

Professor Pearl Brilmyer
273 PLC
brilmyer@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-4:30

Queer Literature

ENGL 199
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12-1:20pm
Winter 2016

What does it mean to call oneself gay? lesbian? homosexual? queer? Where did these words come from, and how do their differing meanings reflect a history of changing conceptions of queer culture? How does language—and literature specifically—shape sexuality and sexual politics? This course will take a historical approach to the study of queer literature. It will consider how shifting definitions of homosexuality, under different guises and different terms, have shaped our understanding of what it means to be queer today.

“Gay / Lesbian / Bisexual / Transgender / Ally / Questioning / Two spirit / Non-gender conforming—every year we add a new letter,” says Stacyann Chin with frustration in her speech at the 2006 Gay Games. She continues:

yet everyday
I become more afraid to say black
or lesbian
or woman—everyday
under the pretense of unity I swallow something I should have said
about the epidemic of AIDS in Africa
or the violence against teenage-girls in East New York
or the mortality rate of young boys on the south-side of Chicago (Chin 2006)

In this course we will question whether we can indeed ascribe a “unity” to queer culture or literature. Attending to a diverse array of moments in gay and lesbian history—moments of anger, sadness, triumph and hope—we will consider the how discourses of sexuality at a given time shape and inform the representation of queer desire in literature and other new media.

Required Texts

Books available at the Duck Store. It is necessary to get the specific editions listed below:

Henry James, *The Beast in the Closet and Other Stories*. Dover (ISBN: 9780486275529)
Eve Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press (ISBN: 9780520254060)
Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press (ISBN: 9781555977078)

A course packet available at The Copy Shop (539 E. 13th Ave.) including:

Radclyffe Hall, “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself”
Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”
Amber Hollibaugh, “My Dangerous Desires”
Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic” and “The Master’s Tools”
John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”
Jasbir Puar, “In the wake of It Gets Better”
Bailey, Kandaswamy, and Richardson, “Is Gay Marriage Racist?”

Writing

Over the course of the term, you will write two blog posts, five blog post comments, four précis, and two essays.

1. **Blog Posts** (200-300 words) This online response, to be presented in class on the following day, will perform a short, *close reading* of a passage from the reading assigned for the following day and pose an interpretive thesis about the passage. Five times throughout the term you will also be responsible for responding to the post of another student in the form of a (100-word) **Comment** to be published on the blog.

2. **Précis** (1 paragraph) In this short assignment you will concisely describe or paraphrase the argument of the reading for that day. Identifying the thesis and evidence given in the author’s argument among other elements, you will produce a concise and clear paragraph that you can reuse in other assignments.

3. **Paper I: Queer Reading** (1 page, single spaced) In this assignment you will produce a “queer reading” of a work of fiction from class (or another approved text). How do stories implicitly or indirectly address questions of gender, sexuality or queerness? What does it mean to read a text queerly?

4. **Final Paper** (5-6 pages, double spaced)

Grading

I will base your grades on your class participation, the quality of your essays, and your responses to the work of others, both written and oral. Each draft of your essay matters (though it will not get a separate grade). Presentation (i.e. grammar, proof-reading, MLA format) as well as style and substance counts. All papers should be instances of academic writing, with a thesis, argument structure, and a conclusion. They should also be standard format—Times New Roman or equivalent, 12 point font, one inch margins, double spaced. Be sure to cite all sources.

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the rubric below. I will be using the plus/minus system for final grades. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. A+ is only given for truly outstanding, exceptional work. This course will not have a final or midterm exam.

