

BEFORE STONEWALL: QUEER CINEMA and AMERICAN CULTURE from WWII to GAY LIBERATION

Film 3352F/WST 3345F—Queer Cinema

Western University—Fall 2018

Screening: Tuesdays 5:30-8:30 pm (UC-1401)

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 5:30-7:30 pm (UC-1405)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-5:30 pm; Wednesdays 3:30-5 pm and by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although the Stonewall rebellion has long served as a foundational moment in the history of gay liberation and queer visibility, its iconicity tends to overshadow the crucial transformations of queer identity, community, culture, and politics that took place in the U.S. and abroad from WWII to that fateful summer night in 1969. For not only did the postwar era witness the development of queer urban spaces and homophile political groups, but it also marked a significant expansion of queer visibility in literature, theater, and cinema. Examining the conventions—the gradual undoing of what Vito Russo famously called “the celluloid closet,” this course will explore key shifts in queer representation in American cinema of the postwar era. We will analyze the queer typology (sad young men, dangerous dykes, queer killers, etc.) of a variety of Hollywood genres (horror, noir, melodrama) as well as the often subversive work of figures like Tennessee Williams, Carson McCullers, and Alfred Hitchcock in the context of Cold War homophobia and gender normativity. We will then frame the eventual breakdown of Production Code restrictions on “sexual perversion” in relation to the development of queer alternatives via avant-garde, underground, and documentary cinema. The final section of the course will concentrate on a group of films from the Stonewall era that will allow us to grapple with the aesthetic, cultural, and political consequences of the shift from silence and oppression to an era of presumed liberation. What’s gained—and perhaps lost—for queer subjects in the transition from invisibility to visibility, from subculture to mainstream, and how has this key historical moment shaped our contemporary notions of queer culture and identity?

Course Objectives:

COURSE TEXTS

—Readings from E-Journals/Books available on OWL

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Class Attendance and Participation [10%]

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Paper Assignments: You will have at least one (possibly two) paper assignments for the course. The first paper will ask you to examine the coding of queerness (narratively, formally, ideologically, etc.) in a WWII-era queer film that we are screening in the course. The final paper for the course is a more extensive research paper that will provide you with an opportunity to explore key films, figures, and/or cultural events from either the pre-Stonewall OR the gay liberation period in a North American or international context.

Digital Media Project: In lieu of the midterm paper assignment, you will also have the opportunity to produce a queer-themed digital media project either individually or as a group. These projects may take a variety of forms, but they should be focused on queer representation in film and media from WWII to the Stonewall-era in American culture. We will both screen and discuss the videos produced in class.

Late Work: Course papers must be turned in complete and on time. In order to be fair to the entire class, I will not grant individual extensions on paper assignments, so be sure to budget your time accordingly. Late papers will be penalized 5% points per day late (including weekends), except in the case of medical emergencies or illnesses (see below).

Note on Screenings: You are to attend weekly screenings on Tuesday afternoons at 5:30 pm (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, no talking, no laptops, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the film in the study center [UC 1126]

Week 2—Sept. 18/19—In the Shadows: Queer Noir

Screening: (Otto Preminger, 1944, 88 min)
& (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948, 80 min.)

Reading: Dyer, “Queer Noir”
& Miller, “Anal ”

Week 3—Sept. Jan. 25/26—Camp, Gay Fandom, and the Hollywood Musical

Screening: (Howard Hawks, 1953, 91 min.)
& Judy Garland Clips

Reading: Cohan, “Introduction” to
& Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here”
& Waugh, “Physique Cinema, 1945-1969”

Week 4—October 2/3—Gender Trouble: Exploitation and Social Problem Cinema

Screening: (John Cromwell, 1950, 96 min.)
& (Edward Wood, Jr., 1953, 68 min.)

Reading: Stryker, “A Hundred Years of Transgender History”
& Butler, “Introduction” to
& Mayne, “Caged and Framed”

Week 7—Oct. 23/24—Troubled Teens: Screening Queer Youth

Screening: (Vincente Minnelli, 1956, 122 min.)
& (Kenneth Anger, 1947, 14 min.)

Reading: Gerstner, “The Production and Display of the Closet”
& Bruhm/Hurley, “Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children”

Week 12—Nov. 27/28—Coming Out Under Fire: Gays in the Military

Screening: (John Huston, 1967, 108 min.)

Reading: Benschhoff, “Representing (Repressed) Homosexuality...”
& Hsu, “Desiring Brotherhood”

Week 13—December 4/5—Anticipating Stonewall: Gay Bars on Screen

Screening: (Robert Aldrich, 1968, 138 min.)

Reading: Hankin, “Lesbian Locations”
& Love, “Epilogue: The Politics of Refusal”

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. For Film Studies regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at www.uwo.ca/film

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. In this course, citation of all material other than students' own ideas must be completed according to the guidelines established in [redacted], 6. For additional

agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com. You should register immediately as a new user by going to <http://www.turnitin.com>. I will provide you with the Class ID # and password as soon as possible. Assignments not handed in to turnitin.com will receive a 0.

Prerequisites: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and or assignments must apply to their Academic Counseling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation.

GRADING CRITERIA

A+ (90-100):

Argument: Clear development of a specific, challenging and original thesis. The writer has taken significant risks successfully; in the resulting piece, distinctive ideas and content have discovered their necessary distinctive form. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

C (60 to 69):

Argument: