

Dr. Kenneth Kidd
AML 3285, Section 1H61
TUR 2305 MWF 7
Spring 2019

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Office: TUR 4370
Hours: MWF 8
& by appointment

Contemporary Queer Literature

Our syllabus is also posted here: kbkidd.org and in our Canvas site.

Texts

Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History* (2016)
Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973)
David Leavitt, *The Lost Language of Cranes* (1986)
*Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1992)
Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982)
Carmen Maria Machado, *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017)
Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)
D. A. Powell, *Useless Landscape, or a Guide for Boys: Poems* (2014)
David Pratt, *Bob the Book* (2010)
Meredith Russo, *If I Was Your Girl* (2016)
Maggie Thrash, *Honor Girl* (2015)
David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives* (1991)

*optional if you can watch the HBO version (2003)

Books are listed on the UF textbook adoption site. You may purchase them anywhere.

There are also readings on UF e-reserves: <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/>. Have these readings accessible on the day we're discussing them or be able to recall in detail. There are also some readings that are available online; links are provided directly on the syllabus.

We will use Canvas for major essay/project submission and return: <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Overview

This course explores contemporary queer literature, meaning mostly literature by, for, and about contemporary queer people about their lives and experiences. We'll concentrate on the literature but also approach it in cultural and theoretical context. By "contemporary" I mean 1970s forward, with an emphasis on recent material; by "literature" I mean a wide range of genres, including long and short fiction, memoir, poetry, and queer theory. Our basic goal is to develop a working sense of what contemporary queer literature involves and looks like, in light of American culture and politics. I expect the course to be a space in which people can safely but also critically engage with issues of identity, social and family belonging, ethics, legal rights, and cultural politics.

Reading pace will be brisk. Generally we will conduct class as a seminar, so participation is vital. Please arrive on time having read the assigned material, on the first day the material is listed on the syllabus. Be ready to discuss.

Attendance Policy

Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. You may miss three class sessions without explanation. For each subsequent missed class without a doctor's note I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade. If you are not here when I take attendance -- usually at the beginning of class, but sometimes at the end -- you will be counted absent. If late, you will be marked absent.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>.

Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

Electronic Media

You may bring a laptop, ebook reader, or tablet to class for the purpose of note-taking and reviewing assigned articles. Please do not surf the web, check email & social media, etc. Please put your phones on silent. No texting please.

Assignments and Grading

No late work accepted.

Memos. You will write 8 reading responses of 1-2 single-spaced pages each, 12pt font. (See below on the potential Wikipedia assignment modification). The memo is simply a short meditation on the assigned reading. Your memo should offer a response to the book as a whole; don't turn in a memo if you haven't finished the book. You may address a number of issues or focus more in-depth on one or two; just be as specific as you can, and support your responses with examples and details from the text.

I do not expect you to have a thorough interpretation, but your memo should offer some kind of evaluation. In other words, it should be more than random or unconnected thoughts about the work. Consider the text as a text, or author's writing or plot strategies – in other words, get beyond your response to characters in the text. If you like, you may make use of outside readings (biographical sketches, scholarly articles, websites, etc.). This assignment is designed to stimulate class discussion, and to help you remember the texts and generate paper ideas.

We have 12 texts; you need to submit 8 memos. No more than one memo per work. You may choose which texts to write about, but you must submit your memo by midnight ahead of the first day we discuss the work about which you are writing, usually Monday. The only exception is *Angels in America*: you may turn in one memo prior to any day we are discussing that work. If there is also an article or other reading assigned that day, you may address it as well, preferably in connection with the literary text. Doing so is optional.

If you like, you may also create up to three alternative memos, in the form of a meme-o or short work of fanfiction. If a meme-o: create a meme that captures/reflects the text in question, perhaps a central relationship or theme or dynamic. The meme should feature the image, adapted as necessary, along with an appropriate caption. You must also include at least one paragraph of explanation or analysis. If fanfiction: rewrite a key scene, or write a new short chapter to be included in the work. Don't forget the appropriate classification tags (genre, pairings, etc.)! A paragraph of explanation should accompany the creative work.

Memos will be submitted electronically to Canvas and (again) are due by midnight ahead of the class day in question. I will grade each memo and average the grades with any quizzes given.

