

<p>Dr. Dejan Kuzmanovic dkuzmano@uwsp.edu</p> <p>Email me to schedule a personal Zoom meeting.</p>	<p>English 384: Topics in Theory Topic: Queer Theory</p> <p>Thursday, 4:30-7:00 pm, Zoom</p> <p>Class: https://uwsp.zoom.us/j/93187343808 Office Hours: https://uwsp.zoom.us/j/9393535943</p>	<p>Drop-by Zoom Office Hours:</p> <p>Tue. 5:00-5:30, Fri. 11:00-11:30</p>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a set of recent approaches to the study of gender and sexuality and their significance in literature and culture. These approaches, commonly known as “Queer Theory,” emerged in the 1990s and share certain theoretical and political origins and premises; however, they do not comprise a unified theory. Queer Theory is a diverse, contested, and fluid field of study, frequently defined precisely by its resistance to stable definitions and categories.

Queer theory is not merely about homosexuality. It is a theoretically sophisticated way of examining the meaning of sexuality, in all its aspects, and its relations to other areas of life.

Through a mixture of lectures and discussions, we will explore queer analyses of diverse texts, various aspects of social life, and key concepts which shape how we live and what we believe. Instead of seeing “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” as obviously distinct and universal categories of human sexuality, Queer Theory examines how it came to be that these categories appear to us obvious and universal, and with what consequences. In addition, Queer Theory argues that sexuality, far from being a matter of private and personal fulfillment, is an aspect of human experience and social meaning-making that crucially informs many other aspects of our lives and communities, such as family, workplace, politics, ethics, class, race, and many others.

We will be discussing sex – openly, explicitly, and unapologetically, though not pruriently. Some readings and topics are sensitive, controversial, and might trigger discomfort (which is part of the learning process). If sexual language or themes offend you or if you fear some sexual topics might emotionally overwhelm you, this class might not be a good fit for you.

A college classroom, physical or virtual, must be a space of safe and open-minded inquiry for all students, regardless of their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, citizenship, age, ability, religious or political opinions, and other forms of difference.

Engage with the material with a critical lens, but not dismissively. Feel free to express your views, but also pay close and respectful attention to what others are saying, especially when you disagree. Try to understand their point of view and to empathize with their experience.

REQUIRED READINGS

Rental: Donald E. Hall, *Queer Theories* (2003)

Purchase: Charlotte Perkins Gillman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892)
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)
Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

Handouts: Additional required readings will be available in Canvas a week in advance.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explain the nature of Queer Theory as an approach to the study of sexuality and gender and their significance in literature and culture.
- Identify and analyze several key debates within Queer Theory, ranging from the foundational debates in the 1990s to some recent debates about the future of the field.
- Apply Queer Theory to analyzing works of literature and other cultural artifacts.
- Examine the significance of Queer Theory for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) lives, communities, and activism – in its diversity and intersectionality.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Exam 1 (take-home)	250 points or 25% of the course grade
Exam 2 (take-home)	250 points or 25% of the course grade
Final Paper	200 points or 20% of the course grade
Discussion Lead	100 points or 10% of the course grade
Daily Work Grade	200 points or 20% of the course grade

Course Grade	Course Grade
A = 940-1000 points	C = 740-769 points
A- = 900-939 points	C- = 700-739 points
B+ = 870-899 points	D+ = 670-699 points
B = 840-869 points	D = 640-669 points
B- = 800-839 points	D- = 610-639
C+ = 770-799 points	F = 0-609 points

TAKE-HOME EXAMS (Tentative Deadlines: March 15 & April 19)

Both exams will be open-book, take-home exams with a firm deadline, but no time restrictions. They will consist of several prompts based on the information from the readings and lectures. You will have some flexibility in terms of selecting the prompt(s) out of multiple options. There will be detailed instructions and a study guide in advance of each exam.

FINAL PAPER (Deadline: May 21)

This paper (4-5 pages) will be an analysis of a literary text, most likely Nella Larsen's *Passing*, from the point of view of queer theory, using some concepts and ideas covered in the course. There will be detailed guidelines, suggested topics, and a writing workshop on May 13.

DISCUSSION LEAD (different dates, beginning with Week 5 or 6)

Students will work in pairs to prepare and lead class discussion (20-30) minutes on a chosen day. The focus will be on the literary text assigned for that day, but discussion leaders should try to make connections between that text and the theoretical ideas from the readings and lectures. They will prepare a list of points and discussion questions about the reading(s), which will be shared with the class in advance. You will receive detailed guidelines and examples soon.

DAILY WORK GRADE

Every week, beginning in week 2, you can earn up to 14 points toward your Daily Work Grade: **14 points X 14 weeks = 196 points**. I will gift you all with **4 round-up points to make it 200**.

A = 188-200 points	B = 168-173 points	C = 148-153 points	D = 128-133 points
A- = 180-187 points	B- = 160-167 points	C- = 140-147 points	D- + 122-127 points
B+ = 174-179 points	C+ = 154-159 points	D+ = 134-139 points	F = 0-121 points

You will all receive 10 make-up points to compensate for 1-2 missed sessions or quizzes. That means you can earn up to 210 point, but the grading is set as if the maximum were 200.

These 14 weekly points will be divided into 4 categories:

- 5 points for Zoom attendance (4 = present, 3 = late, 2 = partially present, 0 = absent)
- 3 points for Zoom participation (3 = frequent, 2 = occasional, 1 = rare, 0 = silent)
- 3 points for theory notes (3 = excellent, 2 = competent, 1 = weak/partial, 0 = missed)
- 3 points for reading quizzes (3 = excellent, 2 = acceptable, 0 or 1 = unacceptable)

If theory notes or a reading quiz is not assigned in a particular week, you will either have an alternative assignment or I will give everyone maximum points for that ghost assignment.

