

# Research Writing: Queer Culture

English 11, Section 33  
English Composition  
Spring 2004  
TR 9:30 – 10:45  
Room 205 in Monroe Hall

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“[W]e get our view of the world as much by omission as by anything else. And the omissions can tell us a lot about what is wrong with our society”—John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*

“Other communities who have been oppressed—Jewish people, say, or Catholics in Northern Ireland—have every opportunity to work out the implications of their oppression in their early lives. They hear the stories; they have the books around them. Gay people, on the other hand, grow up alone; there is no history. There are no ballads about the wrongs of the past, the martyrs are all forgotten. . . . Thus the discovery of a history and a heritage has to be made by each individual as part of the road to freedom, or at least knowledge”—Colm Tóibín, *Love in a Dark Time*

“Advice on how to make sure your kids turn out gay, not to mention your students, your parishioners, your therapy clients, or your military subordinates, is less ubiquitous than you might think. By contrast, the scope of institutions whose programmatic undertaking is to prevent the development of gay people is unimaginably large”—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*

**Course Description** In this course we will examine the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) experience through literature, film, and history. We will start with the consideration of whether there even is a uniquely “queer” experience, different from what straight people go through, and whether it is common across the LGBT community. This investigation will be the launching pad for class discussions, compositions, and research projects. Students will be required to complete a number of short writing assignments, a longer research paper, and an oral presentation.

**Course Objectives** This course is foremost a composition class with a focus on research writing. Writing, research methods, and practice are the primary area of concern. However, this course is structured around a thematic base (Queer Culture) that will be a new area of research for most students. Readings and films will be used to stimulate student ideas for research projects.

As a composition course, this class will increase students’ comfort with the writing process (especially thesis formation, mechanics, and argumentation). Additionally, the activities in the class will familiarize students with paper revision—a misunderstood activity often confused with editing. As a research course, this class will acquaint students with research methods, information sources, and the incorporation of secondary material into one’s own writing.

**Required Texts** Baldwin, James. *Giovanni’s Room*. New York: Dell, 2000.  
Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: MLA, 2003.  
Russell, Ina, ed. *Jeb and Dash: A Diary of Gay Life, 1918-1945*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1993.  
Stein, Gertrude. *Fernhurst, Q.E.D., and Other Early Writings*. New York: Liveright, 1996.

There is also a course pack available at the GW Bookstore; this contains required texts as well.

### **Grade Calculation**

The student's final course grade will be calculated with the following weights:

25%	Research project
15%	Annotated bibliography
15%	Web site analysis
15%	Journal analysis
10%	Thesis, research, and pre-writing materials for research project
10%	Oral presentation
10%	Participation

The following grading scale will be used in this class:

A = 100 – 92
B = 91 – 83
C = 82 – 74
D = 73 – 65
F = 64 and below

### **Class Policies**

1. ***No late work will be accepted!*** All drafts and papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed below.
2. The participation component of the course grade is not to be taken lightly. This class will be run as a seminar, and its success depends upon students taking an active part in class discussions. Free and eager participation will be looked on more kindly than a single, brilliant contribution once during the semester!
3. Students are expected to be in class on time for each meeting. However, things that present conflicts with class attendance invariably arise. Therefore, students will have four (4) free days/absences to use as they wish (illness, vacation, sleeping in, etc.), but students will have one (1) point dropped from their grade for any absences beyond the four free days. Three (3) late arrivals (after the roll has been called) will count as an absence.
4. Absences do not excuse students from submitting work that is due on the day they happen to be away from class. Anything due on a day a student is absent from class should be in the bin on the instructor's office door 20 minutes prior to the start of class or given to the instructor in person before the roll is taken.
5. Plagiarism is a serious matter, and the University has set high standards for academic integrity. Therefore, class members should consult the University Code of Academic Integrity to familiarize themselves with this issue and the repercussions associated with any violations. Students can also visit the web site <http://www.gwu.edu/~bulletin/ugrad/unrg.html> for information on academic integrity here at the University.
6. Students should turn off (or leave at home) cell phones and pagers prior to arriving for class.
7. Students wishing to discuss a grade on a paper or assignment should meet with the instructor in his office during office hours. The instructor will not discuss grades in the classroom.

