

**Carleton University
Summer 2019
Department of English Language and Literature**

ENGL 2109A: *Gender, Sexuality and Literature*
Prerequisites: Second-year standing or permission of the department
Preclusions: additional credit for ENGL 2902 (no longer offered)

Tuesday and Thursday / 11:35 to 2:25
Location: TB 236

Instructor: Gemma Marr
Email: *GemmaMarr@cmail.carleton.ca*
Office: DT 1807
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:40 – 4

Carleton University is located on unceded Algonquin territory.

Course Description:

This course will focus on literature that questions and complicates normative understandings of sexuality and gender. The class will outline some of the major debates in literary, gender, and sexuality studies, and investigate how these discussions are represented and/or complicated by the study of contemporary queer literature. We will read works by gay, lesbian, queer, two-spirit, intersex, and transgender writers from varying economic, racial, and geographic backgrounds, and investigate how these works reflect on, engage with, and question their respective social, cultural, and political contexts. We will use an intersectional approach to consider the interplay of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and we will read some short pieces of queer and cultural theory to help illuminate our literary texts. To make the most of our time and to cover a range of authors and thinkers, we will study shorter pieces that cut across a variety of literary genres, including graphic novels, short fiction, poetry, and memoir, as well as works of art and criticism not typically captured under the label of 'literature.' Some of the themes and topics we will explore in this class include: sexuality in history; the positioning of the 'closet'; trans identity; patriarchal oppression and homophobia; sexuality and colonialism; kinship and family; the effect of literary style and form in representation and reception; and the importance of celebratory expression.

Learning Outcomes – In this course, you will:

- critically engage with and historically contextualize assumptions and opinions about gender and sexuality. You will interact with and understand a range of key concepts and debates in literary, gender, and sexuality studies, and apply this thinking to literary works.
- work critically with questions of form and genre, both in class and in your assignments. You will develop your close reading skills to interpret and engage deeply with the chosen works.

- develop essay writing skills. You will practice your writing throughout the course, and work with targeted feedback to develop strategies for reading, summarizing, and engaging with literary texts.
- participate in in-class group work and contribute to collaborative projects. You will make connections between the texts, your own life, and with each other!

Required Texts:

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner, Houghton Mifflin)

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Graywolf)

The above texts are available at Octopus Books. Please try your best to acquire print copies, whether you buy them at Octopus or elsewhere (used bookstores, for example). Other required texts can be found online through ARES or are linked in the class schedule.

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Critical Responses – 20% (10% x 2)

In-Class Assignments – 10% (5% x 2)

Group Presentation – 10%

Project Proposal – 5%

Final Project – 20%

Final Exam – 25%

Assignments

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend all classes and come prepared to discuss the assigned material. Because summer courses run on a condensed timeline, attendance will be taken every class and you will be expected to stay for the entire class. Moreover, student participation and group discussion is a vital component of this class. It is expected that you will come to class on time, be prepared to engage thoughtfully with the material, ask and answer questions, and participate in respectful dialogue. **Students who have more than two unexplained absences will have their final grade deducted by 2% for every subsequent class missed. If outstanding circumstances cause you to miss multiple classes, please contact me immediately. Documentation for illness or emergency will be accepted.**

Critical Response: Throughout the course, we will read and discuss works of theory, criticism, and personal reflection. In response to **TWO** of these readings, you will submit a two page, double-spaced reflection which engages critically with the assigned text. You may use this space to respond to the overarching argument or focus of the piece (that is, what is your take away from the text; did you understand the main points and, if not, what was difficult or confusing?), to offer consideration of an interesting line or passage, and/or to make connections with other texts from the course.

Critical responses are to be submitted a week after our discussion. [For example, we read Michel Foucault on May 9th – should you choose to write about this reading, your critical reflection would be due in class on May 16th].

In-Class Assignments: Students will write three in-class writing assignments. These assignments will occur during random classes throughout the term. **The two assignments with the highest grade will be counted toward your final grade.** The in-class assignments will pose a question about the day's reading and you will be given roughly 20 minutes to write a response to the question. **If you miss an in-class writing assignment, you will be given a zero.**

Group Presentation: At the beginning of the course, students will be put into small groups. Collectively, each group will choose the topic for their presentation from a list provided in the assignment guidelines. As a group, students will research the topic and prepare a short (15 minute) presentation. The group will also facilitate a discussion period. Time will be given in class for group work. **More information on the group presentation will be given on the first day of class.**

Project Proposal: The project proposal is worth 5% of your overall grade. Your main objectives for the proposal are (a) to provide a working thesis statement which ties into your chosen texts, (b) list your chosen text(s) and why you've chosen them, and (c) to outline your plan of action for the project. Ask yourself: how will I situate and explore my overarching argument or focus, what texts will I use, what is my goal for the project, and how will I accomplish this goal? On the day the proposals are due, we will workshop them in class. This will provide an opportunity to get feedback on your work at an early stage, and to develop your thinking in tandem with a writing workshop. Participation in this workshop is part of the grade for this assignment. **More information on the project proposal will be given in class.**

Final Project: For the final project, students will be given the option to write a traditional academic essay or to complete a creative project. For the traditional essay, students will write 1400-1600 words on an assigned topic. For the creative option, students will submit a creative piece accompanied by a 2-page reflection. **More information about the essay and creative project will be given in class.**

Exam: Students will write a 3-hour exam that covers all readings and materials covered in class. Exam date and location to be announced.

