

Queer Theory, Film, & Communities

ENGL 261 / MDST 270 / CRIS 265
SPRING 2024

TUESDAY/THURSDAY 2:35–3:50PM
WRIGHT MUSEUM OF ART LOGAN SEMINAR ROOM
GOOGLE CLASSROOM CODE: a2pexa6

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Office Hours: <https://tinyurl.com/dangomt>

Course Description

This community-engaged course is an introduction to studying queer theory and LGBTQ+ identities and histories, with a special focus on the United States in the 20th and 21st century. We will explore this topic through discussions of readings of queer history and theory and screenings of LGBTQ+ films. To better situate ourselves in living LGBTQ+ communities, this course will also divide students into three teams placed in local organizations to develop mutually beneficial projects: (1) a team that will work with Beloit Family Services to develop LGBTQ+ advocacy programs for Rock County; (2) a team that will work with the Beloit International Film Festival to curate a series of LGBTQ+ films for the public; and (3) a team that will work with the Beloit Historical Society to collect oral histories of local LGBTQ+ residents.

Course Format

This course introduces students to LGBTQ studies, with a focus on the history and literature of queer communities in the U.S. from Stonewall to the present. For the first two weeks of class, students will get an intensive introduction to history and LGBTQ issues. Beginning in the third week (February 6), we will continue to meet as a whole class on Tuesdays, but on Thursdays small groups will be assigned to spend class time working alongside one of three community organizations.

- Beloit Family Services: Meet with Stephanie Hormig at 416 College St. (walking distance)
- Beloit Historical Society: Meet with Donna Langford at 845 Hackett St (group will carpool)
- Beloit International Film Festival: Meet with Nico Doret in our usual classroom (Wright Museum of Art)

After two months working in the assigned organization, we will return to meeting as a whole class for the rest of the semester (beginning week of April 16).

Course Requirements

Grade Determination

You will be graded on Google Classroom. You can always check your current overall grade through that platform.

For this course, you are required to:

- participate regularly in class discussions (15% of overall grade);
- contribute fully to your assigned community organization project, as assessed by your project supervisor (30%);
- write weekly reports and reflections on your community work (20%);
- present to the class as a small group your work done at the community organization (10%);
- complete one in-class exam on LGBTQ history (10%);
- write one final essay synthesizing course readings and your community experience (15%).

Participation

This class is structured as a seminar, and discussion will be our common activity. Class participation is essential and mandatory for us to succeed—and that means not just showing up, but actively listening to and engaging with each other. I know it can be hard to put yourself out there and to think out loud in a room of your peers, but it's essential to our aims in the course. If you're finding it difficult to participate in class, come chat with me in office hours and we can brainstorm points of entry for you to make the discussion more accessible.

If you're going to be absent for a good reason, please let me know 48 hours ahead of time. More than one absence will make it much harder for you to develop the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in this course; more than two absences will directly lower your grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from A to A- or from B+ to B).

For your work at the community organization, I will be in regular contact with the project supervisor and will also visit the project from time-to-time to assess your full contribution.

Weekly Reports

For the weeks you will work in a community organization, you will be given a prompt on Tuesday after class to write up about 300 words reflecting on your work in light of our readings. Your reflection is due the following Monday.

Class Policies

Accommodations

I aim to make this class accessible and inclusive by meeting the needs of each student. That means I'm happy to meet with you or respond to your e-mails if you have any concerns about the class. I just ask that you get in touch sooner rather than later so we can work toward solutions together as soon as possible.

I also welcome requests for accommodation. If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on the 2nd floor of Pearsons (north side), 608-363-2572, or learning@beloit.edu. For accommodations in my class, you may also bring me an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS, and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS. If you want support from an Organizational Tutor you also can request one on the portal using the same form.

Academic Resources

College-level analysis and writing pose challenges to all students. To help you meet these challenges, you may find it helpful to utilize some of the services provided by the college. Various professional staff and advanced students are committed to helping you address academic challenges in a variety of ways. Please let me know if there are any resources I can help you find to ensure your success in this class.

I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center website at <https://www.beloit.edu/writingcenter/> to learn about tutoring and mentoring options, guidance on study skills and time management, and one-on-one assistance to ensure that you are using the best possible strategies for success in your course work. The Writing Center has appointments available Sunday-Thursday 3-10pm. Try not to wait until the last minute—there is often a lot of work to be done after a session. At an appointment, you will bring in the assignment, related reading, and any previous work on which you've received feedback. Please try it out! It is so helpful to be able to sit down with somebody to dissect your assignment prompt, discuss the related reading, generate ideas and make a plan, revise drafts, and edit sentence-level issues. And you don't need to have writing done to find a session useful—sometimes it's great to have an appointment just to get started!