## Paper Guidelines

All papers should be typed, double-spaced, and formatted with one-inch margins on all four sides. Paragraphs should begin with a half-inch indentation, and there should *not* be an extra blank line between paragraphs. The papers should have the student's name, the instructor's name, the course title, and the date (in that order) in the upper left-hand corner. Papers should have a header in the upper right-hand corner made up of the student's last name and page number. **All papers should be stapled.** The revision and draft (when applicable) should be fastened with a paperclip to the composition for final submission. Students should use a fairly standard, legible font (e.g., Times Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt.) when preparing their papers. Chapter four of the *MLA Handbook* deals with paper formatting. Gelman Library's web site also has a "Ready Reference" page with more details and an example. This "Ready Reference" page can be found at <http://www.gwu.edu/gelman/ref/readyref/style.html>. Once there, click on the "Modern Language Association (MLA) Format" hypertext link for further clarification.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: Preliminaries

- 1/13 Introductions and discussion about objectives for the course.
- 1/15 Review of syllabus, sources for research project ideas.

### Week 2: Queer Theory

- 1/20 "The Ethics of Sexual Shame," M. Warner (course pack).
- 1/22 Library workshop. The class will meet in Gelman Library (Room B06 on the lower level).

### Week 3: Queer Theory (cont'd.)

- 1/27 **Web site analysis due.** "From *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*," G. Anzaldúa (course pack).
- 1/29 "Pedro Zamora's *Real World* of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self," J. Muñoz (course pack).

### Week 4: Lesbian & Gay History

- 2/3 Video: *Out of the Past*.
- 2/5 "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," J. D'Emilio.

### Week 5: Lesbian & Gay History (cont'd.)

- 2/10 **Journal analysis due.** *Jeb and Dash*.
- 2/12 *Jeb and Dash*.

### Week 6: Lesbian & Gay Literature

- 2/17 Poetry selections from *Love Speaks Its Name* (course pack).
- 2/19 "Tom's Husband," S. Jewett (course pack) and "Paul's Case," W. Cather (course pack).

### Week 7: Lesbian & Gay Literature (cont'd.)

- 2/24 *Q.E.D.*
- 2/26 **Annotated bibliography due.** *Q.E.D.*

Week 8: Thesis Workshops

3/2 In-class evaluation of students' proposed thesis sentences for the research project.

3/4 In-class evaluation of students' proposed thesis sentences for the research project.

Week 9: Lesbian & Gay Literature (cont'd.)

3/9 *Giovanni's Room*.

3/11 **Pre-writing materials (thesis sentence, outline, bibliography) due.** *Giovanni's Room*.

Week 10

3/16 **Spring break—no class!**

3/18 **Spring break—no class!**

Week 11: Conferences

3/23 No class—students meet with the instructor in his office for their scheduled conferences.

3/25 No class—students meet with the instructor in his office for their scheduled conferences.

Week 12: Queer Cinema

3/30 Video: *The Celluloid Closet*.

4/1 **Draft of research project due.** In-class peer review session.

Week 13: Queer Cinema (cont'd.)

4/6 Video: *Beautiful Thing*.

4/8 Video: *Beautiful Thing*.

Week 14: Queer Cinema (cont'd.)

4/13 **Research project due.** Video: TBD.

4/15 Video: TBD.

Week 15: Presenting Research

4/20 **Final date for revisions of short-paper assignments!** Oral presentations.

4/22 Oral presentations.

Week 16: Presenting Research (cont'd.)

4/27 Oral presentations. Course wrap-up.

**Note: The revision of the long research project must be in the bin on the instructor's office door before 10:00 a.m. on 29 April to be included in the student's course average!**