Quizzes. There may be a few unannounced quizzes which you may not make up unless you can provide documentation of illness or emergency. These quizzes will usually consist of 3-4 short questions about the reading that you can answer in several sentences or less.

Essays/Projects. In each of the below options, your project should run at least 5 double-spaced pages, with 12-point font. You may choose each of these options once but you can coordinate them potentially. You need an argument and supporting evidence for all options but Option 5. You are welcome to draw on scholarly material such as articles or academic books as appropriate. Papers are due by the specified due dates below (Essay 1, 2) but you can turn drafts in earlier, and if you do so I will respond and make suggestions for revision. Please submit to Canvas in the form of a Word Document. Identify the option undertaken.

Option 1. Queer: A Graphic Guide invites us to “think queerly” and gives some examples of how queer theory has been used to interpret literature and popular culture (pp. 98-124). Think queerly by developing a queer theoretical interpretation of a literary or media work of your choice, either something we've read together or something that interests you outside our syllabus. Use the ideas of at least one queer theorist and draw directly from their work, with proper citation. While I want you to apply the terms or concepts developed by that theorist, it's also great to think *with* those terms or concepts. You are welcome to draw on memos if that's helpful.

Option 2. Analyze one winner of a queer book award in light of that award's terms and criteria and whatever aspect(s) of the work that interest you. Some options include the Stonewall Book Awards (<http://www.ala.org/rt/glbtrt/award/stonewall>), the Lambda Literary Awards (<https://www.lambdaliterary.org/awards/>), and the Prism Award for queer comics (<https://www.prismcomics.org/>). No additional sources required.

Option 3. Design a syllabus for a queer literature course. This involves researching other syllabi (there are many online), reading about literary and critical texts, putting together a list of readings and assignments, and reflecting on what you are doing and why. Required: a list and possibly a schedule of readings, literary and critical, a course overview/rationale, assignment descriptions, and some reflection on both what the course might do and the process of drafting the syllabus. Talk about what you'd like to explore with this course, how and why, and about what challenges you see in going about it. You could focus on particular genres, or time periods, or topics – it could be more general, or highly specialized. It does need to be literature focused. You are welcome to add other materials, too, such as recommended readings or resources, etc.

Option 4. Open topic on contemporary queer (American, but negotiable) literature. Even if you decide to analyze something larger, like a genre – queer detective fiction or whatever – I'd recommend anchoring the discussion in one or two representative texts. You need also to use at least one refereed article or book/chapter. If you choose your own adventure here I want you to come discuss in office hours first.

Option 5. Revise an existing Wikipedia “stub” or underwhelming page – or compose and add a new page – on a queer writer of your choice (known or unknown, on our syllabus or not), and write a reflection on the entry: the information you added, or the changes you've made, their significance, and your experience working on the entry. A number of writers are underrepresented or neglected, so the first step is to choose an author. You will need to research the author and their work, which means tracking down articles, interviews, and other materials. Along with the new page, your reflection, I'd like a list of those resources with which you work in your entry. If a revised entry, you'll need to document the original piece (a screenshot is fine) for comparison. If you undertake this option, you will complete trainings on the Wiki Education platform (<https://dashboard.wikiedu.org>) and work with the Wikipedia Expert assigned to our course. You can write on authors that you also write about in other options.

Though potentially very fun, not to mention useful to others, this option may require more work; it depends on the author you choose and how ambitious you get. If you research and write a new entry and the work is substantial – more than the equivalent of a 5-page critical paper -- you only have to submit 5 memos (requires my approval in advance).

Active Participation. You will receive a grade for active participation, which means coming to class regularly and on time, paying attention, asking questions, and contributing to discussion. You must do all of these things in order to receive an A for participation. If you are habitually late, you will not receive an A for participation. Nor if you pay more attention to your laptop or cellphone than to class discussion.

Essay 1	30%
Essay 2	30%
Memos and quizzes	30%
Active participation	10%

Grade Scale. I give A's to essays using an original and spirited argument to illuminate complexities of language and theme. I give B's to well-organized, well-developed, relatively error-free essays with sparks of originality or daring, and B-'s to competent essays needing more complex development and/or clearer focus. Lower grades mean greater problems with development, structure, and grammar. Recurrent grammatical errors lower the grade; occasional spelling errors and typos don't. Proof your essays. The best essays sustain complex and or audacious arguments; a good B essay capably summarizes and compares themes.

