ENGL/WGST 333.503 Gay and Lesbian Literature
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MWF 3.00 – 3.50 LAAH 3XX
Office Hours: W 2-2.50 pm.

ENGL/WGST 333: Gay and Lesbian Literature. (3 credits). Gay and lesbian literature from classical times to present, studied in its historical and cultural context.

Course Description: This class introduces students to some examples of “gay and lesbian literature” by questioning the adequacy of the moniker “gay and lesbian literature.” To observe the historical and cultural specificity of such concepts as “gay and lesbian,” “LGBT [etc.],” “straight,” and “heterosexual”—and, why not, “literature”—we’ll start by looking at texts produced in times and places that differ, sometimes radically, from what we claim as our own culture(s). In turning to the more contemporary examples, we’ll pay particular attention to the ways in which histories of race, migration, and globalization are being negotiated in our class readings. We’ll familiarize ourselves with the texts’ social and historical contexts; we’ll also consider how the literary texts are responses to—inventive ways of negotiating—particular historical problems and issues. While a number of sessions consist of lectures on the historical, cultural, and biographical contexts of the texts we are reading, the majority of the course will be conducted as a seminar, where the students are expected to engage in class discussion.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Analyze and provide close readings of literary texts, while paying attention to their historical contexts.
- Formulate a research question, a thesis, and a detailed outline of a research project.
- Summarize academic texts and their visual representations.
- Annotate bibliographic sources.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present.

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of and writing about ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading as well as their visual representations.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.
Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions of gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present.

Evaluation of Core Objectives

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as the struggle for gay rights, the politics of respectability vs. radical politics, the place of transgender people in the gay and lesbian community, and homonormativity vs. heteronormativity. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present.

REQUIRED TEXTS
James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, Delta, 2000

All other texts, including handouts, are available on Blackboard or university library’s databases.
CLASS REQUIREMENTS
Response papers (7 at 3% each) and annotated bibliographies (3 at 3% each): 30%
In-class quizzes (3 % each): 30%
Final research proposals: 40%

Response papers: During the semester there are 10 occasions for you to write 1-2-page (approx. 400-700-word) response papers on the assigned material. By the end of the term, you will have had to write seven. The papers should be double-spaced, written with 11pt or 12pt Times New Roman font and with 1-inch margins. During the first half of the semester, there are three sessions for which a required response paper has been scheduled. Failure to hand in a response for these dates will result in an F for this portion of the assignment. You can decide yourself when you hand in the remaining response papers, but they must be for sessions for which a response paper has been scheduled (see the syllabus below for these dates). While you can make connections to the texts we've read earlier in class, or texts you know from outside the class, the focus of each response paper must be on material that has been scheduled for the session when the response is due. I will not grade papers that discuss material we have already gone over in class. Response papers are due at the beginning of the class.

Final Research Proposal: Research proposals are outlines of your research paper. While sometimes they can be as short as one paragraph, in this class I ask you to think about your topic more and provide a more detailed outline of your proposed paper. Before you can write a research proposal, you must have thought of a research question and done some initial research and thinking on your topic. A research proposal includes a research question, a thesis and an outline of your project. Students will be graded on quality of research, coherence, and originality.

Annotated bibliographies: During the semester, we will practice reading and summarizing scholarly articles by producing annotated bibliography entries. You will have 5 opportunities to produce an entry; by the end of the semester, you will have had to do three. During the first half of the semester, there are two sessions for which a required entry has been scheduled. Failure to hand an entry in on these dates will result in an F for this portion of the assignment. You can decide yourself when you hand in the remaining entry, but it must be for sessions for which one has been scheduled. Annotated bibliography entries are due at the beginning of the class.

Annotated bibliography entries consist of 1) a paraphrase of the reading’s thesis and 2) an outline, in 3-5 sentences, of the text’s major points. (See handout.) Where the text doesn’t have one identifiable thesis (as is sometimes the case with book-length studies, for example), the entry’s first couple of sentences should spell out the main arguments of the text. Successful annotated bibliography entries show that the student has understood the text and can communicate its content to the reader.

