

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 517.15-05

Theoretical & Cultural Studies: Narrating the Queerness of Youth

Fall 2015

Th 9:00-11:45am | SS 1015

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Office hours: Thursdays 1-2, or by appointment

Course Description:

As tragic stories of queer youth suicide and bullying fill our headlines, popular interest in young adult fiction (YA) with queer characters and themes is exploding. Many contemporary critics call for representations of LGBT youth that exceed and defy the troubled, lonely, and self-loathing teens of early YA with gay content. Instead, these critics maintain, young queers need role models in the form of fictional adolescents who are out, proud, and growing confidently into LGBT adulthood. Queer theory, however, often suggests an approach to relationality that embraces ambiguity, shame, and negative affect while rejecting coherent identity and teleological narratives of growth. In other words, while many queer YA critics are invested in normalizing representations of happy, hopeful, and accepted LGBT characters, queer theory reminds us of the value of the invisible, the marginal, the perverse, and what Heather Love calls “backward feelings”—the dark affect that fills the pages of many queer YA novels. This class puts queer YA and queer theory into conversation with one another to chart and formulate an approach to the anxious, pressing questions surrounding representation, sex, sexuality, reading, and pedagogy that currently circulate around this increasingly popular YA subgenre.

Drawing on queer YA novels from 1969 to the present day, children’s literature criticism and queer theories of affect, childhood, pedagogy, and temporality, students will interrogate how the figure of “queer youth” is constructed, represented, and put to work in a variety of texts. Among other topics, students will consider: the relationship between pedagogy and queer YA; theories of queer reading; representations of HIV/AIDS in YA; the persistence and subversion of YA “problem novel” themes; sex, pleasure, and desire; and the relationship of queer YA criticism to the reading practices of fictional and material youth. This class will moreover push at the limits of queer YA as a literature-based genre by considering representations of queer youth in multimedia popular culture texts, including the *It Gets Better* YouTube project and its documentary adaptations, the television series *Glee*, and slash fanfiction. Students will depart the class with a strong foundation in queer theory and queer theories of childhood, children’s literature theory, and the history and politics of queer/LGBT representations in YA.

Texts and Readings:

Fiction:

John Donovan, *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* (1969)
Isabelle Holland, *The Man Without a Face* (1972)
Rosa Guy, *Ruby* (1976)
Nancy Garden, *Annie on My Mind* (1982)
Francesca Lia Block, *Dangerous Angels: The Weetzie Bat Books* (1998)
Alex Sanchez, *Rainbow Boys* (2001)
David Levithan, *Boy Meets Boy* (2003)
Shyam Selvadurai, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2005)
Elizabeth Hand, *Illyria* (2010)
James St. James, *Freak Show* (2007)
Dan Savage and Terry Miller, eds. *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living* (2011), YouTube project, and MTV documentaries
Glee episode 5.5, "The End of Twerk" (2013) – to be screened in-class
Selected *Glee/It Gets Better* crossover slash fanfiction (e.g. Susala, "It Gets Better: A Glee Fanfic," 2011)—all available online
Raziel Reid, *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* (2014)

All fiction titles are available for purchase at the university bookstore, unless otherwise indicated.

Theory & Criticism:

Sara Ahmed, selections from *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) **
Kent Baxter, selections from *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (2008) **
Christopher Beha, "Henry James and the Great Y.A. Debate." *The New Yorker* (18 Sept. 2014) ***
Robin Bernstein, selections from *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood From Slavery to Civil Rights* (2011) **
Deborah Britzman, "Precocious Education" (2000) and "Queer Pedagogy and Its Strange Techniques" (1998) **
Michael Cart and Christine Jenkins, selections from *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-2004* (2006) °
Thomas Crisp, "The Trouble With Rainbow Boys" (2008) and "From Romance to Magical Realism: Limits and Possibilities in Gay Adolescent Fiction" (2009) **
Lee Edelman, selections from *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) °
"Is young-adult fiction intolerant of gay characters?" *CBC Q* 28 Sept. 2011 ***
Rose Fox, "Authors Say Agents Try to 'Straighten' Gay Characters in YA," and "Riposte and Counter-riposte," *Publisher's Weekly Genreville*. 12 Sept. 2011 ***
Ruth Graham, "Against YA: Yes, Adults Should Be Embarrassed to Read Young Adult Books." *Slate* (8 Oct. 2014) ***
Francis Hanckel and John Cunningham, "Can Young Gays Find Happiness in YA Books?" (1976) °
Kenneth Kidd, "Queer Theory's Child and Children's Literature Studies" (2011) **
Nancy Larrick, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (1965) ***
Heather Love, selections from *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007) °
Robert McRuer, "Reading and Writing 'Immunity': Children and the Anti-Body" (1998) **
José Esteban Muñoz, selections from *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) **

