

Carleton University  
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline  
Department of English

**ENGL 2109A: *Gender, Sexuality, and Literature***

**Topic:** Queer Feeling, Queer Healing: Four Writers for Our Times

**Prerequisites:** second-year standing or permission of the department

**Preclusions:** Precludes additional credit for ENGL 2902 (no longer offered)

**Format:** In-person, not suitable for online students

**Instructor:** Prof. Jodie Medd (she/they)  [hear my name](#)

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*Carleton University is located on the traditional, unceded and un-surrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, the customary keepers and defenders of the Kichi Sibi (Ottawa River) watershed. Carleton occupies this land as a settler institution, a result of an economy of property and allocation of public space facilitated by the nation-state of Canada. As a settler whose ancestors came as uninvited visitors to this land, my life-long responsibility is to work to develop right relationship to this land, including the earth, water, and non-human plants and animals, and to the Indigenous peoples who are the original and ongoing stewards of this land.*

**\*\*\* Preliminary outline only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

Welcome to our course!

**ENGL 2109A/ Queer Feeling, Queer Healing: Four Writers for Our Times**

James Baldwin. Audre Lorde. Billy-Ray Belcourt. Ivan E. Coyote.

Enough said.

But in case you need more: Together we will study four 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century queer\* writers whose lives and work have been transformational and inspirational in their own time and place and beyond. Focusing on these select, influential creators and cultural teachers will allow us to get to know them, their work, and their ongoing livingness. Their intellectual, artistic, affective, and activist work teaches us about being, feeling, and healing through intersectional, critical, and creative perspectives and practices. Our class encourages you to cultivate your own curiosity, to connect your interest in these writers with your own interests beyond our classroom.

Primary texts include essays, fiction, poetry, short stories, life writing, performances, podcasts, film and other media by, about and in kinship with Baldwin, Lorde, Belcourt, and Coyote. An additional introductory primer on key histories and concepts related to queer theory is also recommended.

Coursework for credit and assessment includes textual analyses and reflections written in class, quizzes, cuPortfolio work that connects class readings with content and learnings outside of the course, documentation of small group discussion, and course reflections. In-class activities will focus on various forms of discussion and peer exchange.

*This course is open to all. It aims to encourage self-reflection and dialogue around gender and sexual differences and to promote the work of allyship with LGBTQ-identified people.*

Prerequisites: open mind + open heart + willingness to learn in community



\*queer here functions as an imperfect umbrella term encompassing 2SLGBTQIA+ identifications and nonidentifications

## Learning Objectives (“Learning Outcomes”)

What you learn will depend on your engagement with the readings, the course content, the class activities, and the ideas and learnings we generate together. This course is designed to help you learn to...

### 1. Read and discuss literary texts closely and thoughtfully:

- **Attend carefully and analytically** to a variety of literary texts, with attention to form and language and their effect on you as a reader.
- **Notice and reference** specific textual details, **describe** your responses to them, and **generate** ideas about these details and their relation to the text as a whole.

### 2. Connect literary texts to different interpretative contexts:

- **Attend to** the socio-historical and artistic contexts in which a work is created, including an author’s ancestral lineage, identity position, and lived experience; and in which it is read, including our present moment, to **consider** how context informs textual meanings.
- **Describe and apply** key concepts from interpretative approaches introduced in class, such as queer theory and intersectional analysis, with the option to consider interpretative approaches from your home discipline and other learnings
- **Observe and discuss** how issues of gender, sexuality, race, capitalism, colonization and other structures of identity and power interact, as represented in the literature.
- **Connect** the work of literary authors to your personal learnings and experiences outside the class, documenting and reflecting on these connections to share with others.

### 3. Communicate, receive, and exchange ideas in different modalities:

- **Clearly communicate** your ideas in different written formats and in conversation with class members.
- **Listen actively and attentively** to class members to learn from and hold space for others.
- **Experiment** with visual and digital forms and creative approaches to assignments.
- **Co-create** a learning community through collective process and different discussion formats.

