

RHET 112-01 queering the reel Spring 2005

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open office hours: 10-11:30am Mondays, 3-4:30pm Tuesdays

feel free to stop by anytime or email me for an appointment

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texts—you are not required to purchase any books for this course; readings will be posted electronically in the weekly schedules or handed out in class. You will be expected to download and print readings and bring them to class. if you're concerned about wasting paper, you're welcome to share print outs of the online documents with a classmate. We will also expect you to view each film discussed at least twice—once with the class, if at all possible, and another time before class discussion of the film. If you write about a film, you will probably need to view it several more times as well. We will try to make an extra copy of each film available for watching before class discussion, but the college or city libraries may also have copies, as well as Campus Video downtown.

Course Description

There are quite a sizeable number of films addressing lesbian, gay male and male-to-female transgendered experience. (Bisexuality, female-to-male, and gender-bending or poly-gendered or radical questioning of gender experience have been far less often addressed). Many of these films also explore how sexual identity and gender are inextricably bound up with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, economic class, and nationality or regionality. This course will give us an opportunity to examine how various filmmakers have attempted to portray non-heteronormative identities and other identifications via the medium of cinema, in both non-fictional and fictional forms.

Through studying how such identities are represented in film we'll also be examining how language of any kind helps us shape what we see and think about the world. In particular this course will give students a chance to develop a more conscious awareness of the shaping potential of their writing. To accomplish that, we will explore the skills of close observation, generating and developing ideas, revising, and responding to the needs of different audiences that, combined with critical reading and research skills, help students create the lasting learning that they acquire in college.

To find out what films and readings will be used in this course, check out the Overview Schedule in the Syllabus section of the course Blackboard website. See the Weekly Schedules (also in the Syllabus section) for the most up-to-date course plans, when assignments due, readings, etc. Instructions for specific assignments will be accessible via the Assignments section of the Blackboard course website.

course objectives for students

In writing:

- To gain confidence, knowledge of their composing processes and how to use writing as a way of learning
- To develop the ability to revise and edit their writing to respond to the needs of the subject matter and their readers' expectations

In Comparative American Studies:

- To develop skills of comparative analysis of identity-based categories, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and nation, especially via the contributions of Queer Studies to the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender culture as represented on film.

class meeting times: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays from 1:30–2:20pm in King 127

class film viewing time: Sundays 7:00–approximately 9:00, depending on length of film,
location tba

class format

Classes will be devoted to discussion of readings, films, and writing assignments. There will be frequent discussion of student writing. You will also discuss your work on a regular basis in individual appointments with Jan, Lissah, or the Rhetoric and Composition Writing Assistants in Mudd 201. Class film viewings will consist of a short (5 minutes maximum) film introduction given by a classmate, then a viewing of the film.

attendance policies

In order for this course to work, everyone must be present to contribute. Therefore more than 2 absences from class or scheduled appointments will be grounds for receiving a failing grade. If you must be absent more than that for catastrophic reasons, you will need to supply documentation from a doctor or your class dean. Tardiness will count as an absence. It is your responsibility to contact Jan to explain any absence and to find out what you missed or to turn in any assignment that is due. You will be expected to be prepared for the next class or to turn in any assignment due.

If you have specific physical or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let Jan know as soon as possible so that your needs can be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to Jane Boomer, the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in Peters G-27. Jane and her staff can also provide excellent advice about acquiring accommodations in other courses and adjusting to the demands of Oberlin College in general.

expectations for student participation

This course is designed to become an intellectual community. Everyone enrolled works on her or his own and together with others to learn and evaluate information, explore ideas and viewpoints, and develop knowledge. In contrast to a lecture course or a course alternating between lecture and discussion, this class is discussion-based. Everyone's commitment, engagement, and ability to take part in the give-and-take of focused discussion are essential to its success. That everyone does the reading or other preparation for class is axiomatic. The instructor and tutor will facilitate discussion and may occasionally introduce or make remarks about a particular topic, but this is your class, and the consistency and caliber of your participation are what will make it work for you and your classmates.

Because college instructors rarely publicly chastise students for coming late to class or drifting in and out to use the bathroom or for other reasons, it may appear that such bad habits are okay. However, they are disruptive and break the flow of the class activities for your classmates. Please come to class on time and make sure you've taken care of all needs before class begins.