In-class quizzes: At the beginning of most classes we will have a quick quiz on the class material scheduled for the session. Although the quizzes also include “substantive” questions, you should have little difficulty in excelling if you have done the reading. Arrive on time since these quizzes make up a third of the final grade.

There will be one quiz scheduled any time between week 10 and week 12 in which you will be asked to reflect upon how your knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures that may be different from your own has changed in light of the new information that you now possess. You
will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden your understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of gay and lesbian literature from classical times to the present.

**Participation.** This is a seminar-oriented class and you will be expected to have done the reading ahead of time and come to class prepared to discuss the material. Additionally, students will be expected to do group work in which they will have to come to class with examples of what J. Jack Halberstam calls “gaga feminism.” On those specific days students will have no reading assignments, but they will be expected to do a ten to twenty minute presentation in which they will offer thoughtful and insightful reflections of the work of J. Jack Halberstam’s work on “gaga feminism.”

**Grading scale:**
A = 90 - 100; B = 80 - 89; C = 70 - 79; D = 60 - 69; F = 59 and lower

**Attendance and class participation:** Class attendance is obligatory, as is adequate preparation for each session. See University Student Rules: [http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07) for information on excused absences and makeups.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall or call 845-1637. For additional information visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu)

**Academic Dishonesty**
All policies, including those on academic dishonesty, outlined in TAMU’s Student Rules ([http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/)) apply: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

**READING SCHEDULE**

Week 1
Introduction

Halpern, “Is There a History of Sexuality?”

Thesis exercise: Paraphrase Halpern’s thesis in one sentence i.e., put it in your own words, without quoting the original text. Annotated bibliography exercise: Having paraphrased Halpern’s thesis, formulate a paragraph in which you, first, give the paraphrase and, second, provide an outline of his argument in 2-5 sentences.

Week 2
No class: MLK Day

John D’Emilio, “Born Gay?”
Plato, *The Symposium*
Annotated bibliography entry #1 (required): D’Emilio

Response paper #1 (required): Plato

Week 3
Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”
Rich, cont.

McRuer, “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence”
Annotated bibliography entry #2 (required): McRuer

Week 4
Wyley, *The Children’s Hour* (screening)

*The Children’s Hour* (screening)

*The Children’s Hour* (screening)

Week 5
Hellman and Wyler, *The Children’s Hour*
Response paper #2 (required): Hellman and/or Wyler

Hellman and Wyler, *The Children’s Hour*

Somerville, “Scientific Racism”
Annotated bibliography entry #3: Somerville

Week 6
Le Fanu, “Carmilla” (chs. 1-9)
Response paper #3 (required): Le Fanu

Le Fanu, “Carmilla” (chs. 10-16)

Screening: Scott, *The Hunger*

Week 7
Scott, *The Hunger* (discussion)
Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Book One

James Douglass, “A Book That Must Be Suppressed”
Response paper #4: Scott, *The Hunger*

Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Book Two
Response paper #5: Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*

Week 8
*The Well of Loneliness*, Book Three
Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Book Four

Prosser, "Some Primitive Thing Conceived in a Turbulent Age of Transition"
Annotated bibliography entry #4: Prosser

**Week 9**

Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Book Five

Response paper #6: Hall

Research Proposals (handout)

Spring Break

**Week 10**

Screening *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*

The Male Prison"; "My Dungeon Shook"
Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, pt. 1
Response paper #7: Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* and/or the essays

Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, pt. 2

**Week 11**

Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, cont.
Response paper #8: Baldwin

In-class exercise on research proposals.

Peddle, *The Aggressives* (screening)

**Week 12**

Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*
Response paper #9: Peddle

*The Aggressives*, cont.
Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, cont.
Annotated bibliography #5: Halberstam
First versions of research proposals due

Screening: *The Kids Are All Right*

**Week 13**


Class presentations on “gaga feminism”

Class presentations on “gaga feminism”
Week 14  

Riggs, *Black Is... Black Ain't* (screening)

Riggs, *Black Is... Black Ain't* (screening)

Riggs, *Black Is... cont.*  
Response paper #10: Riggs. Final research proposals due.