**WMST 402: Queer Theory/INTS 475: Queer Theory and Literature**

Room: Petersen Hall 1113

Time: Wednesdays 4:30pm-7:10pm

Instructor: David Powers Corwin MA: MAIS

Office: Johnson Center 240KA or Zoom

Office hours: Please email me for an appointment

**Women and Gender Studies**

**Commitment to Diversity Statement**

*Women and Gender Studies seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own*.

**Course Description:**

This course challenges rigid categories and definitions in order to create a space for marginalized voices. It examines the inconsistencies and erasures that often characterize notions of sex, gender, sexuality, and sexual desire. Lastly, we will explore categories that intersect with sexualized identities such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, location, and age.

This course is meant to be an introductory course to queer theory, while still being a 400 level course in the program. We are certainly not even digging into a substantial amount of the scholarship and issues surrounding post-structuralist feminism and queer theory. We will do as much as we can while we are together in class, but this course is meant to begin a conversation that you continue to have in other venues moving forward. If we do not discuss something in class that you want to always feel free to bring it up.

The course will have a strong focus in the following areas:

1. canonical texts in the 20th century that we now consider queer theory
2. The intersection of race, sexuality, and class in conversations about gender
3. How institutions reinforce patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and classism
4. How to write about, read, and discuss theory in academia as well as the applicability of theory into practice.

**Required Texts:**

*City of Night*-John Rechy

*Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*-Andrea Lawlor

*Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing*-Stacey Waite

Access to Blackboard for other readings and some films on online platforms (all in the course schedule)

**A note on the course text choices for class**: I choose the texts I choose based on my expertise and what I feel is important for the canon of queer theory. I also feel that it is important to discuss the voices at the margins that may not be seen as “canonical,” which we will unpack what I mean in class. While I am always open to suggestions for things to read on my own time, I have made the choices I have made for this semester for a variety of reasons and do not welcome conversations about making changes to the texts or workload mid semester. The syllabus and all it encompasses stands from Day 1. You don’t have to love every text that we read to learn something from it; I certainly have not loved everything I have read for the 24 years I have been in school. 😊

**Paper Policy:** All papers can be written in MLA or APA format and submitted a doc. or docx. Papers will be assessed on cohesion of the argument, proof of original thought, ability to critically analyze theoretical frameworks and issues, syntax and sentence structure, grammar construction, and use of scholarly sources. A letter grade will be deducted for each page less than the minimum requirement. If the assignment is four pages, and three are turned in, I will be begin the grade at a B+. I don’t have a late policy for the course, which means I don’t accept late work without prior approval. However, in most circumstances, I am happy to provide an extension on most assignments. You MUST turn in an acceptable final paper in order to pass the course.

I am happy to read drafts of your essays ahead of time. You must give me a week before the deadline to give you feedback. I will not assign a grade to the draft, but will give you constructive feedback about what could use improvement and strengthen your argument.

See the last page of the syllabus for the University’s policy on academic integrity. If you are unsure about a citation, ASK! Plagiarism is much more than submitting a paper you found online. If you do not include a works cited or fail to follow one format correctly, I as an instructor am obligated to refer you to the Honor Board.

**Paper rubric:**

**A level:** The paper demonstrates careful attention to critical analysis and expresses original, clearly put together points about the texts and addresses topics that were not solely what was discussed in class. Class discussions are reflected significantly, but not the central base on the paper. The paper demonstrates concise organization with specific topic sentences and transitions between points. The paper is virtually free of grammatical and sentence errors and is free from word repetition and awkwardness. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has an original succinct thesis with evidence to support the thesis and deep analysis of the points being made and the writer's evidence. When sources are asked for, the paper demonstrates careful attention to the citation format used and cites all of their sources correctly and effectively. When the paper is driven by a prompt or has specific directions as to format and content, the directions are followed seamlessly and there is clear evidence that follows the criteria explicitly. The paper meets the page requirement.

**B level**: The paper demonstrates careful attention to critical analysis and expresses some original insight into the texts, but may rely mostly on discussions from class without integrating original ideas. The paper demonstrates solid organization with some transitions between points, but has some awkwardness. The paper has a few sentence level errors, but these errors only minimally take away from the writer’s main points. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has an original succinct thesis with some evidence, but needs more proof from other sources. When sources are asked for, the paper demonstrates careful attention to the citation format used and cites all of their sources correctly and effectively, but may have some minor issues. The paper is less than or two pages more than the page minimum or maximum.

