

Gender & Sexuality Studies 371
LGBTQ Television
Instructor: Lauren Herold
Summer 2019
Northwestern University

Course Meetings: M/W from 10am-12:30pm
Course Location: Kresge 2-440
Office Hours: Monday from 1-2pm or by appointment
Office Location: 1815 Chicago Ave, 2nd floor
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Course Description:

This course introduces students to theories and debates about representations of gender and sexuality on television. We will grapple with questions like: how have commercial news and entertainment television represented LGBTQ identities, lives, and community issues? In turn, how have LGBTQ folks responded to these images and used television programming to represent their own experiences? We will consider significant moments in the history of LGBTQ television, including the first programs to include queer and transgender characters in their content, as well as the ways in which LGBTQ activists have protested against and/or worked alongside cultural workers in the media industries to shape these images. As our class moves through television history, we will examine historical shifts in the visibility of LGBTQ people, paying close attention to the ways in which race, gender, class, and trans status shape representational dynamics. We will assess how the evolution of television programming—via broadcast, cable, and digital networks—has shaped the possibilities for the production, distribution, and reception of LGBTQ television. This course will interweave queer theory, LGBTQ history and cultural politics, and television studies to analyze and critique the programs we watch.

Learning Goals:

- 1) To analyze historical and contemporary televisual representations of LGBTQ people
- 2) To construct complex arguments around the relationship between television, gender, sexuality, and relations of power
- 3) To understand the role that gender and sexuality have played in the evolution of television history

Required Materials:

All required readings, unless otherwise noted, can be found on our course Canvas site. Students are required to complete the readings prior to the course meeting for which they are assigned and should come to class prepared to discuss their content. Screenings can be found in the Library Media page on Canvas as well as linked to in the syllabus.

Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:

Screening Response Journal: Students will be required to write a short response (150-300 words) reflecting on one program screened in every class. Students should address a particular aspect of the program that they find intriguing, analyze an issue it raises in relation to its historical context, connect the screening to the reading, and/or pose a question to discuss further in class. These reflections should demonstrate that students understand the screenings and are able to relate them to class lectures, discussions, readings, and/or personal experience. Students should keep these responses in a Microsoft Word or Google document and will turn in their journal in two parts: in class on Wednesday, July 10th and at the end of the class term, on Wednesday, July 31st.

Final Paper: Students will turn in a final 6-8 page paper using the concepts and ideas from the class to critically assess an issue related to or an example of LGBTQ television representation. Students should advance a scholarly argument about the television text in relation to the historical and cultural context in which it was created and/or received. Students are encouraged to make an appointment to discuss this topic with the instructor in the weeks before the paper is due. Students will workshop paper topics in class two weeks before the paper is due. More detailed instructions will be provided later in the term.

Attendance: Since this is a six-week summer course with only 12 meeting sessions, attendance is essential for a robust and thoughtful class discussion. Students are allowed one unexcused absence for the course. Two or more unexcused absences will result in a 10% lowering of your attendance grade (one full letter grade) per absence. Excused absences include illness, family emergency, and religious holidays. **Please email me in advance about any upcoming absences.** Please be courteous to your classmates and arrive to section on time. If you have a scheduling situation that makes it difficult to arrive on time, come speak to me about it.

Participation: Every student is a valued and important member of this course. This class is a seminar in which class time will be based around conversation. Participation includes verbal contributions *as well as* active and courteous listening. Students are expected to read the assigned articles, watch the assigned screenings when noted, and to consider them carefully prior to the beginning of class. It is helpful to take notes on readings as well as to formulate questions that can contribute to the class discussion. This classroom space is meant to be a supportive and respectful space that promotes thoughtful and collaborative scholarly thought and exploration. Abusive and/or aggressive language and behavior are not welcome here and will not be tolerated.

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 10%
- Screening response journal: 30%
- Final essay: 50%

Class Policies:

Communication with instructor: If you have any questions, problems, or difficulties, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or during office hours. Contacting me as early as possible will allow me time to assist you more effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to ask for help. I will do my best to respond to any questions within 24 hours.

Technology: This classroom is technology-friendly. Students may use laptops or tablets in class if these technologies aid their learning. All technology should be silenced in order to minimize classroom distractions. Please put away cell phones.

Late papers: Late papers will be excused only in the case of a health or family emergency. You should discuss any special circumstances for a late paper with me at least **48 hours in advance**. If you turn in a late paper without having talked to me first, your grade for the assignment will **drop ½ letter grade** for every day that it is late (e.g., an A paper become as A- one day late, then a B+ two days late).

