

# Clark University

## Comparative Literature 109: Sexuality and Textuality

Fall 2011

Class time: Monday/Wednesday 4:15—5:30  
Classroom: Estabrook 303

Professor Tobin  
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Office Hours: Tu/Th 2-3  
Office: Estabrook 309

“Sexuality and Textuality” serves as an introduction to gay and lesbian literary studies and queer theory. It looks at questions of sexuality and literature in ancient and early modern texts (from the Hebrew, Greek and English traditions), as well as in modern texts (from German, French, Spanish, Japanese and English traditions). In addition to literary texts, students will work with a number of cinematic representations of queer sexuality. Besides these primary texts, students will work with important secondary literature about sexuality.

“Queer Theory at the Roundabout.” A special feature of the course this year will be a series of four lectures by scholars and activists from the region who are working on queer issues as they affect the world at large. Students will have the chance to develop their skills in thinking about sexuality and literature by working with these innovative scholars and activists.

### Assignments:

short paper on premodern sexuality	10%
secondary literature oral discussion and write-up	10%
research paper	25%
participation	25%
cicada forum discussion entries	10%
small assignments, class exercises	10%
Queer Theory at the Roundabout	10%

Short Paper on Premodern Sexuality: This paper will be about 5 pages long and will use the ideas from the assigned secondary literature to discuss questions of sexuality in the assigned ancient and early-modern texts. You will probably want to focus on just one primary text, but bring in arguments from several of the critical texts. Use MLA style with a works cited format.

Secondary Literature Oral Discussion and Write-Up: After the pre-modern section, students will choose an assigned piece of secondary literature to read, write-up, and briefly discuss in class. In the class discussion, please try to give the three or four most important points of the paper. Simply reading a blow-by-blow account of the argument will not be helpful!

Research Paper: This will be due at the end of the semester, when our final examination would be, December 19<sup>th</sup>. It should be around ten pages long, focus on one major text that we have discussed in the class (if you want to do something comparative, chat with me first), and use at least five pieces of secondary literature.

Participation: This is a discussion-based course, so even if you're shy, try to make a contribution to the class at least every other meeting. If you tend to talk a lot, look around to make sure that you're not preventing other people from getting a word in. If you are concerned about your ability to participate for whatever reason, come in and see me and we'll try to make some arrangement. See guidelines below for participation grades.

Cicada Forum: Make a contribution to the forum before each class. That way we can begin class with a discussion already in place.

Small Assignments and Exercises: Periodically, class will be structured around small assignments and exercises. For instance, students will divide into small groups and prepare background information on each of Claude Cahun's "heroines."

Queer Theory at the Roundabout: We will be hosting 4 visiting scholars and activists from around the region who are working on queer issues around the world. 5 students will be assigned to each speaker, reading up on their background, studying some of their writing, preparing an introduction and anticipating questions for them.

# Grading

## Grade Structure for Papers:

**A:** An “A” paper will have a clear and original thesis. It will be well written, with a lively sophisticated style. Arguments will be comprehensive, take into account obvious objections, and buttressed by strong evidence. There will be virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling.

**B:** A “B” paper will have a clear thesis and be solidly written.

**C:** A “C” paper will lack a clear thesis. Many arguments will not follow from the evidence given, or will be asserted, rather than proven. There will be errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**D:** A “D” paper will have a topic, but no thesis. Many arguments will lack structure and not be to the point. Others will not follow from the evidence given or will be asserted rather than proven. There will be numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**F:** An “F” paper will scarcely have a topic. Arguments will lack structure and not be to the point. There will be numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

## Grade Structure for Participation:

**A:** advances the discussion; contributes complex insights; will be articulate and engaging; and enhances and encourages the participation of others.

**B:** expresses text-based, substantial ideas; stays with the topic and continues the discussion; actively volunteers; asks good questions; shows genuine effort; but might fluctuate between “A” and “C” behavior.

**C:** shows acquaintance with the text if called on; tends to offer personal opinions without textual references; does not advance discussion; actively listens, but does not participate.

**D:** disruptive in class, abusive to fellow students; continued refusal to participate in discussion; exhibits signs of disengagement, such as sleeping, zoning out, or non-attendance; and reveals no evidence of having done the reading.

**F:** “D” behavior carried to the extreme.

## Two Final Notes:

Attendance: Attendance is vital for a seminar class. More than three absences may result in the lowering of your final grade by a whole letter.

Lateness: Late papers complicate the grading process. Therefore, I will take off a half grade for each day of lateness. I leave the calculation up to you whether the extra work you put into a paper will be worth the grade erosion caused by lateness.

## Day to Day

### ANCIENT SEX

- Aug. 29           Classes Cancelled: Hurricane Irene!  
Aug. 31           Introduction and Biblical Passages (Cicada)
- Sept. 5            Labor Day, no classes  
Sept. 7            Sappho (Cicada). Winkler (Cicada)
- Sept. 12           Plato's Symposium. Halperin (Cicada)  
Sept. 14           Plato's Symposium. Boswell (Cicada)
- Sept. 19           Shakespeare, Sonnets. Sedgwick. (Cicada)  
Sept. 21           Foucault. History of Sexuality. Parts 1, 2, 3. Pp. 1-74
- Sept. 26           Foucault, History of Sexuality. Part 4. Pp. 75-159  
Sept. 28           Review of "Ancient Sex"  
*First Paper Due: Friday, September 30, 4 pm.*

### THE NEW WOMAN AND EUROPEAN SEXUALITY

- Oct. 3            Lecture Series: "Queer Theory at the Roundabout"  
                  Andrew Parker, Professor of English, Amherst College  
                  "Male Maternity in Nietzsche: Queering the Mother's Gender"  
Oct. 5            Anna Elisabet Weirauch, The Scorpion, pp. 1-180.
- Oct. 10           Fall Break, no classes  
Oct. 12           Anna Elisabeth Weirauch, The Scorpion, pp. 181-340.
- Oct. 17           Claude Cahun, "Heroines" (1924), from Inverted Odysseys, pp. 44-93  
Oct. 19           Solomon-Godeau on Claude Cahun, in Inverted Odysseys

### POST-WAR GLOBAL MASCULINITY

- Oct. 24           Yukio Mishima, Confessions of a Mask (1948)  
Oct. 26           Yukio Mishima, Confessions of a Mask (1948)
- Oct. 31           Yukio Mishima, Confessions of a Mask (1948)  
Nov. 2            "A Year without Love"

Weekend Viewing: François Ozon's "8 Women"

Nov. 7           Lecture Series: "Queer Theory at the Roundabout"  
Thibaut Schilt, Assistant Professor of French, College of the Holy Cross  
"François Ozon and Queerness à la française"

Nov. 9           Lecture Series: "Queer Theory at the Roundabout"  
Cary Alan Johnson, Executive Director, IGLHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission)

Nov. 14           Class Cancelled

Nov. 16           Bechdel, Fun Home

Nov. 21           Bechdel, Fun Home

Nov. 23           Thanksgiving Break, no classes

Nov. 28           Puig, Kiss of the Spider Woman

Nov. 30           Puig, Kiss of the Spider Woman

Dec. 5           Lecture Series: "Queer Theory at the Roundabout"  
Brad Epps, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University  
"Queering Spanish Film"

Dec. 7           Puig, Kiss of the Spider Woman

Dec. 12           Last day of classes: Conclusion/Make-Up Day

Dec. 19           Research Papers Due