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## ENGL 265-01, Queer Identities and Queer Narratives, Fall 2009

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ENG 265-01/ FALL 2009  
CRN 10219  
TTH 11-12:15  
KENNEDY 207

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OFFICE HRS: MW11-12:15,  
TU 12:30-1:45, & BY APPT.

### “QUEER IDENTITIES, QUEER NARRATIVES

This course will examine questions of identity and desire in a relatively small sampling of works by, and/or about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. In addition to the literary questions raised by the selected novels, plays, short stories, and poems we will be attentive to the way these works have participated in creating the modern history of sexuality, how they have helped make queer identity and queer politics possible. Some of the works we read will openly address the experiences of gay people in a homophobic world. Other works will provide insight into the narrative strategies that writers have used to explore the forbidden topic of same-sex desire. As we read and discuss these texts, we will be considering some of the vexed issues that crop up whenever one claims an identity for oneself or imposes an identity on others.

Course objectives: become conversant with some of the key works of the European/American GLBT literary tradition; be able to articulate and think critically about the major terms, concepts, and themes of this tradition; be able to interpret and argue about these works in writing, with precision and persuasiveness,

#### Required Texts\*

##### Available at the Rhodes College Bookstore

Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner Books)

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (Delta)

Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (FSG)

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (TCG)

Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Norton)

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

##### Coursepack readings available on Moodle (M)

\*Please make sure you have the edition listed above

Selected films: screening dates and times TBA

*Before and After Stonewall* (Rosenberg)

*Coming Out in the Developing World* (Scagliotti)

#### Requirements

Paper #1 (3-5 pages) 20%

Paper #2 (4-6 pages) 25%

Paper #3 (7-9 pages) 30%

Presentation 10%

Attendance and Participation 15%

(includes quizzes, homework, informal writing)

**Presentations:** Each student will sign up, in a group of 2-3, for one of 9 presentation topics. You will first research that topic on your own and prepare a short annotated bibliography presenting that research, that you will hand in to me. Then, you will work with the other members of your group to prepare a polished, informative presentation of about 15 minutes for the class on the assigned day. The bibliography will be graded individually. The group will receive a grade as a whole. Each group will need to meet with me in advance to discuss the presentation topic.

#### Resources for writing papers and documenting sources:

- “A Guide to Effective Paper Writing” (distributed to all Rhodes students), also available on-line: <http://www.rhodes.edu/9076.asp>
- The Writing Center (Barret Library) <http://www.rhodes.edu/4680.asp>

The documentation style required for this class is MLA (Modern Language Association). Guidelines for MLA style can be found in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Many writing handbooks used in Rhodes writing seminars (such as Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*), contain abbreviated versions of the MLA guidelines. If you do not already own one of these guides, *you will need to purchase one*.

**Participation and Confidentiality:** The success of this seminar depends upon the active and engaged participation of everyone in the class. The nature of the course makes it essential that all members of the class feel that they can speak freely about potentially sensitive subjects. It goes without saying that no one should fear that their words or opinions are the subject of gossip outside of class.

