

Film Studies FILM 307 L01
Topic in Cinema and Gender Studies
Contemporary Queer Cinema
Winter 2014
Lectures: Thursday 10:00-11:50
Screenings: Tuesday 9:00-11:50

Instructor: Dr. Dawn Johnston
Office Location: SS 234
Office Phone: 403-220-3199
E-Mail: debjohns@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday 13:00-15:00 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

This course examines representations of gender and sexuality in film, and 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 Tuesdays from 9:00 - 11:50 in EDC 280. 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.

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 and analysis, 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. Critical analysis is the result of careful, considered, and complex 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 at all during film screenings. Please respect your fellow students and your instructor by avoiding distracting uses of technology.

Textbooks and Readings:

Readings for this course will be linked on Blackboard or placed on reserve in the library. Please note that you will be responsible for downloading and printing those readings for the designated classes. These are **required** readings, but have been linked electronically or placed on reserve 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	January 30	20%
"Excluded Films" Essay	March 13	30%
Final Exam	Registrar Scheduled	30%

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 15-20 minutes in length, and should provide some contextual background and preliminary commentary on the selected film. The main purpose of each presentation 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, but not all are required – your group should select which elements are most useful in generating and guiding discussion of your film. 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. While online resources like Wikipedia and IMDB, among others, may be useful in gathering some of your background information, your presentation should elevate any such resource by demonstrating independent critical thought. The group must submit (by email or hard copy, on the day of your presentation) a copy of any slides or speaking notes that are used, as well as a complete bibliography of all sources consulted in your preparation. Please remember that guidelines around plagiarism apply to oral presentations exactly as they do to written work. 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 January 30th will consist of short answer questions focusing on key concepts in queer film theory and the history of queer cinema. 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 1000-1200 word 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, most importantly, a rationalization of why it would make a significant contribution to a course on contemporary queer cinema. You are encouraged to use the concepts from queer theory and queer film history discussed at the beginning of this course. You should also incorporate 3-4 **scholarly** sources about queer film, culture, and/or history into your argument. A hard copy of essays must be submitted in person to the instructor at the beginning of class on March 13. This essay is worth 30% of your course grade.

Your registrar-scheduled final exam will consist of short answer questions about the films as well as an analytical essay question. The final exam is worth 30% of your course grade.

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

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

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: Yes

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://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: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

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

	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 (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) 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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

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