

English 200 (Fall 2018): Junior Research Seminar
Queer Urbanisms
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:30 PM
Fisher-Bennett Hall 139

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Office hours: Monday and Tuesday 1:30 – 2:30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What’s queer about the city? What’s urban about queer life? What do queer literary and critical representations of urban systems reveal about American cities and their legacies of unequal access to housing, education, and nonviolent, ordinary lives? This course focuses on the entanglement of queer studies with the development, disinvestment, and gentrification of American cities from the 1950s to the present. We will concentrate on the work of four important queer authors: Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, Samuel Delany, and Eileen Myles, as they lived in, wrote about, and advocated for their cities. Course texts will include Lorde's *Zami* (1982), Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962), Delany's *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue* (1999), and Myles's *Chelsea Girls* (1994). We will read our authors as critics, as literary artists, and as activists in dialogue with movements for queer rights, disability access, and racial justice.

This course will also set the work of these authors into dialogue with other texts in urban studies and queer theory. As a Junior Research Seminar, this course will create opportunities to learn and practice research strategies integral to writing about literature and culture. Assignments will include constructing an annotated bibliography, tracing the history of words important to queer urban life, generating independent and collaborative close readings, and conducting research in the library archives and the public sphere. We will build from the methods of our authors, as we use creative writing experiments to inform our academic writing. We will also use academic form to write across genres about the social, aesthetic and political relationships between queer communities and the cities where they live.

COURSE QUESTIONS:

- What are “queer spaces” in cities? How are they made? Who lives in them?
- How have queer communities and individuals interacted with American urban spaces since the 1950s?
- How do queer activist, social, and private spaces similarly and differently make use of the city?
- How do literary and critical representations of queer urban life variously articulate the relationship between queers and the city?
- How has a queer quotidian desire for urban life been in dialogue with or separate from work by queer communities for queer rights, disability access, and racial justice?
- How do queer communities change the city? How have cities changed, and how have those changes affected queer communities?

READINGS:

*All readings are available on Canvas, with the exception of the four books required for this course, which are on reserve at VanPelt Library and can be purchased at the Penn Bookstore.

Baldwin, James. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. [Vintage International Edition]

Delany, Samuel, *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue*. Beacon Press, 1999.

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982.

Myles, Eileen. *Chelsea Girls*. Black Sparrow Press, 1994. [Ecco Books Paperback Edition]

TEACHING METHODS

The teaching methods in this course will include in-class discussions, writing exercises, group work, individual and collaborative analysis of literary and cultural texts, field observations, process writing, and other activities. A careful reading of the texts assigned for each session is necessary to an informed discussion in class. Some class activities will ask you to take a position on the reading, to disagree with it, or to debate multiple perspectives. Because this is a course about queer urban life that is taught in a city in which many of the dynamics and histories we will discuss are readily present, you may also find it helpful, over the arc of the course, to reflect on your field observation, or on other experiences you have had in Philadelphia or in other cities.

COMMUNITY STATEMENT

A classroom is a space into which each of us enters to expand our perspectives, learn new things, and challenge our assumptions. Our classroom, in particular, may engage critically with material depicting violence, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and other topics that may elicit intense emotional responses, debate, and disagreement. Throughout the course we will have frank and challenging conversations about social justice, and about personal and institutional responsibility.

While safe spaces are important, it is impossible to guarantee them in a classroom in which we are respectfully challenging ourselves and one another. What I can guarantee, as your instructor, is that I will work to facilitate conversations that are respectful of every student and that are attentive to the sociohistorical conditions that produce uneven degrees of safety in the classroom and other spaces.

I ask each of us to validate each person's insights, perspectives, and needs as we create a "brave space" in our classroom, and open ourselves to our work in class as a collaborative project for which we need the participation and support of one another in order to succeed.

STUDENT RESOURCES

[Office of Student Disability Services](#): Provides services for students who self-identify as having a disability, including academic accommodations and accommodations for housing.

[International Student and Scholar Services](#): Provides immigration expertise and services to the Penn community, runs programming and outreach partnerships within the university and with agencies like Social Security and Customs and Border Protection.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Provides confidential and free professional mental health services to Penn students, and helps students adjust to university life, manage personal challenges, situational crises and academic stress.

Penn Violence Prevention: Engages the Penn community in the prevention of sexual violence, relationship violence and stalking (a collaborative program of the Penn Women's Center).

ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC SUPPORT

As this course requires several written assignments, please keep in mind the writing-related resources on campus. Please take advantage of these resources if you desire or need additional assistance with your writing.