**C level:** The paper does not meet the page length requirements by more than one page. The paper engages in little to no critical analysis of the texts and only summarizes texts and ideas. The paper is poorly organized with ineffective topic sentences. The paper has many sentence level errors and many awkward word choices and sentence structures and loses the reader in this awkwardness. If the assignment involves a prompt, the prompt is not answered and the paper only minimally refers to the prompt. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has several arguments in one paper with little or no connections. The paper reads as a literature review of facts rather than an argumentative essay. When sources are asked for, the paper uses the correct amount of sources, and but does not follow MLA or APA style correctly.

**D level:** The paper does not meet the page length requirements by several pages. The paper does not minimally answer the prompt or follow directions (source count, page count, which texts to use) or engage in any critical analysis and only summary. The paper has sentence level errors in virtually every sentence and there is no attention to proofreading. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has no thesis and only a series of observations with no connections. When sources are asked for, the paper does not have the correct amount of sources or does not cite them in MLA or APA correctly (ie in-text citations are not done correctly, sources are left out in the works cited or added and not used).

**F level:** The paper is not submitted or is an off topic paper.

**Technology Policy:** Laptops are only to be in class the days we have readings from Blackboard. You are not to have them out on days we are reading out of novels or other books. If you have a Kindle edition, you may bring your Kindle; however, no other exceptions to this policy.

**Instructions sent via email or posted on Blackboard hold the same weight as syllabus instructions.**

**Cell phone policy:** Cell phones will not be needed in this course for any reason. If you need to make a call or send a text, I am happy to make accommodations; however, you must discuss this with me AHEAD of time. If I see that you are using your cell phone during class, I will first give you a warning. After that, I will not say any more and will deduct three points off your final grade for every time moving forward that I see you using it.

**Communication:** I prefer communication via email at [dcorwin@gmu.edu](mailto:dcorwin@gmu.edu). Please do not email me at [dcorwin@masonlive.gmu.edu](mailto:dcorwin@masonlive.gmu.edu) as I do not check that account. Due to university policy, we are required to communicate with you through your Mason outlook email. Please send me emails through this account and check your email regularly (at least once a day) for class notifications. I am also happy to meet with you in person during office hours. If those times do not work for you, we can set up a separate appointment. To brainstorm research topics or to discuss grades, I require in-person communication. I will not discuss grades via email.

I will respond within 36 hours of receiving an email Monday-Thursdays. Emails sent Friday-Sunday will be responded to on by Monday evening as this is the time that I am doing my own research.

**My expectations for course preparation**: This course is a discussion based course. While I may need to briefly lecture on some topics, we are a learning community that depends on everyone’s voices rather than just mine. I rarely speak for the entire (or even half of) the class. I expect everyone to have read the texts, watched the films, and come with specific comments and questions for me, but more importantly for your peers. My classes do not operate as a relinquishing of information from me to you. We ALL have to generate class conversation and questions. If you can’t commit to this type of environment, please see me after the first day of class.

Some specific examples of excellent class preparation:

* You should come to class with specific observations rather than “I found this text interesting.”
* “I don’t understand this particular concept, does anyone have anything they can add” rather than “I don’t understand any of this text” or remaining silent
* “What can I say in class that would be helpful to me and my peers?” rather than “I don’t have anything to say in class or I usually don’t participate”
* “How can my instructor and peers help me with the course load and concepts? Rather than “This class is too much work.”
* Note taking is going to be really helpful when watching media texts for your in class participation, but also your assignments.
* Come to class with connections AMONG texts ACROSS THE SEMESTER. Think outside of the day we are in class. You will be asked to make these connections both through in class and outside of class writing assignments. I will also ask you to make connections between our class conversations and what is going on in the world as we speak.
* ANALYZE don’t summarize. We all know what the text says, but we don’t know what YOU have to say about the text.

**Policy on Incompletes:**I rarely give incompletes. The only circumstances that I will give one is a death/illness of a close loved one at the end of the semester or a severe illness or injury where a doctor says that due to these issues you cannot complete the course on time. You have to have at least 75% of the coursework completed as well in order to qualify for an incomplete. No exceptions to this policy.

**Class Climate Rules:**

Open, frank discussion without referring to groups by derogatory manner, that is, the use of terms that are or have been used to describe groups of people in a demeaning way will NOT be used in class. Confront ideas, concepts, theories.  Do NOT confront/attack individuals. Emotion is great, but so is cognition.

