

[Online Class](#)

M/W 9-12.15

O/H: Tu 10-12

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[Zoom](#): 271 850 3064

WGSS S212E: Reading Sexuality

This course investigates the literary archive of queer and trans desire in America since World War I. Drawing on aesthetic and theoretical texts, we will examine the way sexuality articulates within economic, racial, and political formations.

Our historical survey begins with the queer poets of the Harlem Renaissance, and Saidiya Hartman's speculative Black feminist history of alternative sexualities in the early 20th century. From there we turn to post-World War II visions of sexual difference, from Frank O'Hara and Andy Warhol's camp cosmopolitanism to Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde's radical feminist intimacies.

The course concludes with two interrelated conversations. First, an interrogation of the enmeshment of race, class, and desire in neoliberal America, as explored in Samuel Delaney's experimental memoir *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, AIDS elegies by Essex Hemphill and John Keene, and philosophical readings by theorists such as Cathy Cohen and Jasbir Puar. Secondly, a comparison of the way Queer Studies and Trans Studies approach questions of embodiment, agency, and the erotics of politics.

Course Objectives

One central goal of this course is improving your writing, thinking and argumentation. Together, we hope to craft sophisticated, coherent, relevant and engaging arguments that answer academic and social problems.

An equally important objective is for you use writing to understand the social systems we inhabit, to see the world more clearly and/or better appreciate its complexities. Thinking together, in this course, we want to reflect on the way class, capital, race and gender influence sexuality.

Required Texts

Samuel Delaney, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*

All other readings will be provided on Canvas.

Academic Honesty

Avoid plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Study the rules of citation and attribution. The University has a disciplinary process to deal with this kind of academic misconduct and it can have very serious consequences. This is not just about rule-following though. It is about recognizing and valuing the work of others. Citation is an ethical practice. Plagiarism has undermined the academic careers of minoritized scholars. Please let me know if you need any assistance determining when you need to cite, but I ask that you first consult [Yale's policies on plagiarism](#) and [The Writing Center's information on using sources correctly](#).

Absences, Attendance, Participation

Unexcused absences are not permitted during Summer Session. If you are unable to attend due to illness, please let me know as soon as possible so alternate arrangements can be made.

The participation grade is holistic. It is based on your contributions across the course, and contributions are not measured by a quantity of comments. Dominating class discussion, in fact, is poor participation. Sometimes silences in class (whether individual or collective) are productive (for instance, they give us time to think, or reveal a problem in our line of conversation or confusion in our thinking). That said, if you tend not to feel comfortable speaking in class discussions, I would encourage to use this class as an opportunity to develop that skill. If you are unsure how to find a way into class discussion, please see me during office hours and we can strategize ways to make sure you are heard and/or develop other ways of measuring participation.

Extensions

All due work is due at midnight on the relevant day, unless otherwise noted. For the two papers, extensions of 24 hours or less will be granted for any reason. Late work may receive less feedback. In some cases, significantly less feedback. This is because I can only set aside so much time for marking. I trust you to respect me as an instructor (and a person!) and only use extensions when they are genuinely necessary.

For homework tasks, it is important to keep as close to our schedule as possible, especially when your papers will be workshopped. Remember: (a) more complete drafts will receive better feedback but (b) presenting some material is better than no material.

Emails and Office Hours

Email is best for brief clarifications or urgent issues that require a 2-3 sentence reply. I will almost always reply to those emails within 48 hours. For broader or more general issues, let's schedule a meeting during office hours. If you can't meet during office hours, I'll try my best to accommodate you at another time.

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10-12. Zoom ID: <https://yale.zoom.us/j/2718503064>

Inclusivity and Accessibility

This is an inclusive classroom. Remarks or behavior designed to threaten, marginalize, diminish, or denigrate other students on the basis of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, cultural background, ability, age, or religious affiliation will not be tolerated. All students should feel able to fully contribute to class discussion. This means we need to communicate respectfully, thoughtfully, intentionally, and empathetically. In turn, this requires us to think reflexively about our own positionality, and our various forms of educational and social (dis)privilege. If you feel threatened, undermined or marginalized by class discussion, please let me know.

Please let me know if you require any educational accommodations. This can be due to disability or any other relevant factor. [Student Accessibility Services](#) will have more information and resources.

Submission

Please only submit work electronically via email (daniel.swain@yale.edu). I hope to never subject you to my handwriting.

Attach your work as a Word file (not pdf!) with the file name [SURNAME] Paper [#] [DRAFT / FINAL]. For instance, if I was submitting a draft for Paper 3, I would write SWAIN Paper 3 DRAFT.

