

Queer Politics/Queer Communities

ENGL 1300.40

Profs. Heather Love and S. Pearl Brilmyer

MWF 12-1



Film still from Wong Kar-wai, *Happy Together* (1997)

Course Description

What is sexuality? Does it exist in the body or in the mind? Is it a collection of actions, desires, and fantasies, or is it rather a disposition, a way of seeing oneself, an identity? Does what we want depend on who we are? Does what we do define who we are? This course will address such questions by introducing students to several classic texts in the history and theory of sexuality and by looking at key moments in the struggle for sexual and gender freedom. The history we trace will focus on the effects of the “invention of homosexuality” in the late-nineteenth century; the history of butch/femme community; the cultural moment of Stonewall and gay liberation; the emergence of the transgender rights movement; the “Sex Wars” of the 1980s; women of color and queer of color critiques; and responses to HIV/AIDS. We will also consider the meaning of “queer,” global sexualities, same-sex marriage, the politics of emotion, and gay normalization.

Class Structure for Spring 2024

- In-Person Lectures and Group Discussions:
 - Mondays and Wednesdays as a large group (lecture based)
 - Fridays small-group discussion in recitation with TA
- Outside of class Activities:
 - Reading and note-taking
 - Watching films or videos
 - Other activities may include short writing assignments or discussion posts
- Workload for a typical week
 - Read 20-30 pages
 - Attend lecture and recitation
 - On occasion complete short writing assignment or discussion board post

Outline of Assignments

- Two 5-page papers
- In-person midterm and final exam

Essential Course Policies

- Attend class and complete readings and assignments
- All course texts will be made available on Canvas

Possible Readings & Films

John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" (1983)

Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes Toward a Radical Politics of Sexuality" (1984)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Axiom 1" *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

Michael Warner, "Fear of a Queer Planet" (1991)

Marlon Riggs, *Tongues Untied* (1989)

Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" (1996)

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality vol. I* (1976) (excerpt)

Isaac Julien, *Looking for Langston*

STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), Statement of Political Platform (c. 1970)

Gay Liberation Front, "Manifesto" (1971)

Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)
Anonymous Queers, "Queers Read This!" (1990)
David Wojnarowicz, "Living Close to the Knives" (1991)
Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" (1994)
Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980)
Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (1978)
Cherrie Moraga and Amber Hollibaugh, "What We're Rollin' Around in Bed With" (1981)
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990) (excerpt)
Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Professing Selves: Sex/Gender Proficiencies" from *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran* (2014)
Martin Manalansan, *Global Divas* (2003) (excerpt)