Adam Phillips, selections from *On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined Life* (1993) *

Eric Rofes, "Martyr-Target-Victim: Interrogating Narratives of Persecution and Suffering among Queer Youth" (2000) **

Jacqueline Rose, selections from *The Case of Peter Pan, or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984) *

Ritch C. Savin-Williams, selections from *The New Gay Teenager* (2005) **

A.O. Scott, "The Death of Adulthood in American Culture." *The New York Times Magazine* (11 Sept. 2014) ***

Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" (1964) ***

Kathryn Bond Stockton, selections from *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009) *

Maria Tatar, "No More Adventures in Wonderland." *New York Times* (9 Oct. 2011) ***

Catherine Tosenberger, "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts" (2008) **

* Available for purchase at the university bookstore

** Available through library database

*** Available online

◦ Available via course reserve

Assignments and Evaluation:

Annotated Bibliography/Class Blog (10%)

Early in the term, you will be responsible for compiling a shared, online annotated bibliography that will highlight key works of queer YA, theory and criticism—outside of course texts—from the 1960s to the present day. This document will serve as a reference for your other assignments, including essays and book reviews, and any relevant future research projects. You will each be responsible for researching a particular temporal period or theme (e.g. HIV/AIDS in YA; YA novels with two-spirit characters) and branch of theory (e.g. affect theory, psychoanalysis, queer theory, child/adolescent development theory). You will be evaluated according to your individual contributions to the site.

Book Review (15%)

According to guidelines I will provide, select and review a theoretical text from the annotated bibliography. Reviews (approx. 1200-1500 words) will be shared amongst members of the class through the class blog.

Response Papers (10% x 3, approx. 500 words)

Class discussion will be prompted by student-written response papers. You will each be responsible for writing three response papers throughout the course of the term. Response papers must be distributed online to all class members 24 hours before class begins. You will also give a short presentation based on your response paper to begin guiding discussion.

Term Paper

(30%, approx. 10-12 pages)

An essay on the topic of your choice, based on course texts and themes. It is highly recommended that you meet with me in advance to discuss possible topics.

Class Participation (15%)

The participation grade is intended to reflect your overall level of engagement with the class and course materials. When determining your grade, I will ask myself the following questions: did you regularly attend class and participate in discussions? Did you meet with me during office hours to discuss essay topics

and/or if you had questions or concerns about course content? In-class, did you demonstrate a good level of preparedness—having completed and engaged with the readings, putting them into conversation with other course texts and themes? Although regular attendance is crucial to success in a seminar, I recognize that illness, emergencies, and personal situations occasionally arise. If you must miss class, please inform me as soon as possible. Three unexplained absences will result in the forfeiture of your entire participation grade.

Assignment Policies:

- Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a third of a grade (an A- to B+) for each business day [not class day] that the assignment is overdue. No assignments will be accepted one week past the assignment deadline without the prior consent of the instructor.
- Please make every effort to submit assignments directly to the instructor during class time. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your assignment will be date-stamped and placed in the instructor's mailbox. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all assignments in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.
- In the case of a late assignment to be submitted electronically (i.e. an annotated bibliography entry), you are responsible for notifying the instructor by email as soon as the assignment has been uploaded. Otherwise, the assignment will be presumed incomplete.
- Term papers must be submitted in hard copy. No electronic copies will be accepted. Response papers and book reviews will be shared online.
- There will be no assignments given for extra credit in this course.
- There will be no Registrar-scheduled exam in this course.

Grading System:

In this course, your assignments (exclusive of quizzes) will be marked on the University of Calgary's four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>

A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Classroom Policy on Electronic Devices, Email, and Internet Use:

You are also welcome and encouraged to use electronic devices in class. However, please be mindful to use them appropriately: checking Facebook, sending messages, and other online activities unrelated to discussion distracts you and those around you.

Students should check D2L and email regularly for updates, assignment instructions, and other course-related information. Email is the best way to contact the instructor. Although I do my best to respond to emails promptly, please allow up to 48 hours for a response.

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 possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events

<http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

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

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboymd@ucalgary.ca

Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:**Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

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

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>,
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:

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

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

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 pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.