

University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexualities and Women's Studies
Winter 2026

GSWS 3173G – English 3209G – SASAH 3392G: Introduction to Queer Theory (Final)

We are located on the traditional land of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawapiskat peoples and we complicate the meaning of this location in our course.

Instructor:	Dr. Kate Korycki
Email:	
Class Meeting and Location:	
Zoom Office hours:	
Class Website:	

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

This course explores the foundational and cutting edge texts of queer theory and considers how they help us think about the world at large. Put differently, the course investigates what is theory and why do we do it, and it asks how queer theory in particular helps us think about social realities in the present. Most specifically, we ask, what is a sexuality, both historically and now, and how does it connect with the notions of 'normality' (& deviance'), visibility (& invisibility), regulation of gender, sex and body. We then investigate how queer theory helps (or not) think about climate collapse, migration, growing fascism and war, but also new forms of solidarity and resistance marshalled to face them.

In terms of content, the students will (1) gain familiarity with the foundational and cutting edge texts of queer and feminist theory, and (2) explore how queer theory helps us understand the broad political, economic and social forces that organize our lives. In terms of skills, the students will practice (3) exploring ideas by reading, thinking, writing, listening and sharing; (4) researching and answering analytically significant questions; (5) writing with integrity, clarity and precision; (6) exercising time- and grade-management.

Readings:

- Students are asked to borrow or buy (**used or new**), the following two books: Alison Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes to Watch out For* (listed on Amazon at \$24.00 for a new copy), and Eduard Louis, *The End of Eddy* (listed on Amazon at \$23.00 for a new copy).

- All other readings will be available through the Course Reading tab on OWL – the particulars are listed in the weekly schedule below. Library access makes the readings free.

Assignments and Expectations:

In this course, curiosity about the material and struggling to understand, transforming the ways in which we see the word, analyzing and grappling with complexity are encouraged, nurtured and rewarded. This means that getting things right is less important than thinking deeply about them! Further, the students are expected to have read and thought about the assigned readings; they are expected to write about them weekly during class; and they are expected to talk/clarify their understandings in our weekly class.

Note: It is NOT possible to pass/do well in this course without reading, thinking, writing and/or talking in each class! Also, the classes build on one another, so, if a student misses a class, it is important that s/he/they reads the assigned material and asks a colleague to share notes from the class meeting (it is not appropriate to ask the professor for this).

Assignments include weekly **in-class attendance, writing & talking** based on readings (maximum 10 points each, for the total of 30), a **2500-word research paper** submitted for review in **three stages** (maximum 10, 20, and 30 points each, for the total of 60), an optional **open book quiz** on the last day of class (maximum 10 points).

Deadlines: all in-class work is done during class time; IF you miss a class, you may submit a detailed but brief (no longer than 400 words) summary of all the weekly readings by Friday of the missed week (this allows you to make up the maximum of 2 points/missed class. Version 1 of the paper is due on **February 6** (500 words), paper version 2 is due on **February 27** (1,200 words), paper version 3 (2,500 words) is due on **March 27**. Detailed guidance and requirements will be posed on OWL Assessment tab by second week of the course and discussed in class.

All writing assignments are **due** on or before 11:55 pm on the dates specified above. They can be submitted earlier, and will be accepted until 11:55 pm of the Sunday following the due date. The built-in no-questions-asked accommodation is there to help deal with emergencies and health related delays. There will be no penalty for submitting the work between the due date and end of grace period, but there will be no further extensions either. Version 2 of the paper is designated as requiring medical certificate to be considered for Academic Absence.

Quiz will take place on **April 2** in class (or Accommodated Exams office – this has to be arranged at least 10 days prior to the quiz). The quiz is optional so there is no makeup for it.

Course Structure and Policies:

Weekly class meeting happen in person on Thursday between 1:30pm - 4:30pm.

In most classes, we will discuss important learning issues: ‘what is a university,’ ‘what is a thesis,’ ‘what is academic integrity,’ ‘what is causality,’ ‘how do we uncover meaning,’ ‘how to formulate a ‘why’ question,’ ‘how to write precisely.’ In each class, we will address what you find unclear in the readings. Come ready with questions.

In each class, we will test your comprehension of the readings, and we will practice writing. Low-stakes writing may happen more than once in a class. The point is to give you time to prepare your answers before you share them with the group and also to sharpen your thinking and understanding, and to practice writing with clarity. Each class will also involve small-group and/or whole class conversations. You are welcome to bring notes of the readings to class and quiz.