Be sure to check the weekly schedules in our Blackboard course website to find out what you're expected to prepare for every class. Email Jan or Lissah if you have any questions about what or how to prepare.

writing assignments

There will be 4 kinds of assignments in this course (all are mandatory):

1. Writing Assignments—These more formal papers are intended to provide you with an opportunity to thoroughly work out your ideas about a chosen subject and to take them through a revision process that shapes them for other readers. Submissions of early and intermediate drafts are required; you will submit at least 1 draft per week. Papers should be submitted as a Word file to your work in the Group section on the course Blackboard website by 8pm of the due date. (More extensive descriptions of each assignment will be posted on the course Blackboard website and discussed in class throughout the semester.) Some of these assignments may also be collaborative, while others you will work on individually. In either case, you may solicit advice for the assignments from classmates, instructors, Writing Center Writing Assistants, or any other Oberlin College reader you trust, unless Jan stipulates otherwise on the assignment. Everyone who has worked on a writing assignment is required to sign the Honor Code, which should be included on every assignment turned in.

2. Library Resource Worksheets— It's time to go beyond "Googling." These short assignments will guide you through using resources for research discussed throughout the course. They are intended to expand your "information literacy," in other words your ability to find and judge the quality of various outside sources of information in both print and electronic form. Some library resource worksheets may also be done in pairs or small groups, and you are welcome to use the advice of your classmates, instructors or library staff to complete them. Be sure to explicitly acknowledge any help you receive in the completed worksheets and to write the Honor Code on them, signed by yourself and your partner(s) on the assignment, if any. This work will also be submitted to your Group section of our Blackboard course website by due dates given on the assignments.

3. Film introductions or discussion questions—each class member will be responsible for preparing an introduction for a class viewing of a film or questions for the class to prepare for discussion of the film. Instructions for introducing films will be posted on Blackboard, along with a list of who is introducing or creating questions for each film. If you are going to introduce a film, you should be sure to watch it at least once before the class viewing. If you are contributing discussion questions, be sure to email them to everyone at least a day before the discussion is scheduled.

4. Portfolios—at midterm and the end of the semester you will collect all the work that you have done thus far for the course, then read through it and write a 2-4 page synthesizing reflection on what you have learned to be submitted for grade evaluation. Both the collected material and the written reflection will be handed in via a folder, or "portfolio." You should work on the synthesizing reflection primarily by yourself, but you may ask for advice on it from your classmates or the Writing Center tutors or any other reader you trust at Oberlin College. Be sure to also include the Honor Code on the synthesizing reflection paper and your signature under it.

See the Assignments section of the Blackboard course website for more specific descriptions of the writing assignments for this course as they come up in the schedule. See the Weekly Schedules folder in the Syllabus section on Blackboard for the most recent class plan updates.

grading policy

Many students report that working on revision and experimentation with new styles in writing comes easiest in courses where letter grades aren't given to each piece of work or the final grade. Therefore, this course is graded Pass/No Pass or Credit/No Entry, depending on when you entered Oberlin College. Your work in assignments and class discussion, and all the reading, research, and writing work that support them, will be the basis of your final grade. We will give you feedback on the quality of your work in our individual appointments, which will usually occur about once a week. At midterm Jan will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the writing in your portfolio and your class participation with you in an individual appointment. If at any time you have questions concerning the progress you're making, however, please make an appointment to discuss your work with Jan.

A Cautionary Word about the College and Conservatory Writing Requirements

For College of Arts & Sciences students: The Rhetoric and Composition Program intends for its 100-level writing classes to give students the writing instruction that will enable them to achieve certification in other Writing Intensive (WRI) or Writing Certification (WR) courses. It is possible that you might demonstrate sufficient skill in academic writing to earn certification in this course, but passing this course does not automatically entitle you to it.

For Conservatory of Music students: Earning a "CR" or "P" grade in this course satisfies the Conservatory Writing Requirement.

If you have any questions about writing requirements or any particularly strong reasons for wanting to earn writing requirement credit through this course, please talk to Jan about them early in the course.

The Honor Code

Oberlin College's student-created, student-run Honor Code is vital to the integrity of the work that all of us do in the institution. Acknowledging the influence of others and understanding the academic customs of showing one's sources are highly valued skills of liberal arts learning. We expect you to read the Oberlin College Honor Code carefully, and we will discuss how it applies to each assignment. You can find the code online at http://www.oberlin.edu/students/Student_pages/honor_code.html .