Please do not hesitate to participate in Zoom conversations. There is no need to understand the material fully in order to do that. We are simply a group of people helping each other make sense of some difficult texts and ideas. Any comment, or indeed question, can be very useful.

Theory notes will be your responses to my questions about the theoretical readings of the week. They will be **due by midnight on Wednesdays**, beginning with February 3. The expectation is not that you perfectly understood everything in the readings, but simply that you read them and gave them some thought. Then the ideas will be more fully explained in class. These questions will be related to exam questions, so writing these theory notes is part of preparing for the exam.

Reading quizzes will consist of a few multiple-choice questions about non-theoretical readings. They will be **due by class time on Thursdays**, beginning with February 4. They will be simple, so that anyone who completed the reading attentively should be able to answer them easily.

This is how you can track your Daily Work Grade:

- You are receiving 13-14 points most weeks = A grade range
- You are receiving 12 points most weeks = B grade range
- You are receiving 10-11 points most weeks = C grade range
- You are receiving 9-10 points most weeks = D grade range
- You are receiving 8 or fewer points most week = F

You will get 0 points for uncompleted assignments, so avoid missing too many of them, and make sure you turn in both exams and the final paper in order to pass the course.

A student who stops participating in activities for longer than one week may be advised to drop the course. If you are concerned about your participation, meeting deadlines, or completing assignments, please contact me. I can show some flexibility and allow make-up work, as long as you are in touch and keep me informed rather than just disappear for an extended period of time.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and consistent participation in class activities are essential for this kind of discussion-based class, especially since we will meet only once a week. Please do your best to attend all classes, but **you may have one absence without penalty**. Excusing an absence will require documentation, so save this one penalty-free absence for when you might really need it.

Additional absences would hurt your Daily Work Grade since you would not receive presence and participation points. **No one who missed more than four classes can pass the course.**

Please have your cameras on, if at all possible, especially during discussions. That will encourage more engagement and help create a sense of class community. If you have a special reason to keep your camera off on some days, I will accept that, but let me know the reason.

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

Being a Pointer entails some rights and responsibilities of which you should be aware.

Familiarize yourself with the UWSP policies regarding student conduct:

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct are serious violations. Read about academic integrity: <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf>
If unsure whether certain actions are appropriate or not, please feel free to talk to me about it.

You have the right to be free from physical or verbal harassment: Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at UWSP. It is your right and duty to report it. Be aware of UWSP policies for such incidents (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/sexualassault/Pages/victims-bill-of-rights.aspx>) and of our Bias/Hate Incident Reporting (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Bias-Hate-Incident.aspx>). You can report (anonymously, if preferred) any incidents of interpersonal violence, such as sexual assault, as well as bias/hate incidents, such as blatantly racist or homophobic behavior.

Students with documented disabilities or temporary impairments have a right to appropriate accommodations. If you are in that situation, please let me know and contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center as soon as possible. DATC is on the 6th floor of Albertson Hall (library), and it can be reached at 715-346-3365 or datc@uwsp.edu. For more information, see <https://www.uwsp.edu/datc/Pages/default.aspx>.

Copyright Note: All lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property. Students may use the materials and recordings only for their personal use related to participation in this class. Copying or sharing lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting them on internet sites or selling them to commercial entities would constitute illegal copyright infringement and a violation of the university's policies.

Please **let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name** from the one in the class roster or if you identify with **pronouns other than “he” and “she”** (ex.: “ze” or “they”). I invite you all to join me in doing our best to respect other people's self-identification choices.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Theory notes will be due on Wednesdays by midnight.
Reading quizzes will be due on Thursdays by class time.

Date Readings (All readings should be completed before class for which they are assigned.)

- 1/28 Lee Edelman, "Unstating Desire"
- 2/4 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 1-18
E. M. Forster, "The Story of a Panic" (Canvas)
- 2/11 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 21-30 & 48-50
David Halperin, "Sex Before Sexuality" (Canvas)
Selections from Plato, *Symposium* (Canvas or Online)
- 2/18 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 31-47
Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (Canvas)
Selections from 19th-century sexologists (Canvas or Online)
- 2/25 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 51-61
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now"
Stephen Greco, "Good with Words" (Canvas)
- 3/4 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 61-71
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, selections (Canvas)
Mary E. Wilkins, "Two Friends"
- 3/11 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 72-85
Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (Canvas)
A. M. Homes, "A Real Doll" (Canvas)

Monday, March 15: Exam 1 due in Canvas by midnight

- 3/18 Charlotte Perkins Gillman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
Hall, *Queer Theories*, 115-129
- 3/22-26 No classes! Have a safe and fun Spring Break!
- 4/1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
Hall, *Queer Theories*, 130-147
- 4/8 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 86-99
An article and/or a short story to be determined
- 4/15 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 99-111
Martin Duberman, "Acceptance at What Price?"
Pat Califia, "The Finishing School"

Monday, April 19: Exam 2 due in Canvas by midnight

4/22 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 164-190

4/29 Nella Larsen, *Passing*

5/6 Critical readings on *Passing*

5/13 Writing Workshop – Detailed outlines for the final paper will be shared and discussed.

Friday, May 21: Final Paper due in Canvas by midnight



Don't worry! By the end of the semester, it will all be