In each class, there will be a short lecture, clarifying the readings, and/or a movie.

Our weekly classes are not recorded & posted to OWL. Furthermore, no materials generated in this class may be recorded or copied without permission, or posted to commercial sites. They may be used, with attribution, in students’ learning and writing. Weekly PowerPoint will be posted on OWL on Monday following the class – this is to allow all those to miss the class to submit their writing.

Computer/Phone Use is prohibited. Computer may be used by up to 3 students who are willing to send the notes to me weekly to be posted on OWL for all to use. Use of a phone in a classroom outside of breaks **WILL** result in lowering of participation points. No computers or phones are permitted during in-class writing or the quiz (unless the student writes in the Accessibility office).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a profound waste of time and a direct involvement in the destruction of the planetary life. It is a waste of *your* time, because if you do not learn to read, research, analyze, and write well, what is the point of being in university? A degree is not worth the paper it is printed on, if not accompanied by knowledge and skills you are here to acquire. In other words, if you spend 4 years in University training a bot how to do the job you hope to get on exit, the bot will get your job! Secondly, your use of AI is waste of *my* time. I want to read your thoughts and teach you; teaching a bot destroys my soul. Thirdly and in a different vein, 100 of words written by chatgpt requires 0,5 liters of water to produce – think about this for a minute (water is not an infinite resource and it is necessary for life to go on)!

All this to say: if you use AI, you have to disclose the extent to which you did this (you have to leave the prompts in the text!). If you do not, you are presenting work that you did not write as yours (this is both a lie and an academic offence). I will NOT penalize the use of AI if disclosed but I will also not offer comments. If I suspect undisclosed use of AI, I will ask for your research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. I may also

ask you to reproduce your entire argument orally. An inability to produce requested materials and/or answer questions to *my* satisfaction, may result in a failed assignment. Please note, I will have a lot of samples of your writing from each week in class, so if your prose changes dramatically in your paper, I will have good grounds to suspect AI use.

Discussion Etiquette: In assessing class participation, I look at a) the quantity, and b) the quality of remarks, as well as c) *listening and respect* for the views of others, and d) a spirit of discovery. Our class conversations are explorations, not a competition.

Absenteeism: You do not need to advise me of absences or seek my approval, but note that if you miss more than **two classes**, you will have to *speak* with me to decide the path forward. This is in agreement with GSWS policy in which more than two absences put you at risk of having to retake the course. Please note, that two allowed absences are NOT in addition to sickness and emergencies you may encounter – the allowed absences are there to accommodate illness and emergency! Please note, I do take attendance.

Contesting a Grade: If you have questions concerning points received on one of your Research Essays, you are welcome to visit me during office hours. If, after our conversation, you wish to contest received points, you should submit a one-page single-spaced, typed request, within two weeks of the returned assignment. The request has to outline the reasons why you think you deserve higher points. Reasons do not related to your likes and dislikes of the assignment or your feelings about its lack of clarity – if you didn't like the assignment, you should have left the course, and if you were unclear about requirements, it was your responsibility to ask questions. Reasons also do not include a claim that you “need” a higher grade – as per GSWS policy, this is not an allowable appeal ground. An appeal is a learning exercise in which you critically confront your own writing vis-à-vis posted instructions. It has to be specific and concrete: ‘I did this, I did not do that; where the professor claims I did no do this and that, I believe I did this here and there....’ This is NOT a hostile/adversarial process but an exploration in which I may miss something and you are welcome to point it out. Note, the marks may go up and down, but they rarely go down ☺.

Requests for appeals outside of the two-week window will not be considered.

There are no appeals on the small in-class and make-up writing or quiz.

Communication with the Professor: I strongly encourage and invite talking to each other and me - as opposed to writing. Thus, all students can bring their questions to class or office hours. Email is the most discouraged form of communicating and I take 48 hours (outside of weekend) to respond. Also, there are many emails to which I don't respond individually – either your question is brilliant, in which case I'll answer it via a class announcement, or in class; or the answer is in the syllabus, or on OWL, which you are strongly encouraged to read and visit often.

All grade related questions must be asked in person, not email. If you send an email about a grade, I will assume you are sending me a heads-up about coming to discuss it in office hours.

Weekly Topics (may be changed or reduces as the course progresses)

Week 1: Introduction (do not miss!)