### 4. Reflect on your learning, feeling, writing, and thinking over the term:

- **Document** responses (emotional, embodied, cognitive) to readings and class discussions.
- **Revisit and reconsider** initial responses to texts as your thinking, feeling, and understanding evolves.
- **Integrate** learning and **observe** your own process through periodic written reflections.

## Required Texts

Books are listed in the order we are reading them. Consider purchasing books from your favourite independent or used bookseller. Books will also be available at a local bookstore. Prices listed are from University Bookstore in 2025.

James Baldwin, [\*Giovanni’s Room\*](#) (Vintage) 9780345806567: \$16.50 to \$22.00

Billy-Ray Belcourt, [\*A Minor Chorus\*](#) (Penguin/Random House) 9780735242005: \$27.95

Ivan Coyote and Ray Spoon, [\*Gender Failure\*](#) (Arsenal Pulp Press) 9781551525365: \$15.00 to \$20.00

Ivan Coyote, [\*Care Of: Letters, Connections, and Cures\*](#) (McClelland and Stewart) 9780771004308: \$21.00

Recommended (not required): Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, [\*Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures\*](#) (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) 9781352007510. The bookstore offers an option to ‘rent’ this as e-book for 6 months: \$43.50 to 57.75.

**Total cost for required books** = \$0 (using library options) to \$90.95 (max for new print books from bookstore)

### Budgeting for Books:

As your budget permits, please buy the primary literary books by Baldwin, Belcourt and Coyote/Spoon in the best format for you. You can re-sell or re-gift them if you choose not to keep them after the course.

**All primary literary texts are available as ebooks through Carleton's library.** *Gender Failure* has unlimited user access; the others have limited users at a time, but you can download sections to read offline. Please see library etiquette on accessing a limited-user ebook in a way that keeps it available for others:

[https://mediaspace.carleton.ca/media/ebook+etiquette/1\\_pubms14p](https://mediaspace.carleton.ca/media/ebook+etiquette/1_pubms14p). **Print books**, when available, are at the Library Reserves desk for our course. **Ottawa Public Library carries our books** in digital and/or print form.

**IMPORTANT:** *Queer Theory Now* is our priciest book; you may opt to 'rent' it as an e-book for 6 months from the CU Bookstore, or use the [ebook through CU library](#). Readings from *Queer Theory Now* are *recommended* (sometimes strongly so) and the info is helpful, especially for students new to gender and sexuality studies, but please prioritize buying the primary literary authors if your book budget is limited. If the TA or I make specific reference to terms from this text in class, we will provide quotations (on slides or documents) for you!

Additional required and suggested readings and materials available through ARES and/or Brightspace.

### Course Requirements, Assignments, and Assessments: Overview

**This information is preliminary and subject to some change**

1. Attendance & Participation
2. In-class Informal Writing Responses
3. Mid-term reflection on in-class writing and learning
4. Kinship Connections (KC) in cuPortfolio: best three of four will be used to calculate final grade; you may opt to complete only three
5. documented participation in Group Shares (notes to Group Shares Discussion)
6. in-class Quizzes: best three of four will be used to calculate your grade
7. Final Reflection or Exam: due during April exam period as "range exam"

### A Note on Assignments & Assessments

As an elective that attracts non-English majors and does not require an ENGL prerequisite, this course does not require you to "write like an English major" or produce standard ENGL essays of literary analysis. The assignments invite your personal engagement with the readings and course materials. Assessment criteria include key expectations regarding attentive reading; direct textual citation (citing specific details, evidence, etc.) and interpretation; and clear, effective communication. We also encourage your creativity, curiosity, and cultivation of your own writing voice. Assignments are intended to help you explore and document your interest in the readings, not cause you undue stress about academic performance. We invite you to show up fully, enjoy the authors, submit the work, and engage with the material and class members. Most course elements give you the opportunity to gain feedback, grow, and try again. You are welcome to communicate with us about your work over the term, and some course work involves self-reflecting on your work and learning over the term.

