

English

Queer American Literature: Twentieth-Century

Jessica Travers | Fall | Course Hours: T/TH 10:20-12:10 | CRN: XXX | Course Location: X

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OFFICE HOURS

Mon. 12-1, Tues. 2-3, & by appt.
Office Location: Wells Hall, C746
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COURSE MATERIALS:

- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*
- William S. Burroughs, *Queer*
- Kathy Acker, *Essential Acker*
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*
- David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*
- Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*
- Josh Kilmer-Purcell, *I Am Not Myself These Day: A Memoir (P.S.)*
- Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*
- Reliable access to a computer with Internet capabilities and a printer
- A functioning email account

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 380 is a reading and writing intensive course that focuses on queer American texts. As the class title indicates, this course considers meanings of “queer” and “spectrums” and what it means to put these two terms together. To call something “queer” may be to label it peculiar or in some way incongruous; to name a sexual orientation “queer” connotes a deviation from what is socially constructed as normative. The term “spectra” engenders ideas of range, suggests unclear delineations, and brings light to mind. Pairing “queer” and “spectrums” together, then, underscores that identity categories – such as woman, man, gay, straight, or trans – do not successfully reflect the “spectral” and nuanced nature of gender and sexuality. Through a historically bound lens, this course uses both written and visual texts to imagine and reimagine queer spectrums from the pre-stonewall era to the present.

GRADE STRUCTURE:

- Discussion Lead – 5%
- Informal Portfolio – 15%
- Average of 3 Papers – 60%
- Final Exam – 20%

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:

Discussion Leads (5%)

In order to foster an interactive learning environment, each time we meet 2-4 students will be asked to come to class prepared to raise a discussion question (or two), based on the reading or

visual text under consideration. This responsibility will be assigned the session before you will be asked to raise your question(s). I will choose students to lead discussion for each class session based on alphabetical order.

Informal Portfolio (15%)

- **Attendance and Promptness:** Attendance will be recorded each session. Students must attend a minimum of 85% of class meetings to receive a passing grade; in other words, *in order to pass the course, students cannot miss more than four class sessions*. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entirety of the session. Repeat or chronic tardiness will result in either dramatic course grade reduction or disqualification from the course (3 “tardies” will reflect as one absence).
- **Participation and Preparedness:** Due to the participatory nature of this course, students must participate and remain focused and on task for the entire class session. Students are expected to complete homework, readings, and/ or viewings before coming to class; to bring the appropriate course materials to class; and to contribute to class discussions, workshops, and activities. Coming to class unprepared or unwilling to participate seriously undermines student success and cheats colleagues, so repeated under-preparedness may result in either dramatic course grade reduction or disqualification from the course.
- **In-class work & short assignments:** reading responses, free-writes, and group work.
- **Quizzes:** in-class quizzes will be given without prior warning at professor’s discretion.

Three (3) Major Papers, 5-6 pages (60%)

- Successful Papers Will:
 - Demonstrate quality and depth of thinking by: including a thesis that clearly reflects YOUR argument and include a “so what?”, using effective close reading and rhetorical strategies, and engaging in rigorous textual analysis
 - Illustrate purposeful organization/ structure, coherence, and technique
 - Have clear and correct grammar and mechanics
 - Use MLA conventions and formatting correctly
 - Note: Paper topics will be suggested, though thinking creatively outside of prompts is encouraged

Final Exam (20%)

Exam is cumulative, closed book and note, and will include passage identification, short answer, and essay questions.

DEADLINE POLICY:

Students are expected to arrive on time and with completed assignments in hand.

Late Papers:

- Major papers will be **marked down 1/3** of a letter grade for each day of lateness. Lateness is defined by a standard class day. If you are ill or cannot submit your paper on time, please email me to make arrangements. Emailing me, however, does not excuse lateness. Also, it is required that all major essays be submitted to earn class credit.

- Any short assignments, reading responses, and in-class work (including quizzes and free-writes) will **not** be accepted late, unless you have made arrangements with me ahead of time.

NOTE ON CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

In order to create a positive and productive working environment, disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated—including *texting during class and other disruptions from cell phones*. Students are expected to behave professionally: to arrive on time; to be sober, rested, and ready to work; and to come prepared with assignments read/printed (and stapled)/posted/completed. Students' actions and words should demonstrate respect for me and for classmates. Anyone who disrupts the learning environment by acting inappropriately or unethically may be asked to leave. Feel free to interrupt me at any time during our discussions or lectures with comments or questions. Also, I expect that we will **treat each other with respect** and we will not denigrate or dismiss the opinions of others (although, respectfully disagreeing is okay, even encouraged).

ACADEMIC FRAUD:

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Forms of academic dishonesty, including using portions or copies of another person's work or recycling essays from past courses, will not be tolerated. *Any intellectual property (ideas, quotes, graphics, etc.) "borrowed" from outside sources must be properly cited.*

Of course, a certain amount of collaboration on writing assignments is allowed and even encouraged. This collaboration can take the form of discussion of ideas, general and specific revision suggestions, and even minor help with editing. However, students who use someone else's work, give someone else work to use, or allow someone else to complete writing or revising work that should be doing themselves are cheating. Students who have questions in this area should see me and/or refer to university policy.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

Students who wish to request disability-related accommodations, feel free to talk to me or contact the Student Disability Resource Center.

READING, VIEWING, & LISTENING SCHEDULE

Reading, viewing, or audio assignments are to be completed before class on the assigned day.

Week 1 | "What is Queer?" "What is Normative?"

8 | 30 Introductory Lecture

Week 2 | Pre-Stonewall

9 | 4 James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

9 | 6 James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

Week 3 |

9 | 11 William S. Burroughs, *Queer*

9 | 13 William S. Burroughs, *Queer*

Week 4 | Post-Stonewall: The Gay Liberation Movement

9 | 18 Required Screening (out of class): *Stonewall Uprising* (available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/stonewall/player/>)

9 | 20 Kathy Acker, *Essential Acker*

Week 5 |

9 | 25 Kathy Acker, *Essential Acker*

9 | 27 Paper #1 Due

Week 6 | Post-Stonewall Continues: HIV/AIDS in the 1980's

10 | 2 Tony Kushner, *Angles in America*

10 | 4 Tony Kushner, *Angles in America*

Week 7 |

10 | 9 Tony Kushner, *Angles in America*

10 | 11 David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*

Week 8 |

10 | 16 David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*

10 | 18) David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*

Week 9 |**Blurring Identities**

10 | 23 Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*

10 | 25 Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*

Week 10 |

10 | 30 Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*

11 | 1 Paper #2 Due

Week 11**LGBTQ**

11 | 6 In-class Screening: *Paris is Burning* and

11 | 8 In-class Screening: *Paris is Burning* and *RuPaul's Drag Race* (clips)

Savage Love Podcast Episodes (individual episode #'s TBA)

Week 12 |

11 | 13 Josh Kilmer-Purcell, *I am Not Myself These Days: A Memoir (P.S.)*

11 | 15 Josh Kilmer-Purcell, *I am Not Myself These Days: A Memoir (P.S.)*

Week 13 |

11 | 20 Josh Kilmer-Purcell, *I am Not Myself These Days: A Memoir (P.S.)*

11 | 22 No Class: Thanksgiving

Week 14 |**Gender Spectrum and Transgender Identities**

11 | 27 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

11 | 29 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

Week 15 |

12 | 4 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

Paper #3 Due

12 | 6 Final Review

Final Exam | Tuesday, December 11, 9:00-10:00am