

**Queerness in Literature
(Introduction to Fiction and Poetry)
CRWRI-UA.815.009**

Instructor: Raphael/le Linden, rl1630@nyu.edu

Semester: Spring '22 (Jan 24 - May 9)

Schedule: Mon/Wed 3:30pm-4:45pm

Office Hours: TBD

“It is quite impossible to write a worth-while novel about a Jew or a Gentile or a Homosexual, for people refuse, unhappily, to function in so neat and one-dimensional a fashion.”

-James Baldwin

“Queerness begins with permission to change... it invites innovation; it is larger than sexuality and gender; it is action.”

-Ocean Vuong

Overview

What makes a work of literature queer? We'll be exploring this question by examining and discussing a broad array of texts by queer authors from a diversity of backgrounds, time periods, genres, and styles. In addition to discussions of weekly assigned texts, you will submit 2 pieces of creative writing that will be workshopped throughout the semester. Assignments are open, but given the class' focus, you'll be encouraged to submit writing that is queer, queered, or queering *something*. What that looks like will ultimately be up to you.

Texts

The only book you will be required to buy is *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin. It can be purchased at the NYU Bookstore, at [Bookshop](#) (which supports independent bookstores), or anywhere books are sold. If you're not able to pay for the book for whatever reason, please [email me](#) and we'll figure something out. All other texts will be available on Brightspace (and most can also be accessed via hyperlink in this document).

Course Requirements and Grading

30% Workshop Submissions

You will be workshopped twice throughout the semester: 1 fiction submission, 1 poetry submission. Fiction submissions should be no more than 15 pages double spaced - 12pt font, and poetry submissions should be no more than 10 pages and formatted as you see fit. That said, hybrid or experimental texts are accepted and encouraged—I'd be delighted to read your fiction in verse or poetry in prose, for example. Play with genre and form!

These submissions will not be graded based on content, but rather thoughtfulness, care, and polish.

30% Class Participation and Feedback

Please come to class with thoughts to share about both the assigned texts and your classmates' writing. In addition to in-class feedback, you're encouraged to give your classmates line edits and required to turn in a thoughtful feedback letter for each submitted piece. Please email me your feedback letters before workshop (if the letter is handwritten, send me a scan or picture). If you're the kind of person who feels shy speaking up in class, then all the more important to give thoughtful, thorough feedback in writing.

In addition, each one of you will be asked to give a short presentation/introduction to one of the assigned texts at some point throughout the semester. This can include (and should by no means be limited to) interesting biographical info on the author, relevant historical context, your personal thoughts on the text (likes/dislikes), etc. Each presentation should end with at least three questions about the text for the class to discuss.

30% Final Portfolio

The final portfolio should be a document containing both pieces you submitted for workshop. You'll be expected to revise these pieces using the feedback you received during workshop and office hours (though if you want to ignore that feedback and take it in your own direction, that's fine too). Please include a paragraph or two explaining the revisions you made and why you chose to make them.

10% Reading Event Report

I will ask you to attend a literary event (reading, panel, book fair, etc.) at some point throughout the semester and write a 1 page double spaced report about your experience. If attending an event in person is of concern, you can absolutely attend a Zoom/online event instead. If you're having trouble finding an event that interests you, I'd be happy to offer recommendations.

Plagiarism

If you're caught plagiarizing, I will have to fail you. That's the last thing I want to do, so let's make sure it never happens! If you're tempted to plagiarize for whatever reason, please [email me](#). I will be more than happy to grant you an extension, talk through the assignment with you, look over an early draft, etc.

Attendance

You're allowed one no-questions-asked absence, though not on a day you're scheduled to be workshopped. (Again, email me if you're in need of an extension.) After that, I'll deduct your grade by a third of a letter grade (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.) Please do your best to come to class on time. If tardiness becomes a persistent issue, then we'll have to sit down and talk about it during office hours (not fun for either of us).

Student Wellness Policy (From NYU)

Unless we see explicit evidence in workshop that the speaker of a work is the writer themselves, we assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will likely prompt the instructor's attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting work, especially for workshop, that may be interpreted as such. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.