**Hot Tip!** "Peer Advice from ENGL2109A" (Brightspace) offers student-to-student advice from a previous version of this course.

**Another Hot Tip!** Check Brightspace regularly! Class materials will be posted there, including anything shown in class (media, slides, etc.), assignment info, announcements, weekly materials, etc.

## **Inclusive, Adventurous, and Respectful Participation**

I hope we will co-create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that is enriched and enhanced by many dimensions of human experience including race, ethnicity and culture, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, age, class, religion, and life experience. Together we can work to support diversity of experience, thought, and perspective, while treating each other with empathy and respect. While striving for inclusivity, I also recognize that danger and safety are integral to education. Our authors call upon us to pay attention to and re-examine our established ways of thinking, and the systems and hierarchies that shape our lives—this process of un/learning can be “uncomfortable” in a productive way. Together, we can support and encourage one another to feel brave enough to take risks, to think differently, and make room for new perspectives. Don’t be afraid to disagree with the readings, with me, or with your classmates, while maintaining an attitude of respect, care, and curiosity. We can also work to be aware of the histories and systems that may make learning environments unsafe for many and to be mindful of our own biases and their impact. As we share this class, I hope we can be both brave and compassionate together.

I also acknowledge that the course readings were created in specific histories and cultural contexts, reflecting particular points of view; we will strive to be mindful of these specific perspectives, including recognizing the contexts and lived experiences out of which our literary authors are writing, while also being aware that the theory and research used to address these authors and their contexts may have limited terms, frameworks, and definitions. The study of English literature has its own history of exclusions, limitations, and hierarchies of value. We will work to be aware of the assumptions, limitations, and biases of the material we read.

Carleton’s [Human Rights Policies and Procedures](#) affirms that university members share responsibilities to “provide a safe environment, conducive to personal and intellectual growth, which is not only free of discrimination, injustice, and violence but is also characterized by understanding, respect, peace, trust openness and fairness.” The university “promotes equity and fairness” and affirms that “Every member of the University community has a right to study, work and live in a safe environment free of discrimination or harassment” (2).

With these responsibilities and commitments in mind, early in the course, we address:

- How we can promote an environment of supportive and inclusive intellectual exchange, where we can share ideas (including disagreements) and feelings with an attitude of respect, courage, and compassion.
- How we can co-create an environment that encourages class members to take risks in sharing their ideas—to move up and speak up; how we can make space for everyone to contribute—including knowing when to move back and practice active and respectful listening. *Let’s learn together.*

Mindful Dialogue & Addressing Harm: I’ll offer some guidelines and protocols for interactions in class. You are welcome to contact me in person, by email, or anonymously (Course Q&A on Brightspace) if a class experience lands in a harmful way. I appreciate your feedback as we strive to co-create an inclusive learning environment. Early communications will invite you to share your name and pronoun, and you are welcome to inform us of changes to that information at any time.

## **Mental Health Acknowledgement**

Ongoing world events make for stressful and challenging times. While encouraging focused and engaged academic work in this class, I am mindful of your health and wellbeing and the need to balance academic commitments with other responsibilities. My hope is that the literature on the course will be engaging to read and discuss, and that we can nurture a supportive and low-stress learning environment together. Please reach out if you are encountering difficult circumstances, struggling with the class, or if you would like help connecting with academic support or health resources. A list of services is provided at the end of this course outline.

Portions of the Inclusivity and Language Statements and Mental Health Acknowledgement are adapted from: Carleton’s Office of Equity and Inclusive Communities

Jennifer Hardwick. “A Safe Space for Dangerous Ideas; a Dangerous Space for Safe Thinking.” *Hybrid Pedagogy*, August 13, 2014  
Carleton course outlines by Dr. Brian Johnson (English), Dr. Laura Horak (Film), and Dr. Sarah Casteel (English)