A+ = 97-100 A = 94-100 A- = 90-93 B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86 B- = 80-83
 C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76 C- = 70-73 D+ = 67-69 D = 64-66 D- = 60-63
 F = 0-60

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Grade %</u>
Two in-class expositions of blog post	see presentation schedule	10% each
Five 100-word comments	throughout units 2 & 3	2% each
Four Précis	1/26, 2/2, 2/11, 2/16	5% each
Paper I: Queer Reading	1/31	20%
Final Paper	3/8 (draft), 3/10	30%

Attendance and Lateness Policy

Students are expected to attend every class. If illness or a religious holiday prevents you from doing so, please notify me, and be sure to get the class notes from another student. Repeated tardiness will accumulate as absences—every three tardies count as one absence. *More than three absences will result in your grade being dropped 1/3 of a letter grade.*

This class will move very quickly and include many detailed writing assignments. You must keep up with the pace of this course. *Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade for every day that it is late.* As large component of the class will be devoted to in-class presentations, you will be required to be present and on time. Unless agreed upon beforehand, if you miss a presentation, you cannot reschedule it. Please utilize my office hours if you are struggling with this course, particular assignments or simply want to talk about a paper topic. The more you communicate the better I can help you push forward.

Class Communication

The primary means of communication outside of class in this course will be through Canvas and your UO email account. Please check this account regularly and be sure your preferred email account is connected to Canvas. I am also most readily available through email and my office hours. Generally, you can expect an email response from me within two working days.

Writing Support

I strongly encourage you to make use of the **UO Writing Lab**, (part of The Teaching and Learning Center, located in 68 PLC, and available by phone at 346-3226). The Writing Lab offers free and individualized help with writing for any UO student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UO can visit the Writing Lab for assistance with any writing project. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, peer writing assistants will be happy to work with you. Their services are not just for writing with “problems.” Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. Peer writing assistants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. Each student determines how to use the assistant’s advice. The assistants are trained to help you work on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work.

A Note on Plagiarism

As a UO student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of UO include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. Plagiarism will be handled according to the Student Conduct Code:

<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>

Preferred First Name Policy

The University of Oregon has a preferred first name policy. According to this policy, a student or employee’s preferred first name will be used in university communications and reporting except where the use of the legal name is required for university purposes. If you have reasons to believe your preferred first name may not be listed correctly in the roster or you do not feel comfortable taking advantage of UO’s preferred first name policy, please communicate to me the name you wish to use. The preferred first name policy can be accessed here:

<http://policies.uoregon.edu/node/216>

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

Title IX Policy and Reporting Responsibilities

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Students seeking to discuss a situation without talking to a mandatory reporter may call 541-346-SAFE. This 24/7 hotline is staffed by confidential, trained counselors. For confidential help, students may also contact University Health Services (<http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu/>) or Sexual Assault Support Services (<http://sasslane.org/>).

Course Schedule (see final page)

Subject to change based on scheduling needs.

	Date			Class Assignment	Due in class
	UNIT I: QUEER READING	Week 1	TR	7-Jan	Introductions
Week 2		T	12-Jan	Smith, "Queer Theory is Entering the Literary Mainstream;" Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic" from <i>The Epistemology of the Closet</i> (p. 1-21)	
		TR	14-Jan	Sedgwick (p. 22-66)	Response to Sedgwick due
Week 3		T	19-Jan	TBD	
		TR	21-Jan	James, "The Beast in the Jungle"	
Week 4		T	26-Jan	Sedgwick, "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic"	Précis on Sedgwick
		TR	28-Jan	Hall, "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself"	Paper 1 due 1/31 by 11:59PM
UNIT II: QUEER REBELLIONS		Week 5	T	2-Feb	Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"
	TR		4-Feb	Hollibaugh, "My Dangerous Desires"	
	Week 6	T	9-Feb	Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," "The Master's Tools"	
		TR	11-Feb	D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity"	Précis on D'Emilio
	Week 7	T	16-Feb	Puar, "In the wake of It Gets Better"	Précis on Puar
		TR	18-Feb	Bailey, Kandaswamy, and Richardson, "Is Gay Marriage Racist?"	
UNIT III: QUEER NORMS	Week 8	T	23-Feb	Nelson, <i>The Argonauts</i>	
		TR	25-Feb	Nelson, Con't	
	Week 9	T	1-Mar	Nelson, Con't	
		TR	3-Mar	Nelson, Con't	
	Week 10	T	8-Mar	Peer Review	Final paper draft (two copies)
		TR	10-Mar	TBA	