Plagiarism and AI Policy

Plagiarism is a serious problem involving some combination of negligence, ignorance, or dishonesty. The *Beloit College Student Handbook* statement on this is as follows: “Plagiarism is the representation of someone else’s words, ideas, or data as one’s own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. By placing their name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments” (57). We will discuss the various issues related to intellectual property, academic honesty, and the relationship between your work, your sources, and your readers (for example, the distinction between deliberate plagiarism and the unintentional misuse of sources, such as incorrect citation format or handling of quoted material). We will also address questions related to the use of various digital technologies in relation to your writing, such as ChatGPT. For this class, the use of any AI text generator in relation to any assignment when that assignment does not explicitly call or allow for it without proper attribution or authorization is plagiarism. Penalties can range from failure of assignment or course to expulsion from the College. If you ever have any questions about academic ownership or intellectual property in relation to work submitted for this class, be sure to ask me.

Office Hours

I love talking with students and having the opportunity to think out loud with you in real time. That means the best time to discuss any questions you have with me is in class or during office hours. I am available over e-mail to answer brief clarification questions or to set up office hour appointments, but please come to office hours or set up an appointment to discuss anything more substantive. Please also schedule an office hour appointment at least 2 business days in advance. That means if you want to meet on Tuesday, you should be e-mailing to schedule on Friday.

Please also note that this syllabus gives you detailed information about due dates and readings. Read it and refer to it often. Answers to many questions are already provided here.

Please note I do not usually check e-mail after 5pm on weekdays and only rarely over the weekend. Please do not expect prompt replies at this time. However, I will make every effort to reply to your e-mail within 24 hours.

Class Discussion Schedule

See below for what you should read and/or watch BEFORE each class session. All readings are available in Google Classroom.

1 Introduction

Tuesday, January 23: Introductory

Thursday, January 25: History

- Before class, read Chapter 4, “US LGBTQ+ History,” from *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies* (SUNY Press, 2022)
- Read Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now,” from *Tendencies* (Duke University Press, 1993).

2 Queer Issues in History

Tuesday, January 30: Prejudice

- Before class, read:
 - Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex” (1984) from Google Classroom.
 - Chapter 6, “Prejudice and Discrimination against LGBTQ+ People,” from *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies* (SUNY Press, 2022)

Thursday, February 1: Resilience

- Before class, read Chapters 8 (“LGBTQ+ Relationships and Families”) and 9 (“Education and LGBTQ+ Youth”) from *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies* (SUNY Press, 2022)

3 Queer on Screen

Tuesday, February 6: Creating History

- Before class, read Chapter 10, “Screening LGBTQ+,” from *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies* (SUNY Press, 2022)
- Before class, watch *Watermelon Woman* (we will have a class screening together, but watch in Google Classroom if time conflicts)

Thursday, February 8: Work with Community Partners Begins

4 Looking for Langston

Tuesday, February 13: In-class Exam

- Before class, watch *Looking for Langston* (dir. Isaac Julien, 1989).
- ***In class exam on the chapters from *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies*. ***

Thursday, February 15: Work with Community Partners

5 Queer Underground

Tuesday, February 20

- Before class, watch *Pink Narcissus* (dir. James Bidgood, 1971)
- Before class, read:
 - Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998): 547–66.
 - Leo Bersani, “Sociability and Cruising,” from *Is the Rectum a Grave?* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Thursday, February 22: Work with Community Partners

6 Camp

Tuesday, February 27

- Before class, watch *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios [Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown]* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1988)
- Before class, read:
 - Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” (1964)
 - David Halperin, “Suffering in Quotation Marks,” from *How to Be Gay* (Harvard University Press, 2012)

Thursday, February 29: Work with Community Partners

7 Appropriation

Tuesday, March 5

- Before class, watch Jennie Livingston (director), *Paris is Burning* (1990)
- Before class, read:
 - Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion,” from *Bodies That Matter* (Routledge, 1994).
 - bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?” from *Black Looks* (Routledge, 1992).

Thursday, March 7: Work with Community Partners

8 Spring Break: No Class 3/12 and 3/14

9 Back to Foundations

Tuesday, March 19: Origins of Queer Theory

- Before class, read:
 - Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)
 - Judith Butler, “Critically Queer” (1993)

Thursday, March 21: Work with Community Partners

10 Back to the Future

Tuesday, March 26

- Before class, read:
 - Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid Stuff” from *No Future* (2004)
 - José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction” and “Cruising the Toilet” from *Cruising Utopia* (2009)

Thursday, March 28: Work with Community Partners

11 Coalition

Tuesday, April 2

- Before class, read:
 - “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (1977)
 - Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” (1997) from Google Classroom.

Thursday, April 4: Work with Community Partners

12 Class Choice

Tuesday, April 9

- For this class, Michael will assign readings based on requested topic areas identified by students.

Thursday, April 11: Debrief Community Work

13 Presentations

Tuesday, April 16: Small Groups Will Present on Their Work

Thursday, April 18: Spring Symposium (no classes)

14 Queer Cinema Now

Tuesday, April 23: In-class screening

- We will watch a movie voted on by the class.

Thursday, April 25: Discussion of Tuesday's screening

15 Reflection

Tuesday, April 30: Last Day of Class

- Final essay due today. Be prepared to discuss your essay's reflections in class.