The Marks Family Writing Center provides writing support to students across Penn's schools and departments. Peer and faculty writing specialists offer individual writing guidance, as well as more general writing workshops. For further information, and to schedule an appointment, see: http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/writing_center/.

The Weingarten Learning Resources Center also offers writing support to all students, and includes Penn's Student Disability Services office.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

If you have a medical, physical, psychological or learning disability for which you wish to request accommodation, you may do so [here](#) or visit the Weingarten Learning Resources Center at Stouffer Commons on 3702 Spruce Street in Suite 300. All services are confidential. Students with disabilities of any kind are encouraged to approach me as soon as possible, and we can work together to shape course assignments and activities to meet your needs.

Additionally, if there are circumstances that may affect your performance in class, or if those circumstances appear over the course of the semester, whether physical, emotional or organizational, please contact me as soon as you can and we will work together to make sure you are accommodated. For further information on disabilities services at Penn, see <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/> and <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are responsible for following the policies (in particular those regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and original work) contained in the Penn Student Handbook. For further info, see: <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>.

LATE WORK

If you encounter circumstances that impede your ability to submit an assignment on time, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance of the assignment deadline. Except in the event of a last-minute emergency, no written work will be accepted late.

ATTENDANCE

More than two absences – excused or unexcused – will be reflected in your final grade in the course. If you must miss class for any reason, please let me know ahead of time so that we can work together to make sure you have access to course material and assignments. After your first two absences, each subsequent absence will lower your final grade for the course by one third of a letter.

ASSIGNMENTS

Keywords Assignment

This assignment adapts the premise of Raymond Williams's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976) to the terms of particular importance to our course. In this assignment, you will choose a keyword of interest to you and situate its contemporary cultural meaning within its etymology, historical context, and within the literary and critical context of our course. More information about keywords is available here: <http://keywords.pitt.edu/whatis.html>

Observation/Adaptation Assignment

This assignment asks you to observe and consider formally queer uses of public space in a location of your choosing in Philadelphia, and to write an account of those observations in your own words. Then, you'll rewrite your observation by adapting Audre Lorde's style in *Zami*, and her own observations in her descriptions of a queer public space.

Library Resources Assignment

This assignment introduces you to a range of online and print resources available at Van Pelt Library by asking you to identify how the unfolding of one of four events important to gentrification in the East Village of the 1980s was covered in local, national, and queer-focused news media, and how it has been reanimated by news sources in more recent accounts.

Entering the Creative Conversation – The Process Poem

This assignment asks you to respond to the text of a prose work or scholarly article you have encountered in this course through a series of poetic procedures. For this assignment, you will perform one or a number of poetic procedures on a critical text of your choice. You will submit your poem as well as a short response reflecting on the exercise, and on the poems of your peers.

Close Reading Assignment

This assignment asks you to perform a number of procedures on one of three Eileen Myles poems of your choosing in order to generate a close reading of their work. After you have close read the poem and reflected on the procedure, we will go into the Wexler Studio in the Kelly Writers House to record close reading videos of each of the three poems in small groups.

Entering the Scholarly Conversation – The Annotated Bibliography

This assignment asks you to put several scholarly articles or book chapters on a common topic into dialogue with one another. For this assignment, you will produce three article annotations and a short critical introduction that sets them in conversation. In advance of submitting the annotated bibliography, you will be asked to choose one of the three articles and give a short (10 minute) presentation on its argument, intertexts, and structure.

Final Assignment

The final assignment for this course asks you to make a critical or creative intervention into the field of queer urban studies. You may choose to expand upon an idea or connection that was of interest to you early in the course, or to pursue a topic or approach outside of our conversations but in dialogue with the course material. If you choose to do a creative assignment, you will also be asked to write a critical introduction. All assignments, whether critical, creative, or a critical-creative hybrid, should have a final length of between 10-15 pages.

GRADING

60% Critical Analysis Exercises (6 exercises at 10% each)
10% Class participation
10% Annotation presentation
20% Final assignment

FINAL GRADE EQUIVALENTS

95-100 = A
90-95 = A-
87-89 = B+
83-86 = B
80-82 = B-
77-79 = C+
73-76 = C
70-72 = C-
67-69 = D+
63-66 = D
60-62 = D-

READING AND ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

Week 1

August 28th, 2018

Eileen Myles. "Hot Night" in *Not Me*. Semiotext(e), 1991. 51-57.

August 30th, 2018

Audre Lorde. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982. 3-21.

