Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Authors and Themes in Literature

Ross Geller to ex-wife’s partner: “You guys sure do have a lot of books about being a lesbian.”
Susan Bunch: “Well, they make you take a class.”

*Friends* (1994)

Course description: This is not that class, but it is a class for anyone who is concerned about the ethical treatment of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons in history and contemporary society. In keeping with TCU’s mission - to train ethical citizens for a global community - this course aims to increase our understanding of sexual diversity via a survey of the substantial contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender authors to literary history. Students will trace the history of sexual identity in literature by both heterosexual and homosexual authors from early antiquity to the present, focusing on gay writers’ stylistic and thematic innovations in genres such as poetry, drama, memoir and film. Since much of the information about alternative sexual practices in literature is encoded or symbolic, this is, methodologically, a course about reading for a subtext. The purpose of the course is not to debate homosexuality - as right or wrong, as a choice or a genetic predisposition - but to grasp what different writers and epochs have made of same-sex feelings as a feature of human psychology, and therefore, a recurrent motif in literary works which aim to plumb the dark corners of the human mind. Finally, this is not just a class for students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, their friends and supporters; rather, LGBT is for anyone looking to sharpen critical reasoning and reading skills while enhancing his or her understanding of sexual diversity in the literary canon.

Course objectives: One of the main objectives of the course is for students to learn the lexicon of sex, gender and object choice. Through our readings, students will learn that psychosexual identities like “Transgender,” and
“Bisexual” are a recent phenomenon, but that same-sex attraction is not. Students will learn when and why the practice of certain sex acts came to imply an entire psychological profile by tracking the representation of homosexuality in literature. In writing a series of papers, student will learn a variety of technical/medical and theoretical terms, including invert, rake, sapphist, tribade, Molly, invert, and transgender, to the historical epoch where each term was in use. They will also learn the political and social climate towards LGBT persons for a large portion of western history. Students will absorb theoretical readings from the major figures in gender studies, including Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick and Michel Foucault, and will read fiction, drama, and poetry, as well as watching a variety of documentary and narrative films.

The world of gender and sexual identity is not a black and white world, but it is a place to learn to make nuanced and careful arguments.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

Graded assignments for this course explore the interaction between our privately held values and our social actions. As we explore writers from a perspective emphasizing the role of sexual identity and object choice in the making of their art, students are expected to articulate an ethical standard of treatment for sex-variant persons based upon a valuation of their contribution to literary culture. Each student will write traditional academic papers exploring the interaction of biography and literature for LGBT authors, but will also participate in an action/rhetoric project and then present it to the class. An action/rhetoric project involves finding language to address an important inequality in LGBT lives and then acting to redress the problem. Because homophobia so centrally concerns public policy acts which powerfully affect private life, and because LGBT persons’ writing and speaking in particular has focused so directly on change and action (personal or public), I'd like students to enact our understanding of LGBT issues in this course. The Action Rhetoric Project may address an important public or personal issue, and might take some of the following forms:

- Making and administering a questionnaire (such as the one in Una Fahy’s book) which identifies and resolves internalized homophobia among friends and acquaintances
• Writing a letter which evaluates institutional homophobia in businesses, organizations, and the law and asks for reasonable accommodation

• Making a short film or writing a creative piece which deconstructs popular myths about sex-variant people.

• Researching the origins and meanings of LGBT symbols, such as the pink triangle, the rainbow, and the lambda, deciding on a meaningful one, and distributing it on campus or another venue with textual explanations of the history.

• Researching state laws governing whether LGBT persons may adopt or foster children, including the biological children born to their life partners.

• Researching military guidelines governing the private sexual expression of LGBT persons and the right to publicly admit those sexual relationships

• Opening an intellectual discussion of homophobia calmly and constructively with a group

• Addressing “compulsory heterosexuality” in language and action, perhaps by providing a list of terms to substitute for heterosexist ones

• Reporting hate crimes and gay- and lesbian-bashing incidents and harassment.

• Exploring the history of LGBT rights on the TCU campus; highlighting an incidence of homophobia in a campus organization (may be historical or contemporary)

• Researching and evaluating the social inequities faced by sex-variant people in Texas and other states, including legal rights to work, serve in the military, obtain housing, marry, inherit or leave property to a same-sex partner

• Conducting an interview with an older (40+) LGBT person, covering aspects such as the changing rights of LGBT persons, in public and private lives.

