gender, race, class, ability and other forms of intersectionality
- identify key theoretical debates, differences and similarities in the study of queer cinema and of homosexuality, bisexuality and trans issues in film
- understand how film functions to produce hegemonic social ideologies, but also how it can be used to subvert those ideologies
- understand the relationship between different types of filmmaking (Hollywood, independent, national cinemas, etc.) and the possibilities available for the construction of differing images of sexuality, sexual identities, and sex acts
- consider the ramifications of funding, production and distribution (i.e., the question of money) on queer filmmaking
- understand the difference between mainstream film-making and independent or marginal forms of filmmaking for the representation of both queer people and queer issues
- develop a vocabulary for understanding both queer film and appropriate theoretical approaches to it
- develop aptitude for analytical/critical thinking; oral and written communication skills; research skills

Schedule of Readings and Films

Required Films	Recommended Films	Required Readings	Optional Readings
I. Introduction: Hollywood and its Closets			
THE CELLULOID CLOSET (will be screened during class time)	FABULOUS!		https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/watching-film/
II. Coming Out in Hollywood and Elsewhere			
DESERT HEARTS	MAKING LOVE	Stacey, "Desert Hearts and the Lesbian Romance Film"; Wartenberg, "Desert Hearts: Betting on Lesbian Love"; Watney, "Hollywood's Homosexual World"	Nelson, "Homosexuality in Hollywood Films"; Hollinger, "Theorizing Mainstream Female Spectatorship"
SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY and NAKED CIVIL SERVANT		Armstrong, "Becoming Quentin: The Biopic"; Waugh, "Films by Gays for Gays"; Benshoff and Griffin, "What is Queer Film History?"	Armstrong, "Introduction"; Medhurst, "One Queen and His Screen"
TONGUES UNTIED	WORD IS OUT	Wallenberg, "New Black Queer Cinema" Riggs, "Black Macho Revisited"	Youmans, <i>Word is Out</i> Mercer, "Black and Lovely, Too"; Park, "All the Sad Young Men"
III. Young and Queer			
LILIES and THE HANGING GARDEN* *CW: magic realist film with references to suicide		Brownlee, "'But ... It's So Beautiful': Fantasy in <i>Lilies</i> and <i>Les feluettes ...</i> " Stockton, "Growing Sideways, or Why Children Appear to Get Queerer in the Twentieth Century"	Khuri, "Other-ing the Worker in Canadian 'Gay Cinema': Thom Fitzgerald's <i>The Hanging Garden</i> " Howe, "The Epistemology of Adaptation in John Greyson's <i>Lilies</i> "

FUNNY BOY			
OY and XXY		Waldron, "Embodying Gender Nonconformity in 'Girls': Céline Sciamma's <i>Tomboy</i> "; Frohlich, "What of Unnatural Bodies? The Discourse of Nature in Lucía Puenzo's <i>XXY</i> "	Martin, "Growing Sideways in Argentine Cinema: Lucía Puenzo's <i>XXY</i> and Julia Solomonoff's <i>El último verano de la boyita</i> "
IV. HIV/AIDS on Film			
PARTING GLANCES	PHILADELPHIA	Corber, "Nationalizing the Gay Body" Carr, "Philadelphia and the Race of 'Brotherly Love'"	Nevelidine, "Skeletons in the Closet";
ZERO PATIENCE	MY BROTHER ... NIKHIL	Knabe and Pearson, <i>Zero Patience</i> Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic"	Hallas, "The Genealogical Pedagogy of John Greyson's <i>Zero Patience</i> "
V. Queer and Now			
MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE and UNSEEN WORLD		Geraghty, <i>My Beautiful Launderette</i>	Gairola, "Capitalist Houses, Queer Homes" (MBL); Swamy, "Politicizing the Sexual, Sexualizing the Political"
FIRE and SAVING FACE		Ghosh, <i>Fire</i> Wong, "Saving Face: Unveiling or Covering Up Asian American Experiences?"	Wu, "From the Transnational to the Sinophone: Lesbian Representations in Chinese-Language Film" Gairola. "Burning with Shame" (Fire) Bose, "The Desiring Subject: Female Pleasures and Feminist Resistance"

<p>FIRE SONG and WILDHOOD</p> <p>CW: <i>Fire Song</i> involves a suicide</p>		<p>Morrison, "Fire Song"</p> <p>Jahri, "Reframing suicide: queer diasporic and Indigenous imaginaries."</p>	<p>Robinson, "Two-Spirit Identity in a Time of Gender Fluidity."</p>
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Course and university policies and prerequisites – please see the course OWL site. Please ensure that you have the correct prerequisites.

This syllabus is subject to change with sufficient notice.

USING GENERATIVE AI LANGUAGE APPS

ChatGPT and its various analogues are not “research help” nor are they “grammar checkers.” They produce text based on a predictive model as to what word is most likely to come next. When asked to cite “research,” they have no capacity to do actual research, so they invent articles and books. You may find yourself citing a work whose author and title are complete fictions; more often, the AI attributes its imaginary research paper to a real scholar, but not necessarily one who even works in the area (I had a student last year who tried to use ChatGPT for his annotated bibliography and was gobsmacked, when he went to the library so he could use those articles for his paper, to discover none of them existed; he went so far as to email one author only to get a perplexed response that she works in an entirely different field; not only was he caught submitting words he did not write *as if they were his own* -- which is the very definition of plagiarism -- but he ended up having to start both assignments from scratch on top of the percentage that was deducted for cheating).

You may find some instructors allowing, or even encouraging, you to use ChatGPT to produce a first draft or some such and then asking you to critique and revise that draft. Here’s the problem. ChatGPT is much better at critiquing its own work than it is at coming up with intelligent and original analysis. Here’s another problem, though: all the research shows that language model AIs get stupider with training, not smarter. Similarly, and for 2sLGBTQI+ people this is a big issue, all AI programs have shown that they learn racist and other bigoted perspectives from humans. In other words, in attempting to recreate the ability to create something new, ChatGPT and other AI apps end up imbibing the worst of humanity, not the best.

The point of education is to learn. If you ask a person or a piece of technology to do your work for you, you sabotage your own learning. You deskill yourself in a world that’s already increasingly deskilled. University graduates are in demand by employers because they expect students will have learned research skills, the ability to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing, and, most importantly, the ability to think critically. Here is what ChatGPT says if you ask it about its ability to think critically: “It’s important to note that while I can provide valuable input, critical thinking often involves a combination of logical reasoning, creative problem-solving, and an understanding of context, which may sometimes require human judgment and expertise.”

As always, the important thing for you, as a young scholar, is **always to acknowledge honestly when you are using words or ideas that are not your own**. Failure to do so is cheating, pure and simple. Please don’t.