George Chauncey. "'Privacy Could Only Be Had In Public': Forging a Gay World in the Streets" in *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1994. 179-206.

Week 2

September 4th, 2018

Audre Lorde. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982. 21-80.

Sara Ahmed. "Introduction: Find Your Way" in *Queer Phenomenology*. Duke University Press, 2006. 1-24.

September 6th, 2018 - Keywords Assignment Due

Audre Lorde. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982. 81-124.

Week 3

September 11^h, 2018

Audre Lorde. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982. 124-195.

September 13th, 2018

Audre Lorde. *Zami: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 1982. 195-256.

“New York City 1970,” “A Birthday Memorial to Seventh Street,” and “Blackstudies,” *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*. Norton, 1997. 101-102, 110-112, 153-157.

Week 4

September 18^h, 2018

Sarah Schulman. “Part I. Understanding the Past” in *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. University of California Press, 2012. 19-48.

Eileen Myles. *Chelsea Girls*. Black Sparrow Press, 1994. 1-61.

September 20th, 2018 – Observation/Adaptation Assignment Due

Eileen Myles. *Chelsea Girls*. Black Sparrow Press, 1994. 62-131.

Jen Jack Giesecking. “Crossing Over into Neighborhoods of the Body: Urban Territories, Borders and Lesbian-Queer Bodies in New York City” *Area*. 48/3. 2016. 262-270.

Week 5

September 25th, 2018

Eileen Myles. “Writing,” “Mt. St. Helens,” and “Snakes” from *I Must Be Living Twice: New and Selected Poems 1975-2014*. Ecco Books, 2015. 234-5, 243-5, and 250-1.

Jack Halberstam, “Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies” in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press, 2005. 1-34.

*In class: planning for Collaborative Close Reading on October 9th

September 27th, 2018 – Entering the Creative Conversation – The Process Poem Part I Due

No class – Work on Entering the Creative Conversation assignment

Week 6

October 2nd, 2018 – Entering the Creative Conversation – The Process Poem Part II Due

*Information Literacy Librarian Sam Kirk will visit our class to give a presentation on library resources

October 4th, 2018

Fall Break (no class) (work on finishing *Chelsea Girls*)

Week 7

October 9th, 2018 -- Library Resources Assignment Due

*This class meets in the Kelly Writers House for our Collaborative Close Reading in the Wexler Studio and reflection.

October 11th, 2018

Eileen Myles. *Chelsea Girls*. Black Sparrow Press, 1994. 132-208.

Week 8

October 16th, 2018 – Close Reading Assignment Due

Eileen Myles. *Chelsea Girls*. Black Sparrow Press, 1994. 209-271.

October 18th, 2018

Film: [Flag Wars](#). Dir. Laura Poitras and Linda Goode Bryant. 2003.

Christina B. Hanhardt. "Introduction" in *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. 1-33.

Week 9

October 23rd, 2018

Samuel Delany, "Times Square Blue" in *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue*. Beacon Press, 1999. 3-108.

October 25th, 2018

Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks: Contact" in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Random House, 1961. 55-73.

Samuel Delany, "...Three, Two, One, Contact: Times Square Red" in *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue*. Beacon Press, 1999. 111-123.

Week 10

October 30th, 2018

*Note: This class will meet on the 6th Floor of Van Pelt Library in Special Collections

November 1st, 2018

Samuel Delany, "...Three, Two, One, Contact: Times Square Red" in *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue*. Beacon Press, 1999. 123-199.

Alison Kafer, "Accessible Futures, Future Coalitions" in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. 149-170.

Week 11

November 6th, 2018 -- Single Annotation Due for Bibliography

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 1-41.

In class: Annotation Presentations

November 8th, 2018

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 41-89.

Week 12

November 13th, 2018

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 89-126.

C. Riley Snorton. "Introduction: Transpositions" in *Nobody is Supposed to Know: Black Sexuality on the Down Low*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 10-45.

November 15th, 2018 – Annotated Bibliography Due

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 127-183.

Week 13

November 20th, 2018

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 183-227.

November 22nd, 2018

No Class – Thanksgiving (work on finishing *Another Country*, and on your final assignment draft)

Week 14

November 27th, 2018 – Final Assignment Draft Excerpt Due

In class: Final Assignment Workshop

November 29th, 2018

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 228-315.

Week 15

December 4th, 2018

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 316-381.

December 6th, 2018 – Final Assignment Due

James Baldwin. *Another Country*. The Dial Press, 1962. 381-436.