• Identifying a piece of anti-gay legislation and write to your representative asking to have it changed and explaining the reasons why it discriminates against LGBT persons.
• Identifying a cultural artifact which indulges in homophobic hatred, such as a film, song, or television show. Writing a letter to the studio or record label which released the work explaining why the item promotes fear and hatred of LGBT persons. Writing to GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, to report the work.

• Identifying a cultural artifact which promotes the humane treatment of LGBT persons. Writing a letter to the studio or record label thanking them for fair representation. Writing to GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, to praise the work.

Secondly, the students will attend a public talk, rally, or event which focuses on the issue of LGBT culture and rights and provide an analysis of a reading/event. These events may include:
  o Campus Talk
  o Documentary Film Viewing (see bibliography for possibilities)
  o Pink Bag Lunches sponsored through the Women’s Resource Center
  o a play by an LGBT author or one which explores LGBT themes
  o a book-signing/reading by an LGBT author or public figure
  o a Gay and Lesbian rights rally
  o a Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (such as the one in Dallas on November 2-11, 2007), etc.
  o a Gay and Lesbian Music Festival (such as the True Colors Festival in Dallas June 23, 2007)
  o a Gay and Lesbian Sporting Event (such as the Gay Games)
  o a church service at a congregation which serves or embraces LGBT members, or which has an openly gay minister

GAPs, Gender analysis papers (biweekly): 20%
Action/Rhetoric Statement: 20%
Attendance and write-up of an event: 10%
Final portfolio: 50%

Course Policies:
Cell phones, blackberries and pagers: Make sure you have switched off all devices prior to coming to class and leave them in the bottom of your bag. You will not be permitted to take a call unless you have informed the instructor in advance that you are a parent with a child who may require emergency attention.

Late Work: You must make arrangements in advance to submit late work. Late work will lose one full letter grade for each class meeting it is late. Work that is more than two weeks late will not be accepted. If you know you will be missing class, please get your work in ahead of time.

Unexcused Absences: Your attendance is expected and required for this course. I will excuse absences for official university functions, and illnesses for which you provide the instructor with a dated form from a physician. Unexcused absences are those for which the student has no official documentation, or which are self-reported by the student (i.e., you cannot excuse your own absences, no matter how piteous the story). With more than three absences, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. With more than four absences, your final grade will be lowered by two full letter grades. With more than five absences, your final grade will be lowered by three full letter grades. With more than six absences, you will receive a failing grade for the class.

Disability Statement: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. No otherwise qualified individual shall be denied access to or participation in the services, programs, and activities of TCU solely on the basis of a disability. The University shall provide reasonable accommodations for each eligible student who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, (b) has a record or history of such an impairment, or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. Information concerning a student's disability is treated in a confidential manner in accordance with University policies as well as applicable federal and state laws. Documentation presented to the Coordinator shall be reviewed by appropriate University professional(s) to verify the existence of a disability. Further documentation
may be required from the student to substantiate the claim of a disability or to assist the University in determining appropriate accommodations. **The Coordinator for Students with Disabilities may be contacted in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, room 11 or at (817) 257-7486.**

Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. The Coordinator will prepare letters to appropriate faculty members concerning specific, reasonable academic adjustments for the student. The student is responsible for delivering accommodations letters, conferring with faculty members, and returning validation of the receipt of information to the Coordinator. The Coordinator consults with the student and with University faculty and staff to ensure delivery of appropriate support services and serves as liaison between the student and the faculty member as needed.

Students who wish to appeal a decision regarding appropriate accommodations shall do so in writing to the Affirmative Action Officer, who shall decide the appeal.

**Academic Misconduct:** Any act that violates the spirit of the academic conduct policy is considered academic misconduct. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

**A. Cheating.** Includes, but is not limited to:
1. Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings.
2. Using in any academic exercise or academic setting, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test.
3. Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during an academic exercise without the permission of the person in charge of the exercise.
4. Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release.
5. Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in a manner that leads to misrepresentation of either or both students work.

**B. Plagiarism.** The appropriation, theft, purchase, or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one's own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the
quoting or paraphrasing of another's work without giving credit therefore.

