

History 389-DL1: Topics in U.S. History
Queer History
Fall 2023, George Mason University

Professor Laura Moore

Email: lmooreb@gmu.edu (best way to contact me)

Virtual Zoom Office Hours: Vary by week and readily by appointment

In this advanced history seminar, we will explore how historians research and analyze LGBTQ history and how we can view US history through a queer lens. Queer folks have always been a part of our communities but have been excluded from the historical record. This erasure means that we do not have a clear picture of our past. This course covers US history from the founding to the present day, all from queer perspectives. In the process, we will discuss the changing definitions of non-normative sexualities and genders. This course also takes an explicitly *intersectional* approach. That is, we recognize that the meanings of and experiences of sexual identity intersect and are shaped by those of gender and race as well as ethnicity, class, region, nationality, age, disability, and more. In addition, we will engage with the political impetus behind the exclusion of queer stories, and the fight to include them, as that is also an important part of the history.

A discussion-based, advanced course like this one can only succeed if every student keeps up with all the readings and other assignments and takes part actively in building the intellectual community of the class. This engagement is especially important in an asynchronous course where we are not regularly seeing each other face-to-face.

READINGS

We will be reading several scholarly books as case studies of queer history scholarship, one overview of US queer history, and other examples of queer history that I will link to via our Blackboard page. You need to have your own copies of the following required books – either digital (ebook) or hard copies. Make sure you have the correct editions, that's really important!

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Bronski, Michael. *Queer History of the United States*. (2011) ISBN: 978-0807044650

Cleves, Rachel Hope. *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America*. (2014) ISBN: 978-0190627317

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls & Twilight Lovers*. (2012) ISBN: 978-023174896

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1880-1940*. (2019) ISBN: 978-1541699212

Berube, Allan, Freedman, Estelle & D'Emilio, John. *Coming Out Under Fire: 20th Anniversary Edition*. (2010) ISBN: 978-0807871775

Smithers, Gregory. *Reclaiming Two-Spirits*. (2022) ISBN: 978-0807003466

TECHNOLOGY

This course being online and asynchronous, I assume you have reliable, daily, internet access. Please alert me to any potential technology or access issues you might encounter.

All class information is on our **Blackboard** page where you will download, read, and submit materials every week.

I also expect you to check your **GMU email** at least once every twenty-four hours, including weekends. It is our official university communication method, and I am required to use it when emailing with you. Keep in mind that what I email you is official course content. In other words, make sure you get my emails. I will hold office hours and study sessions via **Zoom**, the link to which will be available on the Blackboard page.

ADVICE

My favorite college professor used to say that true learning begins when you admit that you're confused. In that spirit, I encourage you to **ask questions** of the professor, other students, and yourself. I really enjoy talking with students – please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

The keys to doing well in this course are to participate actively, keep up with the reading, and bring imaginative questions to course materials and discussions. Expect to spend on average about ten hours each week on this course – and sometimes more. But don't expect to become overwhelmed. If you are averaging much more than ten hours a week, or are feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason, **TALK TO ME**.

This class focuses on topics that many of us find very personal and both emotionally and intellectually challenging. That is to be expected and respected. We recognize that each of us comes to this class with our own experiences, backgrounds, and values that are not all the same and that will affect how we approach course materials. Those differences are welcomed. At the same time, *no one should feel obliged to disclose personal information*. In other words, let's all strive to maintain an open, congenial, and comfortable setting for our academic discussions. And, please remember that you are always welcome to **TALK WITH ME** in confidence about any concerns you may have about class topics or discussions, including if you anticipate or experience anything that is triggering for you. I am committed making this class a safe, shared (if virtual) space.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take my obligations under the University Honor Code seriously and expect you to do the same. You have signed the Honor Code, and all the work you do in this course is subject to the policy. It is especially important that you do not commit **plagiarism** – that is using others' wording or ideas without attribution. You can avoid it by **using proper citation methods** (including to ALL internet sources used in any kind of research) and quotation marks when quoting. Remember that summary, paraphrasing, and quoting all require citations. And remember, as well, that plagiarism includes not only published sources, but also the writing or ideas of friends, family, or classmates without acknowledging them. Review the Writing Center's plagiarism handout available at <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/citing-sources/plagiarism> and the full Honor Code including its definition of plagiarism at <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>

Use of artificial intelligence software or word mixing software to write anything for this course or to disguise plagiarized work is also academically dishonest and considered cheating in this course. In addition, sharing materials created by the instructor or other students, such as uploading them to sites outside of our course, violates the Mason Honor code as does uploading your own coursework to online study sites. Please check the Office of Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

RESOURCES

I encourage you to utilize the many support services available to GMU students, which are summarized here:

<https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/resources-and-support-services>

For example, **Learning Services** offers workshops in academic skills, some of which are particularly well-suited for advanced history courses: <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/>.

I appreciate students reaching out to me about how I might best support them while in my course. That said, I strongly encourage you to turn to Mason's confidential resources as appropriate, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (**SSAC**) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (**CAPS**) at 703-993-2380.

A commitment to diversity and inclusion is central to my teaching philosophy, and I strive to do my part to foster a welcoming, safe, and equitable learning environment. I encourage all students to review the university's **diversity statement** at <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/general-teaching-resources/mason-diversity-statement/>

As an instructor, I also have certain legal obligations, including under **FERPA** (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>) and **Title IX** (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>); contact Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu).