To make this course work we’ll all need to:

* Afford each other mutual respect
* Confidentiality with regard to discussions in class
* Agree to disagree, agreeably!
* Examine self/explore
* Non-judgmental of others
* Know and say what you feel
* Value each other
* Be honest with self and others
* Show humility and keep an open mind
* Use appropriate humor
* Be direct
* Attack issues not individuals
* Listen constructively
* Question and participate

**A Note on When Life Happens….**

As someone that strives for social justice, identifies as a feminist, and whose research is on trauma-infused pedagogies, I understand that life gets out of our control more often than not, particularly during a pandemic. Since we are discussing emotionally charged issues, there many be discussions or readings that trigger particular past experiences that you or someone else has had. Please consult with me if you find yourself in this situation and we can figure out how to best support you through a reconfiguration of your engagement with that text and/or on campus resources. Any text in this course has potential to be triggering to some folks.

Many of you have competing responsibilities in addition to school and I want to be supportive of those. While I hold high standards and all work has to be completed in the course, I am happy on a case by case basis to make adjustments to due dates when needed. I just ask for at least 24 hours notice and for a meeting to discuss how to best move forward if you regularly find that you can’t meet requirements/due dates in the course. I do not, however, change the workload mid semester.

**Advice for the Reading**

* Even though many weeks may seem like there is not much reading, the reading is complicated and theoretically dense (hence the product of a theory course). Allow enough time to complete these assignments.
* Take notes either in a notebook, a pdf tool, or online.
* It is ok to read a whole article and not understand it. Welcome to theory! ☺ Reread the sections you really struggled with and come to class with questions.
* This course is A LOT of reading and you agree to these terms by staying in the course. ☺

**Grade Breakdown**

**Participation** (Reading, watching films, In-class writing, occasional short-out of class writing, discussion, attendance, evidence of having read the text): **40%**

* Due to the substantial amount of reading for the class, 40% of your grade is participation and engaging with the texts.
* Participation is NOT just attending class, but it is difficult to participate without attending class. It is engaging with the text through class discussion and showing evidence of having read the text. Also, showing proof that you are paying attention to your classmates and the instructor contributes to my assessment of participation.
* Frequent tardiness will result in a reduction of your participation grade.
* Occasionally, I may ask a question in class and ask you to go home and write a few paragraphs in response to that. Also, I may ask for the same in class and build the discussion around your responses. I have some of these scheduled at the end of the semester to encourage continued reading; however, I may give these unannounced. These assignments cannot be made up without a doctor’s note.
* If I see that the class as a whole is falling behind in the readings, I will give reading quizzes. These quizzes will count toward your participation grade. These cannot be made up without a doctor’s excuse.
* I will calculate grade out of 20 pts for your participation grade after the midterm and another one at the end of the semester.

**Queer Theory and Coffee Partners 15% (3 @ 5% each) (See Assignment Sheet on Blackboard)**

**Theory Exercises 10% (2 at 5% each) (See assignment sheet on Blackboard)**

**Research Paper 30% (See assignment sheet on Blackboard)**

**Process Grade 5% (Research paper proposal, draft of research paper, and conference with me).**

You may also get up to 4 points of extra credit for attending two events (2 points each event) that Women and Gender Studies is hosting even though I hope you attend more of them. If you complete any extra credit options, these points will be added at the end of the semester after all other assignments have been graded.

You can also earn these 4 points by attending an all day Safe Zone Training or two half day ones (awareness OR gender module AND the ally skills). You can sign up for this training at lgbtq.gmu.edu.

**Course Schedule**

**( Subject to Change)**

**Week 1**

**1/27**

Introductions

Why Theory?

Beginnings of the History of sexuality

**Read:** hooks-“Theory as a Liberatory Practice” (Blackboard)

Halberstam-“Introduction” to *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*

**Week 2**

**Begin Theory and Coffee Discussions**

**2/3**

The History of Sexuality

Michel Foucault- *The History of Sexuality* (selections on Blackboard)

Eve Sedgwick-*Epistemology of the Closet* (selections on Blackboard)

Adrienne Rich “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence” (Blackboard)

**2/10**

Sedgwickian Debates

“How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay” (Blackboard)

*Between Men* Introduction and Ch 1 (Blackboard)

**Watch:** *Dawson’s Creek* Season 3 Episode 20 “The Longest Day Ever” (Netflix)

**2/17**:

Rethinking the Queer Canon

**Read:** Musser**-“**Re-membering Audre- Adding Lesbian Feminist Mother Power to Black”

Lorde-*Sister Outsider*: “Man Child: A Black Lesbian’s Feminist Response”

[**https://search-alexanderstreet-com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/work/bibliographic\_entity%7Cbibliographic\_details%7C4401746#page/1/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic\_entity%7Cdocument%7C4401747**](https://search-alexanderstreet-com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4401746#page/1/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C4401747)