Disability Disclosure Statement (From NYU)

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675

Telephone: 212-998-4980 Voice/TTY

Fax: 212-995-4114

Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Calendar

Week 1: Introductions and Housekeeping

Monday, January 24:

- Review the syllabus
- Set up workshop schedule
- Discussion: [How To Unlearn Everything](#) by Alexander Chee

Wednesday, January 26

- How to give constructive criticism
- Mock workshop critique

Week 2: The Queer Body

Monday, February 1:

- [Boy in a Stolen Evening Gown](#) by Saeed Jones
- Excerpt from [Paul Takes The Form of A Mortal Girl](#) by Andrea Lawlor
- Excerpt from [Autobiography of Red](#) by Anne Carson

Wednesday, February 3:

- Workshops 1 and 2.

Week 3: Queer Time

Monday, February 7:

- [The Life and Death of Modern Homosexuality](#) by Ben Miller
- Excerpt from [Orlando](#) by Virginia Woolf

Wednesday, February 9:

- NO CLASS – PRESIDENT’S DAY

Week 4: The Queer Canon

Monday, February 14:

- *Giovanni’s Room* by James Baldwin

Wednesday, February 16:

- Workshops 3 and 4.

Week 5: Queer Pain

Monday, February 21:

- [four ethers](#) by serpentwithfeet
- Excerpt from [Junk](#) by Tommy Pico
- [Notes](#) by Danez Smith
- [Jealousy](#) by Janani Balasubramanian (video)

Wednesday, February 23:

- Workshops 5 and 6.

Week 6: Queer Desire/Sex/Love

Monday, February 28:

- Excerpt from [What Belongs to You](#) by Garth Greenwell
- [Love Poem](#) by Audre Lorde
- [Novel](#) by Arthur Rimbaud

Wednesday, March 2:

- Workshops 7 and 8.

Week 7: The Plague

Monday, March 7:

- Excerpt from *To The Friend Who Did Not Save My Life* by Hervé Guibert
- [The Voice of ACT UP Culture](#) by Sarah Schulman
- [Tiara](#) by Mark Doty
- [On PrEP or on Prayer](#) by Sam Sax

Wednesday, March 9:

- Workshops 9 and 10.

Week 8: Queer Politics

Monday, March 21:

- [Pulse, Beat, Rhythm, Cry](#) by Che Gossett
- [Postcolonial Love Poem](#) by Natalie Diaz
- [Sisters in Arms](#) by Audre Lorde
- [Even This Page Is White](#) by Vivek Shraya

Wednesday, March 23:

- Workshops 11 and 12.

Week 9: Gender Trouble

Monday, March 28:

- [Gender is More Than Performance](#) by Julia Serano
- Excerpt from *Freshwater* by Akwaeke Emezi
- Excerpt from *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci

Wednesday, March 30:

- Workshops 1 and 2.

Week 10: Queer Theory

Monday, April 4:

- Excerpt from *The Argonauts* by Maggie Nelson
- [Zizek's Trans/gender Trouble](#) by Che Gossett

Wednesday, April 6:

- Workshops 3 and 4.

Week 11: Queering Genre and Form

Monday, April 11:

- [Inventory](#) by Carmen Maria Machado
- [For the Feral Splendor That Remains](#) by CA Conrad
- Excerpt from [The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions](#) by Larry Mitchell

Wednesday, April 13:

- Workshops 5 and 6.

Week 12: Queer Spaces

Monday, April 18:

- Excerpt from [Gay Bar](#) by Jeremy Atherton Lin
- [The 17-Year-Old & the Gay Bar](#) by Danez Smith
- [A Straight Man's Epiphany in a Gay Bar](#) by Terrance Hayes

Wednesday, April 20:

- Workshops 7 and 8.

Week 13: CAMP

Monday, April 25:

- [Notes on Camp](#) by Susan Sontag
- [Too Sexy](#) by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

Wednesday, April 27:

- Workshops 9 and 10.

Week 14: Queer in America

Monday, May 2:

- [An American Poem](#) by Eileen Myles
- [A Letter To My Mother That She Will Never Read](#) by Ocean Vuong
- [Michael](#) by Hilton Als

Wednesday, 4 :

- Workshops 11 and 12.

Week 15

Monday, May 9:

- Class Reading and Party
- Final Portfolios Due