If you are a student with a disability who needs academic accommodations, please talk with me privately and contact the **Office of Disability Resources** at (703) 993-2474 (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

WEEKLY RHYTHM

Our class week runs from Monday-Sunday and all times are eastern, ie Fairfax time zone. Start the week by checking its module on Blackboard, beginning with the instructions and materials I will post by noon on Mondays. Discussion Board Conversations begin Wednesday nights with initial replies due by Friday night and final posts due by Sunday night. I will review the previous week's Homework and Conversations beginning at 8:00am each Monday, so all Discussion Board posts must be in by then. Some other assignments, including the three exams, will be due mid-week. I will also hold Zoom office hours and study sessions at different times throughout the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Exams: 50% of course grade Discussion Boards: 30% Research Projects: 20%

Exams:

These three "take-home" essay exams allow you to demonstrate your skills of historical analysis, your ability to synthesize course materials into a cohesive and logical interpretation. If you keep up with the readings, weekly assignments, and discussions, and take good notes, you will be well-prepared for the exams.

Midterm 1 will be relatively short and is due on September 5; Midterm 2 is due ; and Midterm 3 on I will provide the questions well in advance and be available for study help.

I will accept the first two exams with a penalty of one half-grade for each twenty-four hours, or portion of twenty-four hours, that I receive it after the deadline. That is, a "B-" exam will receive a "C+" if I receive it a few minutes, eight hours, or twenty-four hours late. Note as well that you must alert me if you are going to turn in an exam late. Exam 3 is due during the final exam period, and I cannot accept it late.

Discussion Boards:

"Weekly Homework:" Each week I will start a discussion thread with a set of questions based on that week's assignments, which you will find in the week's module. You will post your answers to these questions as a reply to my post.

I will post the Weekly Assignments and Questions by noon on Monday and students must post their Weekly Homework no later than 8:00am the following Monday. To get credit, these posts *must be on time* and *must address the questions* in a substantive way, referring directly to course materials. I will usually not be asking for summary of the readings, but I should be able to tell that you completed all that week's assigned readings and gave it some serious thought. I am not so much looking for "correct" answers as thoughtful and analytical ones, including sharing your uncertainty and confusion and your own questions.

"Conversations:" All students will participate in weekly conversations related to that week's course materials. These conversations work similarly to in-class discussions in a face-to-face class. Each week, some students will act as "Discussion Catalysts" responsible for starting the conversations. We will schedule the Catalysts during the first week of the semester. Each "Discussion Catalyst" will ask a question in that week's Conversations Discussion Forum by starting a thread. The students who are not acting as Catalysts that week must *respond to at least two of these questions and must post at least four replies total* each week. The Catalysts must respond to at least half of the replies on their thread. Catalysts may also want to respond

to the other threads, but are not required to. I will act as Catalyst for the first and last week of the semester and for the weeks when Midterms are due. I will also provide further instructions, guidance, and examples.

Catalysts must post their initial question, starting their conversation thread, no later than 8:00am on Thursday; at least two replies by each of the other students must be posted by 8:00am on Saturday; the final round of replies must be posted no later than 8:00am Monday. To get credit, the initial questions and all the replies must be *on time* and show thoughtful engagement with that week's course materials AND with what the other students are saying in the conversation.

Research Projects:

These projects will give you the opportunity to explore more deeply a queer history topic that interests you by evaluating how another historian has researched it and by doing some primary source research yourself. I will provide detailed instructions and guidance separately. You will meet with me individually at least twice during the semester to plan and discuss these projects. You will also share updates and the final projects with the rest of the class. The final projects are due during the last week of the semester.

Please note:

*I reserve the right to make changes to the course and to the assignment schedule in ways that I deem in the best interests of the class.

*It is ***your responsibility*** to use the syllabus, to keep track of any changes, and to make sure you have received all instructions.

*If you have any questions, concerns, confusions, or worries about the course at any point:

TALK TO ME

WEEKLY SCHEDULE - OVERVIEW

Week 1 ends August 27

Read: Syllabus

“Author’s Note” and “Introduction” in Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*
Articles 1, 3, and 4 of *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History* links on Blackboard

Week 2 ends September 3

Read: Bronski, Chapters 1 and 2

Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia*, Chapters 1-9

Labor Day September 4

Midterm I due September 5

Week 3 ends September 10

Read: Bronski, Chapter 3

Cleves, *Charity & Sylvia*, Chapters 10-19 and Afterword

Week 4 ends September 17

Read: Bronski, Chapters 4-5

Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, Chapters 1-5

Week 5 ends September 24

Read: Faderman, *Odd Girls*, Chapters 5-11 and Epilogue

Week 6 ends October 1

Read: Bronski, Chapter 6

Chauncey, *Gay New York*, Part 1

Week 7 ends October 8

Read: Chauncey, *Gay New York*, Parts 2 and 3

Week 8 ends October 15

Read: Bronski, Chapters 7-8

Midterm II due October 17

Week 9 ends October 22

Read: Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*, Chapters 1-4

Update on Research Projects due October 24

Week 10 ends October 29

Read: Berube, *Coming Out*, Chapters 5-7

Week 11 ends November 5

Read: Berube, *Coming Out*, Chapters 8-10

Week 12 ends November 12

Read: Bronski, Chapter 9

Smithers, *Reclaiming Two Spirits*, Part 1

Update on Research Projects due November 14

Week 13 ends November 19

Read: Smithers, *Reclaiming*, Part 2

Week 14 ends November 26

Read: Bronski, Chapter 10

Smithers, *Reclaiming*, Part 3

Thanksgiving November 22-24

Week 15 ends December 2

Reading: TBD