Class Policies

Please note: as per section [Section 2.1](#) of the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar: "To obtain credit in a course, students must meet all the course requirements for attendance, term work, and examinations as published in the course outline." If you have failed to complete any of the requirements, or if you have failed to comply with the attendance policy, you will fail the entire course.

In-class etiquette: Please be respectful of others and refrain from using electronic devices for any purpose other than taking notes or consulting texts in class. Texting, browsing the web, and working on other projects is an impediment to your own engagement in the class as well as the learning of other students. **Laptops and tablets should be used for classwork only, and cellphones should**

be turned off at the start of class. Moreover, this class deals with sensitive topics and difficult subject matter. We will all be gentle with each other as we move through the material, as well as careful and purposeful with our language.

Email etiquette: All communications to the instructor must be done through your official Carleton email. Call me Gemma (or “Instructor Marr” – no “Mrs” or “Miss” please), use proper grammar and punctuation, and refrain from using colloquial language in emails (hey, sup, yo, lol, etc). I generally do not answer my emails on weekends; otherwise, you may expect me to get back to you within 48 hours. I recommend [this article](#) for advice on email etiquette.

Submission Policies: Please hand in a hard copy of all assignments and essays. Assignments and essays are due at the start of class on the specified due date. Late assignments will lose 2% per day. If you anticipate missing a due date, please contact me in advance to discuss alternate options. If you cannot be in class on the date an assignment is due, please submit to the drop-box at the English Department office (1812 Dunton Tower).

Grade inquiries: I am always willing to discuss your grades, and I am happy to provide further feedback on your work. However: if you have a question or concern about a grade, please **wait 48 hours before contacting me**. Take this time to carefully re-read your work and review the comments I’ve provided. Reflect on the assignment, and come to me prepared to discuss your concerns in an organized manner (that is, don’t state that you want an A without providing any reason for why you feel this grade is deserved).

Final grades: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Support Services

Writing Tutorial Service (WTS): The [WTS](#) offers students one-on-one, personalized assistance with academic writing, free of charge. To make an appointment for a 50-minute session, call 613-520-2600, ext. 1125, or visit in person at the Learning Support Services Desk on the 4th floor of the MacOdrum Library.

Learning Support Services (LSS): LSS offers students a variety of free services, including academic skills workshops and information sessions, and individualized assistance in the form of a tutor referral service and a supportive staff of Peer Helpers. To learn more about these services, visit LSS on the 4th floor of the MacOdrum library, contact them by phone at (613) 520-2600, x.1125, or visit [online](#).

Foot Patrol: The Foot Patrol is a student-run, volunteer-based service available to Carleton students, free of charge. Its patrollers will escort you safely to your destination, whether on or off campus (provided that it is within 30-minutes' walking distance of campus). For more information, visit [online](#). To register for a Safe-Walk, call 613-520-4066 or visit in person at 426 UC.

Carleton Health and Counselling Services: Provides outpatient medical services and confidential personal counselling services. Students can self-refer to counselling. For more information visit <http://carleton.ca/health/> or call 613-520-6674.

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more

details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Reading Schedule (subject to minor changes):

Tuesday, May 7: Introduction, orientation, and syllabus review

Historical Context and Categorization:

Thursday, May 9:

Michel Foucault, “We ‘Other Victorians,’” (3-13) and “The Incitement to Discourse” (17-35), from *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* [ARES]

Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market.” Online: <https://editions.covecollective.org/edition/goblin-market>

Tuesday, May 14:

Lillian Faderman, “‘The Loves of Women for Each Other’: ‘Romantic Friends’ in the Twentieth Century” from *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* [ARES].

Radclyffe Hall, “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself,” *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Aristo to Stonewall*. [ARES].

Thursday, May 16:

After Stonewall: screening and discussion

Locations - The Home and the Family:

Tuesday, May 21:

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Thursday, May 23:

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* cont.

Tuesday, May 28:

Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay on Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal*. vol. 40 no. 4, 1988. [ARES]

Oliver Bendorf, “Make Believe”; “The No Shame Theatre”; “Wagon Jack”; “No Billboards in Vermont”; “The Woodlot”; “The Spectral Wilderness”; and “Second Winter” from *The Spectral Wilderness*. [ARES]

Questioning Genre and Form

Thursday, May 30:

Aaron Apps, “Barbeque Catharsis,” *The Carolina Quarterly*, 2013. [ARES]

Casey Plett, “Twenty Hot Tips for Shopping Success” from *A Safe Girl to Love*. pp 33 -37. Available as a PDF: <https://caseyplett.wordpress.com/free-pdf-of-a-safe-girl-to-love/>

Vivek Shraya, *I’m Afraid of Men*. pp. 1 – 12 from [ARES]

Tuesday, June 4:

(Project Proposal Due) - *Essay Writing Workshop*

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

Thursday, June 6:

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* cont.

Intersectional Interventions

Tuesday, June 11:

Audre Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury” from *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* [ARES]

Vivek Shraya, “Indian” and “Raji” from *even this page is white* [ARES]

Discussion of Janelle Monaé’s “Screwed” and “Django Jane”

Thursday, June 13:

Beth Brant, “Writing Life” from *Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk* [ARES]

Gwen Benaway, “Kiiwe”; “Half Breed”; “Problem”; “What I Want”; and “Girls” from *Passage* [ARES]

Discussion of Kent Monkman

Tuesday, June 18:

Wrap up and Review - (Final Project Due)