C. Collusion. The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.

D. Abuse of resource materials. Mutilating, destroying, concealing, or stealing such materials.

E. Computer misuse. Unauthorized or illegal use of computer software or hardware through the TCU Computer Center or through any programs, terminals, or freestanding computers owned, leased, or operated by TCU or any of its academic units for the purpose of affecting the academic standing of a student.

F. Fabrication and falsification. Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves altering information for use in any academic exercise. Fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.

G. Multiple submission. The submission by the same individual of substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) for credit more than once in the same or another class without authorization.

H. Complicity in academic misconduct. Helping another to commit an act of academic misconduct.

I. Bearing false witness. Knowingly and falsely accusing another student of academic misconduct.
Classroom as “Safe Space” Agreement:

In order for this class to work as a community of scholars and professionals grappling with academic issues related to sexual orientation and diversity, we must all agree to exercise a high degree of maturity. Revelation and confession are not expected of any student; no one should feel pressured to wear any particular label as a result of registering for this class. Even the requirement to attend a gay rights event presumes observer status on the part of the student. If you infer private information about students, instructors, or guests, or if private information is openly shared within the classroom, that information must remain within the confines of the classroom. Rumor and hearsay could have profound negative effects on the health, well-being and financial support of students. If you are unable to maintain the confidentiality of this classroom, this is not the course for you.

Please sign here to show that you understand this document and return to the professor:

I, ____________________________

agree to limit my transmission of information related to this class carefully. I agree that I will not post conversations or inferences about students, guests, or instructors from this class on internet web pages such as Facebook and Myspace. I understand that information idly shared may result in physical injury or emotional trauma to my fellow students or a rupture in their relationships with others, including financial support they receive from family members. The instructor is not liable for my failure to maintain confidentiality.
Required texts:
Alison Bechdel, Fun Home
Lillian Faderman, ed. Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Writing from the 17th Century to the Present
Una Fahy, How to Make the World a Better Place for Gays and Lesbians
William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night (Dover)
---., Sonnets (Dover)
Robert Louis Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Dover)
Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest (Dover)
The Penguin Book of Gay Short Stories

Reading Schedule:

Week One: Greek Love
M 8.20 Ovid, Metamorphoses, “Apollo and Daphne,” “Echo and Narcissus,” “Hermaphrodite,” “Iphis and Ianthe,” and “Ganymede.”
Gender Analysis Paper #1: Topic: Both Plato and Sappho lived in a Greek context that considered bisexual expression normative, yet neither “Platonic love,” nor “Sapphic love” in contemporary parlance, conveys “normative bisexuality.” Explain the meaning of the two terms and explain how they differ today. Please refrain from beginning any sentence with the words, “Webster’s Dictionary defines . . . .”

Week Two: Homosocial and Homoerotic Cultures of the Renaissance
M 8.27 Shakespeare, Sonnets; Eve Sedgwick, “Swann in Love.”
W 8.29 Christopher Marlowe, Edward II (1590); John Boswell, Same Sex Love and Marriage in Early Modern Europe, excerpt.
Screening: Derek Jarman, Edward II (1991)

Week Three: The Renaissance, continued
M 9.03 Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, Acts 1-2
W 9.05 Twelfth Night, Acts 3-5
Screening: Trevor Nunn, Twelfth Night (1996)
GAP #2: Topic: Focusing on one influential Greek sex-variant icon (such as Sappho, Ganymede, Echo etc.), explain how the figure is represented in the original source texts, and contrast that representation with Renaissance representations of the figure from our reading. What key aspects are different? Which ones are relatively continuous?

Week Four: The Female Transgender Experience
W 9.12 Charlotte Cibber Charke, The Diaries, in Faderman
Kristina Straub, “The Breeches Part,” essay
Dianne Dugaw, Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, handout
Screening: Queen Christina (1933)

Week Five: The 18th century: Rakes and Cockscombs
M 9.17 Anne Lister, Diaries (1791-1840)
W 9.19 John Rochester, Earl of Wilmot, poems
John Cleland, “the Phoebe episode,” and “the two Sodomites” excerpted from Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1749)
Barbara Creed, “Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys and Tarts.”

GAP #3: Topic: Explain the reasons why some of our authors and characters in the 17th and 18th century were drawn to cross-dressing. Are the reasons different for men and women; are there class-inflected reasons to cross-dress? Who has more mobility as a result of transvestism, and who has less?

