

Film Studies FILM 307.04 L01
Contemporary Queer Cinema
Fall 2011
Lectures: Wednesday 11:00-12:50
Screenings: Monday 12:00-14:50

Instructor: Dr. Dawn Johnston
Office Location: SS 234
Office Phone: 403-220-3199
E-Mail: debjohns@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 14:00-15:00 or by appointment (and if the door is open, drop in anytime)

Course Description

The course will explore various incorporations of the queer experience in the context of films from multiple countries and cultures. The course engages critical discussions on film as a space for resistance against coercive sexual and gender binaries. It also alludes to cinema's articulation of sexual identity as a social construct within a complex set of social, historical, and institutional relations.

Additional Information

Because this course examines representations of gender and sexuality in film, it is entirely possible - quite likely, in fact - that some of the material will be sexually explicit, and may challenge your comfort level with regards to portrayals of gender roles, sexualities, and sexual orientations. This material is crucial to the course, so please consider your course selection carefully if you are concerned about your response to the material.

The course has one weekly screening time on Mondays from 12:00 - 2:50 in PF 110. You are expected to attend every screening; if you miss a screening, the films are available for on-site viewing at the Media Library. This will be useful for repeat viewings and/or close analysis, as well. Certain titles (though not all) may be available at local video stores, as well: these resources are *not* a substitute for the scheduled screenings, but may prove helpful for completing assignments.

Objectives of the Course

This course encourages students to consider the performance and representation of queer sexualities in contemporary cinema. We will examine films from several countries,

analyzing the rhetoric, performance, and representation of homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender, and queerness in these visual texts.

The purpose of this course is to develop your skills in critical analysis. You will be expected to critically analyze films within the context of a larger popular cultural environment, as well as the broader rhetorical context of contemporary debates about representations of sexuality in popular media.

In this course you are writing "criticism," not "review." We're not looking at whether you like or dislike the selected films - we're looking at what these films are doing and why it matters. A review expresses a first impression after a single viewing. "Criticism" is the result of careful, considered, analytical thought, and it usually requires multiple viewings. Where a review describes or summarizes a film or television show, criticism analyzes how the specific elements of the text - e.g., its plot, characterization, narrative structure, dialogue, settings, sound, lighting, editing, in fact, anything in or related to the film - work together to advance the theme that you are defining in your work. The strength of your argument will depend upon the "evidence" from the film that you use to support your claims. For your models of critical writing, do NOT rely on newspaper and magazine reviews. Rather, look to academic books on film and to the specialized film and popular culture journals (e.g., *Film Quarterly*, *Journal of Popular Film/TV*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Jump Cut*, *Film Comment*, *Sight and Sound*, *Cineaste*, etc.).

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. iPods, cellphones and gaming devices should be turned off during class. Laptops may not be open during video screenings. Please respect your fellow students and your instructor by avoiding distracting uses of technology.

Textbooks and Readings:

Readings will be posted on Blackboard. Please note that you will be responsible for downloading and printing those readings for the designated classes. These are **required** readings, but have been posted electronically rather than packaged as a custom readings package in order to reduce the cost to students. Each reading will be posted a minimum of two weeks before it will be discussed in class.

Assignments and Evaluation

Group Presentation	Selected Date	20%
Test	October 5	20%
"Excluded Films" Essay	October 26	20%
Term Paper	December 7 (Topic by November 9)	40%

All students will be required to give an in-class group presentation introducing one of the films being screened as part of this course. Presentations will take place at the beginning of lecture in the week that the film is screened. Presentations should be 12-15 minutes in length, and should provide some contextual background and preliminary commentary on the selected film. The main purpose of the presentations is to generate and frame our class discussion and analysis of the film – discussions of directors, cultural contexts, specific film techniques, major themes, critical response and popular reception would all be welcome. The presentation need not conduct in-depth analysis, but should provide us with contextual tools to aid in our classroom analysis of the film that we have watched. A list of films and dates will be circulated in the first class, and students will select a presentation slot accordingly. Presentations will begin in Week Three. Any students not in attendance at the first class will be assigned a group and film. Unless there is compelling evidence to indicate otherwise, all group members will receive the same grade on the assignment. This assignment will be worth 20% of your course grade.

The test on October 5th will consist of short answer questions focusing on key concepts in queer film theory. These questions may take the format of short definitions or fill-in-the-blanks. The test is worth 20% of your course grade.

One of the most commonly asked questions in a topics-based film course is: "Why aren't we watching...?" We all have ideas about which films *should* be part of a course on contemporary queer cinema, and this is your chance to defend your choice. You are required to write a short (500-750 words) essay about which excluded film of the last twenty years *you* would have included in this course. Your essay should include a *brief* plot description, some background information on the film, and a rationalization of why it would make a significant contribution to a course on contemporary queer cinema. This essay is worth 20% of your course grade.

Your term paper for this course is a research and analysis essay. This assignment affords students the opportunity to examine a theme or representation or symbol or technical element or directorial style in detail, in context, and in depth. The essay should demonstrate your own critical analysis of your topic, as well as your familiarity and engagement with other scholarly analyses of your subject. Your essay should be 1800-2000 words in length. You may select your own topic, but it **MUST** be submitted to the instructor for approval, via e-mail, no later than November 9. **Essays on unapproved topics will not be accepted.** The term paper is worth 40% of your course grade.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Assignments are due at the beginning of lecture on the due date. Assignments not submitted in person, at the beginning of lecture, will be considered late. Please do not submit essays electronically or to the drop box unless you have been granted prior permission to do so.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99

B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Ignorance of these rules is not an acceptable excuse.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be posted on Blackboard in the first week of classes