Course Schedule:

June 24: Introduction and course overview

Read: Vito Russo, "Introduction: on the closet mentality" in *The Celluloid Closet*
Steven Capsuto, "Forward" to *Alternate Channels: The Uncensored Story of Gay and Lesbian Images on Radio and Television*
Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch, "Television as a Cultural Forum"

Screen in class: *Pose* S1E1 (FX, 2018)

June 26: Stereotype

Read: Larry Gross, "Out of the Mainstream"
Joshua Gamson, "I want to be miss understood"
John Fiske and John Hartley, "Reading Television"

Screen in class: clips from *The Homosexuals* (CBS, 1967), *All in the Family* (CBS, 1977), and Jerry Springer clips (NBC, 1990s-today)

July 1: Visibility and Representation

Read: Suzanna Walters, "The love that dares to speak its name: the explosion of gay visibility"
Tavia Nyong'o, Sydney Freeland, Lexi Adsit, Robert Hamblin, and Geo Wyeth,
"Representation and its Limits"

Screen in class: *The L Word* S1E1 (Showtime, 2004); clips: *Will & Grace*, *Faking It*, *Orange is the New Black*

July 3: Stigma – Guest Lecture by Myrna Moretti

Read: Paula Treichler, "AIDS Narratives on Television: Whose Story?"
Douglas Crimp, "Portraits of People with AIDS"

Screen at home: *An Early Frost* (NBC, 1985)
Screen in class: *Tongues Untied* (PBS, 1989)

July 8: Art and Activism

Read: Devorah Heitner, “The New Black Magic: Black Arts and Women’s Liberation on *Soul!*”
Alexandra Juhasz and Juanita Mohammed, “Knowing each other through AIDS video: a dialogue between AIDS activist video makers”

Screen at home: *Soul! Season 1 Ep 4* (PBS, 1971)
Screen in class: *We Care* video (1990)

July 10: Mainstreaming

Read: Anna McCarthy, “Ellen: Making Queer TV History”
Ron Becker, “Prime-Time Television in the Gay 90s”
Optional: Em McAvan, “‘I think I’m Kinda Gay’: Willow Rosenberg and the Absent/Present Bisexual in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*”

Screen in class: *Ellen* “The Puppy Episode” (ABC, 1997), clips from *Glee* (Fox, 2009-2015)

Due in class: Screening Journal Part 1

July 15: Capitalism

Read: Katherine Sender, “Dualcasting: Bravo’s gay programming and the quest for women audiences”
Optional: Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism”

Screen in class: *Queer Eye* (Netflix, 2019)

July 17: Performance

Read: Ralina Joseph, “‘Tyra Banks is Fat’: Reading (*Post-*)Racism and (*Post-*)Feminism in the New Millennium”
Jose Muñoz, “The White to be Angry: Vaginal Davis’s Terrorist Drag”

Screen in class: *RuPaul’s Drag Race* (Logo, 2009)

July 22: Labor and Casting

Read: Alfred Martin, “The Queer Business of Casting Gay Characters on U.S. Television”
Dan Udy, “Keeping it real: genre and politics on *I am Cait*”
Optional: Nina Metz, “Why trans actors should be cast in trans roles”

Screening in class: *Transparent* S1E1 (Amazon, 2014), clips from *I am Cait* (E!, 2015)

July 24: Fandom

Read: Henry Jenkins, “*Star Trek* Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching”

Eve Ng and Julie Russo, “Envisioning queer female fandom”

Optional: Autostraddle, “All 204 Dead Lesbian and Bisexual Characters on TV, and How They Died”

No class screening: in class final paper writing workshop.

July 29: Reception

Read: Alexander Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here”
Andre Cavalcante, “Resilient Reception”

Screening in class: clips from *Laugh-In*, *Hollywood Squares*, *Bewitched*

July 31: Industry and Innovation

Read: Julia Himberg, “Diversity: Under-the-radar activism and the crafting of sexual identities”
Aymar Jean Christian, “The Value of Representation: Toward a Critique of Networked Television Performance”

Screen in class: first two episodes of *The T*, *Brujos*, and *Brown Girls* (OTV: Open Television)

Due in Class: Screening Journal Part 2

Final Paper Due: Friday August 2nd

A Note about Course Screenings and their Content

As this is a course on LGBTQ media, students should be aware that the programs and clips screened in class will occasionally feature examples of homophobia and transphobia. Elements may include stereotype, derogatory language, hate speech, and physical violence. If you have concerns about a particular screening and its subject matter, please feel free to speak with the instructor.

University Policies:

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

For more information visit: <http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/faculty/general-information/index.html>

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

Northwestern University is committed to fostering an environment where students are safe and free from sexual misconduct. Confidential resources are available to those who have experienced

sexual misconduct. Faculty and instructors are not confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct, whether discussed in your assignments or in person, to the Title IX Coordinator, who can provide information about resources and options. I encourage students who have experienced sexual misconduct to talk with someone to get support. For more information, including how to request interim protective measures and academic accommodations or file a complaint, see [the Get Help page](#).

Northwestern University's Policies on Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment apply to all members of the University community, including students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes that he or she has been discriminated against or harassed on the basis of his or her race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, genetic information or any other classification protected by law, should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access at (847) 491-7458 or the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office at (847) 467-6571. Additional information about the University's discrimination and harassment policies, including the campus resources available to assist individuals with discrimination or harassment concerns, is available online on the [Human Resources Equal Opportunity and Access website](#).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity. (<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>) If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to the instructor before the assignment is due and/or examine the University web site. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers, providing information to others, using a crib sheet) or plagiarism of a paper (e.g., taking material from readings without citation, copying another student's paper). Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a loss of credit for that assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply, including academic suspension. The guidelines for determining academic dishonesty and procedures followed in a suspected incident of academic dishonesty are detailed on the website.

For more information on Northwestern's academic integrity policies, see:

<http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/courses-registration-grades/integrity/>.