Week Six: Victorians: The Epistemology of the Closet
M 9.24 R. L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
W 9.26 Christina Rossetti, Goblin Market in Faderman
Michael Field, poems in Faderman

Week Seven: European Fin-de-Siecle/ The Decadents
Importance of Being Earnest
(Dover)

Carmilla in Faderman

The Pure and the Impure in Faderman

“Epistemology of the Closet,”

handout

The Importance of Being Earnest (2002)

GAP #4: Topic: Explore one system of coded language in the readings from the 19th century that appears to refer to homosexual practice. According to Sedgwick, a specific epistemology, or “theory of knowledge” is presumed by such encoding. Does your selected code bear out her theory? What would it mean to the identity of readers to belong to a small, select group of those who can break the code?

Week Eight: American Expatriates and High Modernism


Paris Was a Woman

Week Nine: LGBT persons, Europe and Fascism

Federico Garcia Lorca, Poet in New York; Albert Goldbarth, Different Fleshes

Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, excerpt; Erica Fischer, Aimée and Jaguar: A Love Story, 1943

Leontine Sagan, Mädchen in Uniform (1931)

GAP #5: Europe had been a draw for LGBT persons since the early 20th century, but the rise of fascist governments put an abrupt end to the atmosphere of tolerance for sexual diversity. Focus on one country (Spain, Italy, Germany, France) and explain how specific legislations targeted LGBT persons. Which laws led to the restriction of women’s rights and/or the limitations of LGBT rights under fascist regimes? How are the rights of the two groups related?

Week Ten: Harlem Renaissance
M 10.22  Bessie Smith, Bricktop, Josephine Baker and Blues Women
W 10.24  Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Richard Bruce Nugent
          Screening: Cheryl Dunye, The Watermelon Woman (1996)

Week Eleven: The Trouble with Normal: the Fifties and Sixties
          Screening: The Celluloid Closet
          GAP #6: Russo describes a system of encoding information in The Celluloid Closet which will be familiar to us from Victorian Decadent literature. How did the terms and practices of the Harlem Renaissance factor into white LGBT vocabularies during the 1950’s and ‘60s?

Week Twelve: Let it all hang out: The Seventies
M 11.05  Audre Lorde, "From Zami, a new spelling of my Name," C+O, pp. 560-
W 11.07  Achy Obejas, “We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like That?” Jewelle Gomez, Sapphire, Kitty Tsui, poems in Faderman
          Screening: After Stonewall

Week Thirteen: The Eighties: AIDS Activism and Gay Rights
M 11.12  Thom Gunn, James Merrill, Rafael Campo, Timothy Liu, poems
W 11.14  Randall Kenan, “Run, Mourner, Run,” and Edmund White, “Reprise,” in PBGSS; Sarah Schulman, People in Trouble, excerpt
          Screening: Angels in America
          GAP #7: Topic: Is it fair to say that the AIDS crisis subsumed other LGBT issues in the public imagination during the 1980’s? How does our
reading record the work of Lesbians and others during “the Gay Men’s Health Crisis”?

Week Fourteen:  Fundamentalist responses to homosexuality
M 11.19  Jeanette Winterson, Oranges are not the Only Fruit
Screening:  One Nation Under God
W-F  Thanksgiving Recess

Week Fifteen:  20th and 21st Century LGBT Experience
M 11.26  Kate Bornstein, Gender Outlaw; excerpt; David Plante, “The Princess from Africa,” and Alan Gurganus, “Adult Art,” and Richard McCann, “My Mother’s Clothes,” PBGSS
W 11.28  Kirk Read, How I Learned to Snap; Richard Rodriguez, Days of Obligation: An Argument with my Mexican Father, and David Sedaris, Me Talk Pretty One Day, excerpts
Screening:  Kimberly Peirce, Boys Don’t Cry

GAP #8: Topic: The Early Modern theme of transvestism and gender blending is back with a vengeance in the turn of the 21st century. Using specific examples from our reading, offer a plausible account for the recurrence of female husbands and mollies in the present day. How have science and medicine altered the landscape of LGBT authors since our first authors explored the topic?