**(will need Mason credentials to log in)**

Grewal and Kaplan: Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality (Blackboard)

-deOnís-What’s in an “x”?: An Exchange about the Politics of “Latinx”

**First Theory Exercise Due by 2/19**

**2/24:**

Butlerian Debates

*Gender Trouble*-Chapter 1 (Blackboard)

“Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (Blackboard)

*Bodies That Matter* “Chapter 1”-(Blackboard)

**Theory and Coffee Partner 1 Due by 2/26.**

**3/3**

Intersectionality, Race, and Queer Theory

**Read:** Reed “The Whiter the Bread, The Quicker You’re Dead: Spectacular Absence and Post-Racialized Blackness in (White) Queer Theory” (Blackboard)

McBride: “Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies” (Blackboard)

Ferguson: “Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and Gay Identity” (Blackboard)

**Second Theory Exercise Due by 3/5.**

**3/10:**

Queer Literature

Queer Night Life

**Read: *City of Night* pgs 15-101**

Roof *Come as You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (Introduction)-Blackboard (This reading you can do a good skim as long as you see the main argument/points).

**Research Paper Proposal Due TODAY!**

**3/17**

Queer Literature

Queer Night Life/Drag Culture

**Read: *City of Night* pgs: 102-205**

Butler-Bodies that Matter Chapter 4

**Watch:** *Paris is Burning*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzIJfMFNUjA>

**3/24:**

Queer Literature

Queer Night Life

**Read: *City of Night* pgs 206-329**

**Read**: Faris-Queering Networked Writing: A Sensory Autoethnography of Desire and Sensation on Grindr (Blackboard)

**3/31:**

Queer Literature

Queer Night Life

**Read: *City of Night* -Finish**

**Theory and Coffee Partner 2 Due by April 2nd.**

**4/7**

Queer Literature

Trans Debates

**Read: *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl* pgs 1-92**

**Meyer**-“I'm Making Black People Look Bad”; The Racial Implications of Anti-Queer Violence(Blackboard)

**Draft of Research Paper Due by 4/9; Conferences begin**

**4/14**

Queer Literature

Trans Debates

**Read: *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl-Finish***

**4/21**

Intersectionality, Class, and Queer Theory

Brim-*Poor Queer Studies* “Introduction, Chapter 3 (Blackboard)

Schweighofer: “Rethinking the Closet: Queer Life in Rural Geographies”

Bautista-“Queering Trauma and Resilience Appalachian Style!” (Blackboard)

**Conferences finished by 4/23.**

**4/28:**

Queer Pedagogy

Alexander: *Literacy, Sexuality, and Pedagogy*: Introduction (Blackboard)

Waite-*Teaching Queer* (all but final chapter)

**Theory and Coffee 3 Due by 4/30.**

**5/5:**

**Final Exam Period**

**4:30-7:15pm**

Finish Queer Pedagogy discussion

Queer Theology

Read: *Queer Theology* Chapters 1 and 4 (Blackboard)

Seedat: “Sitting in Difference: Queering the Study of Islam” (Blackboard)

**Final Research Paper Due by 5/6 at 11:59pm**

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100%

A: 93-96%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89%

B: 83-86%

B-: 80-82%

C+: 77-79%

C: 73-76%

C-: 70-72%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% or below

**Campus Policies**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. The University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu/), is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

**Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. [University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/?_ga=2.94227165.1364438867.1499346356-1286492189.1460059294) (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

**Campus Resources**

**OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474.

All academic  accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. [http://ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu/)

**WRITING CENTER**: A114 Robinson Hall; [(703) 993-1200](tel:%28703%29%20993-1200); [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)

The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications It is best to make an appointment; walk-ins are accepted if there are openings at that time. Assistance is also offered online. You are highly encouraged to take advantage of this free service! After the first writing assignment, I may recommend that you visit the writing center.

**UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES** “Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

**COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS**): [(703) 993-2380](tel:%28703%29%20993-2380); [http://caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu/)

**WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CENTER; JC 240K** (703) 993-2986; <http://wmst.gmu.edu/center/>

The Women and Gender Studies Center sponsors programs and events that are relevant to this course. It has a library of material that may be checked out. We also support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. Hours: Monday-Thursday: 9-6; Friday: 9-5

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Resources**:

SUB I, Room 2200 703-993-2702 lgbtq.gmu.edu

**Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE)**

SUB I, Room 2400 703-993-2700 odime.gmu.edu

**Student Support and Advocacy Center**

SUB I, Room 3200 703-993-3686 ssac.gmu.edu

24 hr Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Crisis Line: 703-380-1434