Assessments

- Paper 1: Close Reading, 2-3 pages, (20% of final grade)
 - A brief close reading of a Harlem Renaissance Poem
 - This is, in part, a diagnostic paper. It's an opportunity to get early feedback on your writing.
- Paper 2: Major Essay, 6-8 pages, (40%)
 - Paper 3 is an independent critical essay that analyses TWO brief literary, artistic or cultural texts dealing with sexuality.
 - The essay should seek to bring the texts into conversation and advance an original thesis.
 - The assignment will be completed over four weeks in a number of stages:
 - Proposal meeting (5%)
 - All students will meet with me on Tuesday Week 2 to discuss possible paper ideas
 - Proposal (5%)

- A 1-2 paragraph abstract of your argument and 5 peer reviewed sources.
 - Draft 1 (10 %)
 - A 4-6 page draft
 - Final Paper (20%)
- Participation and Class Presentation (20%)
 - Engagement in seminar discussions
 - A brief class presentation on an assigned reading
- Take Home Exam (20%)
 - A 3-4 page essay response from a brief list of questions.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Most readings are on Canvas.

All due dates are at midnight, unless otherwise noted.

WEEK	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	WORK DUE
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Departures: The Harlem Renaissance</u></p> <p>Langston Hughes: “Spectacles in Color”, “Lenox Avenue: Midnight”, “The Weary Blues”, “Song for a Banjo Dance”, “A Black Pierrot”</p> <p>Claude McKay: “Bennie’s Departure”, “Consolation”, “Harlem Shadows”, “The Snow Fairy”, “The Tropics in New York”.</p> <p>Countee Cullen: “Timid Lover”, “If You Should Go”</p> <p>Mae Cowdery, “My Body”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Beautiful Experiments: Sexual Difference in Early 20th Century America</u></p> <p>Saidiya Hartman, from <i>Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments</i></p> <p>Nyan Shah, “Policing Strangers and Borderlands”</p>	Paper 1 Due Saturday
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cruising and Camp</u></p> <p>Frank O’Hara: “Having A Coke With You”, “Homosexuality”, “Poem (Lana Turner Has Collapsed)”, “Biotherm”</p> <p>Susan Sontag: “Notes On Camp”</p> <p>Andy Warhol: “Screen Tests”, “Camp”</p> <p>Wayne Koestenbaum: “On Frank O’Hara’s Excitement”, excerpts from <i>Andry Warhol</i></p> <p>Roland Barthes: “Soirees de Paris”, excerpts from “Pleasure of the Text”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sexuality and Second Wave Feminism</u></p> <p>Adrienne Rich: “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience”, “Diving into the Wreck”, selections from “Twenty One Love Poems”</p> <p>Audre Lorde: “Uses of the Erotic”, “Conversations in Crisis”, “Pirouette”, “Recreation”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Combahee River Collective Statement</p> <p>Valerie Solanas, “SCUM Manifesto”</p>	<p>Paper 2 Proposal Meetings Tuesday (9am-1pm)</p> <p>Paper 2 Proposal Due Saturday</p>

3	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Blackness and AIDS Memory</u></p> <p>John Keene: “Mission and Outpost”, “You Have Smallish Hands For a Brother” “In A Warm, Sunlit Room, Talking of Brotherhood” <i>Punks</i></p> <p>Essex Hemphill: “When My Brother Fell”, “Ceremonies”, “Does Your Mama Know About Me?”, “Object Lesson”</p> <p>Isaac Julien: <i>Looking for Langston</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Times Square Red, Times Square Blue</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Samuel Delaney</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Essay 2 Draft 1 Due Friday</p>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Queer Theory I: Performativity</u></p> <p>Judith Butler: “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (1991) and “Critically Queer” (1993)</p> <p>Jack Smith: excerpt from <i>Flaming Creatures</i> (1966)</p> <p>Carolee Schneemann: <i>Interior Scroll</i> (1975)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Trans Sexuality I: Manifestos of Transformation</u></p> <p><i>Paris is Burning</i> (film)</p> <p>Susan Stryker: “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage” (1994)</p> <p>Sandy Stone: “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” (1991)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Essay 2 Final Draft Due Friday</p>

5	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Queer Theory II: Race, Class, Empire</u></p> <p>Tommy Pico: excerpt from <i>Junk</i></p> <p>Cathy J. Cohen: “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” (1997)</p> <p>Jasbir Puar: “Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics” from <i>Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times</i> (2007)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Trans Sexuality II: The Erotics of Politics</u></p> <p>Andrea Long Chu: “On Liking Women”</p> <p>Maggie Nelson: <i>The Argonauts</i> (excerpt)</p> <p>Kim Petras, various songs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Take Home Exam Due Friday</p>
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