One requirement of the code is that you must write the following statement on every assignment: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." You must also sign your name to that statement. If you don't include the code and your signature, we will not be able to respond to the assignment until you have included it. Typing your full name after the Honor Code will serve as a signature if you submit an assignment electronically via your email or Blackboard accounts.

acknowledgements

Jan gratefully acknowledges the suggestions she's received on this syllabus and in her plans for this course from the following colleagues: Jane Boomer, Mary Garvin, Erik Inglis, Lissah LorberbaumGina Perez, Meredith Raimondo, and Sandra Zagarell.

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Overview Schedule (as of February)

This is a tentative overview schedule for the whole semester. For a more accurate and detailed schedule, consult the updates posted in the "WEEKLY SCHEDULES" folder of the Syllabus section of RHET 112's Blackboard course website.

Week 1: Introductions, examining backgrounds, films as texts

film—WEST SIDE STORY

reading-- Timothy Corrigan's "Beginning to Think, Preparing to Watch, and Starting to Write" (handout)

writing assignment--Paper 1: First Words

Week 2: Writing and Observing

film— BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER

reading— selections from Jo Eadie's *Sexuality: The Essential Glossary*; Timothy Corrigan's "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" and "Glossary of Film Terms" (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment--revision of Paper 1

Week 3: Organization: Historicizing

Film—THE CELLULOID CLOSET

Reading— Annamarie Jagose's "Queer" and "Contestations of Queer"; Optional: "Theorizing Same Sex Desire" (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment—Paper 2: Visual Analysis

Week 4: Questioning Language 1

film—THE HUNGER

reading—Timothy Corrigan's "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" and "Glossary of Film Terms"; Pat Day's Post-Human Vampires: "We are Animals" (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment—Revision of Paper 2

Week 5: Questioning Language 2

film—TONGUES UNTIED

reading—Reid-Pharr's "Disseminating Heterotopia" (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment—Paper 3:

Week 6: Questioning form/Questioning history 1

film—WATERMELON WOMAN

reading—Sullivan's "Chasing Fae: *The Watermelon Woman* and Black Lesbian Possibility."

writing assignment— Revision of Paper 3

Week 7: Editing Language

film—viewers' choice

reading—papers for workshopping (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment—Paper 4a: Research project proposal

Week 8: Reflecting on Module 1

no film this week

reading—papers for workshopping (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment—midterm folders due at Jan's office by noon on Friday, March 25

Week 9: NO CLASS--Spring Recess

Week 10: Questioning form/Questioning History 2

film--LILIES

reading--David Wojnarowics's "DO NOT DOUBT THE DANGEROUSNESS OF THE 12-INCH-TALL POLITICIAN" (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment--Paper 4b: Research report with annotated bibliography

Week 11: Fantasy and Visualizing Identifications of Gender, Sexuality, Economic Class, and Nationality

film--MA VIE EN ROSE

reading--TBA (posted on Blackboard in Weekly Schedule)

writing assignment--Paper 4c: first draft of research project

Week 12: Presenting Projects

Films and readings to be determined by projects

Assignments--final drafts of research projects

Week 13: Closure

writing assignment--Final Portfolio

FINAL Portfolios due by noon on Friday, May 13.

READINGS REFERRED TO ABOVE

Other readings will be added as the semester progresses. Unless otherwise indicated, readings will be available to be downloaded from weekly schedules in the Syllabus section of the Blackboard course website):

Corrigan, Timothy. "Beginning to Think, Preparing to Watch, and Starting to Write." *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2001. 20-40.

_____. "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing." *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2001. 41-92.

_____. "Glossary of Film Terms." *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2001. 205-210.

Day, William Patrick. "Post-Human Vampires: 'We are Animals.'" *Vampire Legends in Contemporary American Culture: What Becomes a Legend Most*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky. 81-104, 178-179.

Eadie, Jo. Ed. *Selections from Sexuality: The Essential Glossary*. London: Arnold 2004.

Namaste, Anamarie. "Contestations of Queer." *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press. 1996. 101-126.

_____. "Theorizing Same-Sex Desire." *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press. 1996. 7-21.

_____. "Queer." *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press. 1996. 72-100.

Sullivan, Laura L. "Chasing Fae: *The Watermelon Woman* and Black Lesbian Possibility." *Callaloo*. 23.1 (2000): 448-460.

Wojnarowics, David. "DO NOT DOUBT THE DANGEROUSNESS OF THE 12-INCH-TALL POLITICIAN."
Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration. New York: Vintage, 1991. 138-162.

JC:Feb. 2005