Week Sixteen:  Mutable Desire
M 12.03  James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room, excerpt
W 12.05  Kissing Jessica Stein, excerpt
Film Bibliography

Ackerman, Chantal. *Je, Tu, Il, Elle*, BEL (1974)
---., *Rendezvous d’Anna*, BEL (1978)


---., *Dark Habits*, SPA (1984)
---., *Kika*, SPA (1994)
---., *Labyrinth of Passion*, SPA (1982)
---., *Matador*, SPA (1986)
---., *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls*, SPA (1980)
---., *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, SPA (1988)


---., *The Living End*, US (1992)


Buñuel, Luis. *Un Chien Andalou*, SPA/FRA (1929)
Cavani, Liliana. *Night Porter*, ITA (1973)
Cocteau, Jean. *Beauty and the Beast*, FRA (1946)
---., *Blood of a Poet*, FRA (1930)
Delannoy, Jean. *This Special Friendship*, FRA (1964)
Farberbock, Max, Aimee and Jaguar, GER (2000)
Fellini, Federico. Fellini-Satyricon, ITA (1969)
Fosse, Bob. Cabaret, US (1972)
Gilbert, Brian. Wilde, UK (1997)
---., Proteus, CAN (2003)
---., Zero Patience, CAN (1993)
Hermosillo, Jaime Huberto. Doña Herlinda and her Son, MEX (1985)
Holland, Agnieska. Olivier Olivier, FRA (1992)
Jackson, Peter. Heavenly Creatures, NZ (1993)
Jarman, Derek. The Angelic Conversation, UK (1985)
Kidron, Beeban. Oranges are Not the Only Fruit, UK (1990)
Krishnamma, Suri. A Man of No Importance, IRE/UK (1994)
LaBruce, Bruce. Super 8-1/2, CAN (1994)
MacDonald, Hettie. Beautiful Thing, UK (1996)
Mamoulian, Bernard. Queen Christina, US (1933)
Mankiewicz, Joseph. Suddenly Last Summer, US (1959)
Metzger, Radley. Therese and Isabelle, GER (1968)
---., Show Me, CAN (2004)
Parker, Ol. Imagine Me and You, UK (2005)
Potter, Sally. Orlando, UK (1992)


Richardson, Tony. **A Taste of Honey**, UK (1961)


---., **When Night is Falling**, CAN (1995)

Sagan, Leontine. **Mädchen in Uniform**, GER (1931)


Smith, Kevin. **Chasing Amy**, US (1994)


Troche, Rose. **Go Fish**, US (1994)

Trueba, Fernando. **Belle Epoque**, SPA (1992)
---., **Even Cowgirls Get the Blues**, US (1994)
---., **Mala Noche**, US (1985)
Von Prauheim, Rosa. **I Am My Own Woman**, GER
---., **A Virus Knows No Morals**, GER (1985)
Walsh, Aisling. **Fingersmith**, UK (2005)
Weir, Peter. **Picnic at Hanging Rock**, AUS (1975)
Wilder, Billy. **Some Like it Hot**, US (1951)
Wood, Ed. **Glen or Glenda**, US (1953)

**Documentary Film Sources:**
Davis, Kate, *Southern Comfort*, US (2001)
---., *Paragraph 175*, FRA/UK/GER (2000)


White, Kevin. *Not all Parents are Straight*, US (1988)


Bibliography of Textual Sources, Primary and Secondary

Ai. *The Killing Floor and other Poems*.

Anon. *Love Letters between a Nobleman and the famous Mr. Wilson*


Anzaldua, Gloria and Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*.


---., Odd Girl Out. 1957.

Bechdel, Alison. The Complete Dykes to Watch Out For. ---., Fun Home. 2006.


Capote, Truman. Music for Cameleons Breakfast at Tiffany’s In Cold Blood


Cunningham, Michael. The Hours.

---., A Home at the End of the World.


---., Surpassing the Love of Men


Leduc, Violette.  La Batarde.

---., Therese et Isabelle

Lee, Harper.  To Kill a Mockingbird.


Moore, Lisa L.  Dangerous Intimacies


Savage, Dan.  Savage Love.

Schulman, Sarah.  People in Trouble.

Sedaris, David.  Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim.

---., Holidays on Ice.

---., Me Talk Pretty One Day.


Schwarz, A. B. Christa. Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance (Blacks in the Diaspora)


Winterson, Jeannette. Oranges are not the Only Fruit.
---., The Passion.
---., Sexing the Cherry.
---., Written on the Body.

Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One’s Own
---., Orlando

---., A Safe Sea of Women: The History of Lesbian Fiction.
