

English/Women's Studies 3850: Queer Texts

Course Location: OA 2020/ AT 5041

Class Times: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:00-11:30

To our Student: Should you require information or documents from our office in another format, please let us know. We are happy to help you. Contact your instructor or our Department of English Administrative Assistant.

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Instructor Information

- Instructor: Melinda Vandenberg Giles
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Course Description/Overview

A study of queer writing and cultural production. Texts will be studied in their historical and cultural contexts. Particular attention will be paid to the variation of queer identities across these contexts, and to the ways in which literature and other cultural texts shape and reflect the construction of those identities.

Course Objectives and/or Learner Outcomes

- read a variety of texts representing sexualities, and assess their rhetorical, ideological and aesthetic strategies.
- write well (grammatically correct, clear, effective prose).
- communicate ideas effectively and coherently, in both the persuasive essay, and a variety of other forms.
- explain the role of literature in articulating and creating categories of identity, especially sexuality.
- explain how a text is produced by, and produces, its historical and cultural context.
- use library resources to research a topic and use what they discover to illuminate a text.
- adapt the tools of literary analysis to cross-disciplinary inquiry.
- apply their knowledge of how literature works to their own writing.
- read texts critically in a variety of historical contexts.
- think independently and critically about literature and the issues raised by texts
- identify and assess the social, environmental and other ethical themes presented in texts
- analyse texts from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Course Resources

Required Course Text(s)

- CoursePack
- Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*
- Morrison, *Sula*
- White, *Skinned Alive*
- O'Hara, ed. *Two Spirit Acts*
- Belcourt, *This Wound is a World*
- Bechdel, *Fun Home*
- Plett, *A Safe Girl to Love*

Course Website(s) (if applicable)

- Desire2Learn (mycourselink)

Course Schedule

Jan 6/8 Introduction; *Forbidden Love*, screening

Forbidden Love, lecture

Early Articulations

Jan 13/15 Jagose, "Queer" (CoursePack); Sullivan, "Queer Race" (CoursePack)

White, "Pyrography" (3-27) and "Cinnamon Skin" (255-73) in *Skinned Alive*

Jan 20/22 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

Baldwin, **DQs, group work**

Jan 27/29 White, "Running on Empty", "His Biographer", "An Oracle", "Reprise" and "Watermarked"

Feb 3/5 Morrison, *Sula*

Morrison, **DQs, group work**

Feb 10/12 **First Installment of Reading Journal Due**

The Normal Heart, screening

White, "Skinned Alive" (54-88) and "Palace Days" (173-211)

Reading Break – No classes

Canada and its Discontents

Feb 24/26 *Zero Patience*, screening

bj wray, "Lesbian Park Rangers" (38-45); See also Dempsey and Millan's archive: <http://www.shawnadempseyandlorrimillan.net/films-videos/>

March 2/4 *Two Spirit Acts*

Two Spirit Acts, **DQs, group work**

See also Kent Monkman's video archive online

March 9/11 This Wound is a World (selected poems)

Cooper, "In Search of our Aunties' Traplines"

March 16/18 Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Bechdel, **DQs, group work**

Second Installment of Reading Journal Due

March 23/25 Plett, "Other Women," "Twenty Hot Tips to Shopping Success," "Not Bleak," and "Youth" in *A Safe Girl to Love*

A Safe Girl to Love, **DQs, group work**

March 30 *Paris Is Burning*, screening

April 1 **Final Essay Due** (Hard copy in lecture or email by midnight)

Assignments and Evaluation

Table of Assignments

Assignment	Due date	Value	Length
Reading Journals	Feb 10 and March 16	20% each = 40%	4-5 entries each
In-class DQs	Jan 22, Feb 5, March 4, March 18, March 25	5% each = 25%	1 page
Final Essay	April 1	35%	5-6 pages

Assignment Policies

- The reading journals and final essay are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively.
- The in-class DQs and group work are collaborative.
- If you require an extension, you must ask for one BEFORE the due date.
- All assignments must be in MLA format, double-spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12-point font.
- Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late essays will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%) at which point they will no longer be accepted.
- Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation.

Details of Assignments

Reading Journals (2x20%=40% of your final grade)

Reading Journals are an opportunity for students to respond to readings in an ongoing fashion and to develop critical reading skills. They should be distinct from lecture notes (that is, I want to know **your** thoughts and ideas, your reactions to the readings). You may write in the first person and be informal. You may begin with whether or not you liked the reading, as long as that is just the starting point. Consider why you liked or didn't like the material. What ideas about queerness did the reading either support or challenge? You may use the journal to figure out your final essay topic.

Instructions Cont'd on next page ...

Some formatting and content suggestions:

1. Provide each entry with a heading, such as a title and a date
2. Describe the text—format, language use, style, genre. Is it easy or difficult to read? Why?
3. What stood out for you? What surprised you? Other reactions? Include a couple of passages that seem significant. Explain why you selected them. Take a few lines to analyse what these passages contribute to your

- understanding of the text and/or of queerness. Or how these passages trouble or challenge that understanding.
4. Consider using these entries to begin to make connections to other texts on the course and/or to other representations of queerness/sexuality beyond the course.

A final note: Reading Journals work best if students write them on an ongoing basis rather than leaving it to the night before the due date and hammering out four quick entries. Make journal notes as you read through the course material (ie **before** lecture). Students are to submit their Reading Journals at two points in the semester. Each submission should contain 4-5 entries. Readings and film screenings are all acceptable for inclusion.

In-class DQs and Group Work (5x5%=25% of final grade)

There are five dates listed in the syllabus (Jan 22, Feb 5, March 4, March 18, March 25) during which students will spend the class working on short, small group projects. The groups' findings will be presented during the class and a small response sheet will be submitted for grading. Students are expected to attend these and all classes with the assigned reading completed and to be prepared to participate in small group discussion.

Final Essay (35% of your final grade)

Participation

Students are expected to attend all classes with the assigned reading done in advance. Students are expected to engage with and respond collegially to one another.

Marking Standards

All assignments will be marked in accordance with the [English Department Marking Standards](#)¹.

Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the [Code of Student Behaviour](#)².

Course Policies

Students are expected to bring their copy of the readings to class. Students are expected to complete the assigned reading in advance of class and come prepared to discuss the readings. Students are expected to respond to each other's ideas in a collegial fashion.

University Policies

- Students in this course are expected to conform to the [Code of Student Behaviour](#).
- **Accommodations:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)³. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#)⁴ and register as early as possible.
- This course outline is available online through the [English Department homepage](#)⁵ and/or the [Desire2Learn](#)⁶ site for the course.

¹ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marking-standards>

² <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/academic-support/skills-for-success/responsibilities>

³ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

⁴ <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

⁵ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english>

⁶ <http://lakeheadu.desire2learn.com/d2l/home>