For information on UF grading equivalences and policies, which I follow, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Schedule

January

- 7 Introductions.
- 9 Pruitt, “LGBT Courses and Questions of Canonicity” (e-reserves).
- 11 McRuer, “Reading the Queer Renaissance” (Canvas files). Watch *Before Stonewall* (1984): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-iYuNy8gHY>
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- 14 *Queer: A Graphic History*, pp. 3-16 (intro and histories of “queer”) & 17-31 (a “potted history” of sex and how we think about it).
- 16 *Queer: A Graphic History*, pp. 32-59 (precursors to queer theory). Read also Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”:
<http://users.uoa.gr/~cdokou/RichCompulsoryHeterosexuality.pdf>
- 18 *Queer, A Graphic History*, pp. 59-83 (“queer theory is born”) & 84-97.
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- 21 MLK holiday. Watch *The Committee Documentary*:
<http://www.thecommitteedocumentary.org/>
- 23 *Rubyfruit Jungle*.
- 25 *Rubyfruit Jungle*.
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- 28 *Rubyfruit Jungle* continued if needed; *Zami*.
- 30 *Zami*.

February

- 1 *Zami*. Read also Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic”:
<https://www.cds.hawaii.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/resources/diversity/SisterOutside.pdf>
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- 4 *Lost Language of Cranes*.
- 6 *Lost Language of Cranes*.
- 8 *Lost Language of Cranes*. David Leavitt visits.
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- 11 *Queer: A Graphic History*, pp. 98-124 (“queer engagements”).
- 13 *Angels in America*. Read also:
<https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/3/30/17168846/angels-in-america-broadway-review>
- 15 *Angels in America*.
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- 18 *Angels in America*.

20 *Angels in America*.
 22 *Angels in America*. Read also Sarah Schulman, "Let the Record Show":
https://dakrolak.wordpress.com/2017/06/23/let-the-record-show/?fbclid=IwAR30rrzKCp7iFEBGz8C9ZQocBDcHIRiGTJ_kRAiz5imTqPFxKT Lk5GczBG0

 25 *Close to the Knives*.
 27 *Close to the Knives*.

March

1 *Close to the Knives*. Read Alexander, "Practicing Utopia":
https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/practicing-utopia-recent-retrospectives-work-david-wojnarowicz/?fbclid=IwAR00jGSZs7ImHEkW9lxSMo7BkcP21KVIUAAqwk_gxsReA-CX6klqR3APVYs#! **Essay 1 due.**

 4-8 Spring Break

 11 *Bob the Book*.
 13 *Bob the Book*.
 15 *Book the Book*. Hurley, "Prologue" and Ch. 1 (esp. through p. 20) (e-reserves).

 18 *Useless Landscape*.
 20 *Useless Landscape*. Kidd, "Introduction: Lesbian/Gay Literature for Children and Young Adults."
 22 *Useless Landscape*. Halberstam, "Chapter 3: The Queer Art of Failure" (Canvas files).

 25 Scott and Fawaz, "Introduction: Queer About Comics" (e-reserves). *Honor Girl*.
 27 *Honor Girl*.
 29 *Honor Girl*. Kidd & Mason, "Camping Out: An Introduction" (Canvas files).

April

1 *The Argonauts*.
 3 *The Argonauts*. *Queer: A Graphic History*, pp. 125-152 ("criticisms and tensions of queer theory").
 5 *The Argonauts*. Brim, "Poor Queer Studies" (e-reserves or Canvas files).

 8 *If I Was Your Girl*.
 10 *If I Was Your Girl*. Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay" (e-reserves).
 12 *If I Was Your Girl*. Gill-Peterson, "Introduction: Toward a Trans of Color Critique of Medicine" (e-reserves). Also, check out:
<http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/transgenderchildrentebellum>

 15 *Her Body and Other Parties*.
 17 *Her Body and Other Parties*.

- 19 *Her Body and Other Parties*. Ahmed, “Ch. 2. Feminist Killjoys” (Canvas files).

22 *Queer: A Graphic History*, pp. 153-173 (“whither queer theory?”). McRuer,
“Introduction: Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence” (e-
reserves).
24 Conclusions, reports.

Essay 2 due Monday, April 29. No exceptions.