

<p>Dr. Dejan Kuzmanovic  <a href="mailto:dkuzmano@uwsp.edu">dkuzmano@uwsp.edu</a>          CCC 427</p>	<p><b>English 384: Topics in Theory</b>  <i>Queer Theory</i>          Tu/Th 12:30-1:45 p.m.          CCC 323</p>	<p>Office Hours:          Tu 5:00-5:30 p.m.          Th 2:00-3:00 p.m.          and via Zoom by          appointment</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.

## SENSITIVITY & INCLUSION

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.**

Please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different **name** from the one in the class roster or if using specific **personal pronouns** is important to you. I invite the whole class to join me in doing our best to respect other people’s self-identification choices. If you want to learn more about the importance of how we use personal pronouns, see <https://pronouns.org/>.

## 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)  
Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)

Additional required readings will be available in Canvas or as handouts.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explain the nature of Queer Theory as an approach to the study of sexuality and gender and of 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	250 points or 25% of the course grade
Exam 2	250 points or 25% of the course grade
Final Essay	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

### To pass the course, you must:

- Earn at least 610 course points, including at least 122 daily work points.
- Take both exams and submit the final essay.
- Miss no more than 5 class meetings, except for prolonged, documented illness.

If you are concerned about your attendance, meeting deadlines, or completing assignments, please talk to me. I can be flexible and allow make-up work, as long as you keep me informed. However, if you just disappear for an extended period of time, I might not be able to help you.

## **EXAMS (Tentative dates: March 14 & April 18)**

You will take both exams in class (75 minutes). They will consist of several short-answer questions and one longer response to a prompt chosen from multiple options. You will receive detailed instructions and a study guide for each exam. We will discuss the expectations in class.

## **FINAL ESSAY (Deadline: May 14)**

In this four-page essay (at least 1,200 words), you will conduct a queer analysis of a literary text of your choice (a text not discussed in the course), using some queer theory concepts and ideas. You will receive detailed guidelines and share ideas with each other as you work on the essay.

## **DISCUSSION LEAD (different dates, beginning with Week 5)**

Students will work in pairs to prepare and lead class discussion (20 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 some 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**

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

**All students automatically receive 10 welcome points!**

## **Quizzes & Theory Notes (100 points)**

Reading quizzes (5 points) will consist of purely factual questions – simple and short – about major characters and events in literary reading assignments, very easy if you have read the text. They may take place at the beginning of class or in Canvas if they are announced in advance.

In theory notes (10 points), you will identify and explain key ideas in a theoretical reading. Typically, you will submit them in Canvas before the class in which we discuss that reading. 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 notes will be related to exam questions, so they will also help you prepare for the exams.

**Attendance (90 points):** You can earn 6 points every week simply by being present in class – in body *and* in mind! Students who doze off, repeatedly check their phones, or appear inattentive in other ways will receive fewer, if any, points for that day.

**Please turn off all electronic devices** unless you use them for taking notes. Texting, emailing, or Web browsing is not allowed because it will distract you and others from class activities.

## ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance and consistent participation in class activities are essential for this kind of discussion-based class. Please make your best effort to attend (and earn those attendance points).

For the first five absences, you will merely lose attendance points (3 per class). However, **if you miss more than 5 class meetings, you will fail the course.** I can excuse only absences caused by documented medical reasons or official university business.

Asking questions and participating in discussion will enhance your learning and make class more engaging. You don't need brilliant ideas or in-depth understanding of the readings to contribute. We are simply a group of people helping each other make sense of some difficult texts and ideas. Any relevant thought or question is valuable. Step outside of your comfort zone and speak up!

At my discretion, I will award **5, 10, or 15 extra credit points** to students who make a strong effort to participate, based on the frequency and substantiveness of their contributions.

## ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES & RIGHTS

**Being a Pointer** entails certain rights and responsibilities. You should be familiar 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 is unacceptable. Be aware of the policies regarding sexual assault and incidents of bias or hate, and how to report them (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Bias-Hate-Incident.aspx>). You can report (anonymously if you prefer) any incident of interpersonal violence or bias-based hateful behavior.

**Students with documented disabilities have a right to appropriate accommodations.** If you are in that situation, please contact UWSP Disability Resource Center to complete necessary paperwork: [drc@uwsp.edu](mailto:drc@uwsp.edu) or visit <https://www.uwsp.edu/disability-resource-center>.

**Copyright Note:** All lecture materials and recordings are protected intellectual property. Students may use them only for the purpose of participating in this course. Copying or sharing lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting them on the internet or selling them to commercial entities is illegal copyright infringement and a violation of UWSP policies.

**WRITING CENTER:** You can get feedback from advanced UWSP students trained to discuss any type of writing at any stage of the process: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, or revising. They work with both experienced and struggling writers since everyone benefits from feedback.

- The Writing Center is located in CCC 234 ([tlctutor@uwsp.edu](mailto:tlctutor@uwsp.edu); 715-346-3568).
- Their services are available online. You can email them your essay for feedback.
- They can assist you at any stage of the writing process (outlining, drafting, revising).
- For more info, see <https://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/Pages/writing-center.aspx>.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

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

- 1/23 Introduction: Why Queer? Why Theory?
- 1/25 Lee Edelman, “Unstating Desire” (handout)
- 1/30 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 1-18
- 2/1 E. M. Forster, “The Story of a Panic” (handout)
- 2/6 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 21-30 & 48-50  
Selections from Plato, *Symposium* (Canvas)
- 2/8 David Halperin, “Sex Before Sexuality” (handout)
- 2/13 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 31-47  
Selections from 19<sup>th</sup>-century sexologists (Canvas)
- 2/15 Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (handout)
- 2/20 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 51-61  
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” (handout)
- 2/22 Stephen Greco, “Good with Words” (handout)
- 2/27 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 61-71  
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, selections (Canvas)
- 2/29 Mary E. Wilkins, “Two Friends” (handout)
- 3/5 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 72-85  
Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (Canvas)
- 3/7 A. M. Homes, “A Real Doll” (handout)
- 3/12 Mid-semester review
- 3/14 Exam 1**
- Have a great spring break!*
- 3/26 Charlotte Perkins Gillman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (Canvas discussion; no class)
- 3/28 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 115-129
- 4/2 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- 4/4 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 130-147

- 4/9 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 86-99
- 4/11 Randall Kenan, "Run, Mourner, Run" (handout)
- 4/16 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 99-111  
Martin Duberman, "Acceptance at What Price?" (handout)
- 4/18 Exam 2**
- 4/23 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 148-156 & 164-171
- 4/25 Woolf, *Orlando*, Chapter 1
- 4/30 Woolf, *Orlando*, Chapters 2-3
- 5/2 Woolf, *Orlando*, Chapter 4
- 5/7 Woolf, *Orlando*, Chapters 5-6
- 5/9 Hall, *Queer Theories*, 175-190
- 5/14 Final Essay (Canvas)**

*Don't worry! By the end of semester, everything will be...*