### **Policies**

- All assigned reading and writing is due at the beginning of the class for which it is assigned, unless otherwise noted. *Always bring the assigned text to class; repeated failure to do so will cause you to be marked absent.*
- Be on time to class. Repeated lateness will cause you to be marked absent.
- **Absences: more than two absences** during the semester will adversely affect your final grade. **Five or more absences** is grounds for failing the class. **It is your responsibility to keep track of your own absences.**
- Failure to complete one or more assignments or to attend class on a regular basis will result in a **failing grade for the course**.
- The schedule of assignments is subject to change as needed, so **if you miss a class, make sure you check with a classmate to get both notes and confirm the next assignment**. Except under extraordinary circumstances, I do not provide class notes to students who miss class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed from someone in the class.
- **Late assignments** will be penalized a third of a letter grade *per day*. Except in the case of documented illness or family emergency (and by prior arrangement with me), papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade. Under extremely special circumstances I may grant extensions on papers, but I will **only** consider requests made **in advance of the due date**. If you believe you have a legitimate reason to ask for an extension, you must contact me **at least two class periods before** the paper is due. Requests made for extensions on the night before or the day a paper is due will not be entertained. *Email is not an appropriate medium for requesting extensions or any other kind of dispensation.*
- **Email etiquette:** Email is a very useful invention that, in many ways, saves time. However, it also has some undesirable effects. I am happy to answer quick questions over email as my time permits, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the syllabus or the college web page) first. Make sure that you carefully proofread your email before pushing "send." *If there is something you need to discuss or negotiate, you need to do it in person or, failing that, over the phone.* In order to prevent email from interrupting my own work, I generally set aside one part of the day to responding to it rather than monitoring it throughout the day. I reserve the right to ignore emails that transgress these rules of etiquette.
- **I do not accept work that has been previously handed in for another class. Such work will receive a failing grade.**
- **Plagiarism:** failure to adequately document a source of any kind, whether or not intentional, constitutes plagiarism and must be dealt with by the Rhodes Honor Council. For a quick reminder of how to recognize and avoid plagiarism, see the Rhodes Writing Center website:  
[http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group\\_b/plagiarism.html](http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html)

**ENG 265 SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT AS NEEDED)**

Th 8/27 Introductions: What is “queer”? What is “queer” literature? Who gets to decide?

**Tu 9/1 What’s in a Name: Identity and Appropriation**

David Halperin, “Is There a History of Sexuality?” **M**

Lillian Faderman, “Preface” to *Chloe Plus Olivia* **M**

Selected poems (Aphra Behn, Shakespeare)

**Thu 9/3 Sodom and the Invention of Sodomy**

Genesis 18-19 **M**

Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 **M**

Dante, *Inferno* 13 **M**

Presentation: Ancient attitudes towards homosexuality and/or medieval understandings of “Sodom”

**Tu 9/8 Gender, Sexuality, Inversion**

Henry Fielding, “The Female Husband” **M**

Richard Krafft-Ebbing from *Psychopathia Sexualis* **M**

Ned Ward, from *A Humorous Account of All the Remarkable Clubs and Societies in the Cities of London and Westminster*

**Th 9/10 Victorian Sexuality**

Christian Rossetti, *The Goblin Market* **M**

Presentation: Traditions of female friendship

**Tu 9/15 Decadence, Aesthetics, and “Queer” Encoding**

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Presentation: Wilde’s sodomy trial

Th 9/17 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Tu 9/22 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Th 9/24 Katherine Mansfield, “Bliss” **M**

**Tu 9/29 The Impossibility of Heterosexuality**

Freud, From *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* **M**

Presentation: Homosexuality and the institution of psychology

Th 10/1 **Paper #1 due**; Reading TBA

**Tu 10/6 Race and Sexuality**

Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Presentation: Nella Larsen and the politics of sexual/racial passing/the politics of sexuality for African American Women

Th 10/8 Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Tu 10/13 James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*;

Baldwin, “Autobiographical Notes” from *Notes of a Native Son* **M**

Presentation: sexual subcultures in Paris and New York in the ‘40’s and ‘50’s

Th 10/15 *Giovanni’s Room*

Tu 10/20 Fall break

Th 10/22 *Giovanni's Room*

Tu 10/27 Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

Presentation: Sexuality/sexual politics during the McCarthy Era

Th 10/29 *Angels in America*

Presentation: The Stonewall riots

Tu 11/3 *Angels in America*

Presentation: The AIDS crisis/the politics of AIDS/the rise of Act-up, etc.

Th 11/5 **Paper #2 due**; Reading TBA

Tu 11/10 Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Th 11/12 Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Presentation: Design a Queer/GLBT film series

Tu 11/17 TBA

Th 11/19 Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*

Anne Fausto-Sterling, from *Sexing the Body M*

Tu 11/24 Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*

Presentation: biological perspectives on gender, sexuality, and desire

Th 11/26 Thanksgiving Holiday

Tu 12/1 *Middlesex*

Presentation: design your own GLBT literature course

Th 12/3 *Middlesex*

Tu 12/8 Wrap-up and Review

**Paper #3 Due: Tues. 12/15**