- In-class film, Laura Poitras (dir.) 2022 *All that Beauty and the Bloodshed*

Week 2: Queer & two of its many histories

- Michel Foucault. 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*. Pages 3-5 & 17-48
- Dan D’Emilio. 1983. “Capitalism and Gay Identity.” In *Powers of Desire*
http://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/readings/demilio_capitalismgayid.pdf

Week 3: Queer & Category, Identity, Boundary, Binary, Relationality

- Baldwin, James. “Stranger in a Village.” *Notes of the Native Son*
- Sander L. Gilman. 1985. “Introduction.” *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*. Cornell University Press: pages 15-35
- Sander L. Gilman. 1985. “The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality.” *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* Cornell University Press: pages 94-101 (the whole chapter is excellent!)

Week 4: Queer & gender

- Monique Wittig. 1981. “One Is Not Born a Woman.”
- Judith Butler. 2006. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge: pages 1-36
- Jack Halberstam. 2019. “Raging Bull (Dyke).” *Female Masculinity*.

Week 5: Queer & body

- Sylvia Federici. 2020. Chapter 7, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. *Beyond Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, and Reclaiming the Body in Contemporary Capitalism*
- Franz Kafka. Report to the Academy.
- Susan Striker. 1994. *My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamonix: Performing Transgender Rage*.
https://archive.org/details/MyWordsToVictorFrankenstein_201605

Week 6: Queer & experience

- Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs. 1992. “Tinkerbells and Pinups - the Construction and Reconstruction of Gender Boundaries at Work.” In *Cultivating Differences - Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*: **pages TBD**
- Joan W. Scott. 1991. “The Evidence of Experience.” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 17. No 4: **pages TBD**
- Paul B. Preciado. 2020. *An Apartment on Uranus: A Chronicle of the Crossing*: pages 21-52

Week 7: Queer & climate

- Jack Halberstam. 2023. *Wild Things* (TBD)
- Amy Robson. 2025. “Troubling times: Climate Crisis, future geographies and queer theory.” *Progress in Environmental Geography*.
- CLAGS panel on Queer Then and Now. Watch Jasbin Paur on India’s protests of farmers (starting 28 min in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH_Lv_FA1a8)

Week 8: Queer & normativity (and moral panics)

- Nancy Fraser. 1997. “Chapter 1: From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a “Postsocialist” Age.” In *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. New York, NY: Routledge: pages 13-33
- Lisa Duggan. 2002. “The New Homonormativity.” *Materializing Democracy* by R. Castronovo and D. D. Nelson (eds.). Duke U Press.
- Korycki, Darwish, Anoun: Order from Ashes Podcast, *Who is Afraid of Gender?* (<https://tcf.org/content/podcast/order-from-ashes-podcast-whos-afraid-of-gender/>)

Week 9: New Queer

- CLAGS panel on Queer Class Relations. 2024, Matt Brim (*Poor Queer Studies*) in conversation with Ramzi Fawaz (*Queer Forms*), and Paisley Currah (*Sex is as Sex Does*): **watch TWICE!** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81DPQSRnt0E>

Week 10: Queer & Class (better)

- Eduard Louis, *The End of Eddie*

Week 11: Queer in the Past as Queer in the Future

- Allison Bechdel. *Dykes to Watch out For*

Week 12: Quiz

Western University & Arts and Humanities’ General Policies & Supports

- Our work in this course is guided by the [University’s Scholastic Discipline](#) document and all offences are taken seriously.
- Students with disabilities work with **Accessible Education (Student Experience)**, which provides **recommendations for accommodation** based on medical documentation or other testing. The office also handles all requests for accommodated exams – read the [policy](#) and register for services and exams [here](#).

- NOTE! Sign up for tests and exams has to be done at least 10 days prior to the scheduled time of the exam! If a student changes their mind, and decides to write with the rest of the class, they must cancel the accommodated exam, or they will be charged \$25.00 fee.
- Requests for consideration on specific assignments - or **Absence Declarations** - should be submitted to the [Office of the Registrar](#). As per Senate [policy](#) student may file **ONE** such request per course and all consideration requests must be filed within 48 hours of the assignment. Note, that if assignments have built in flexibilities, or if they require medical documentation and the documentation is not provided, the requests for excused absence are denied. (Final exams ALWAYS require medical documentation and any other assignments that do, are listed above.)
- **Academic Advising** - as opposed to Accessible Education - offers support whenever students face issues affecting their studies, including guidance on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Academic Advising is where you present evidence of illness/emergency when making Absence Declarations (above). Academic Advising should be sought at student's home faculty (the contacts for all faculties is found [here](#)).
- NOTE! NO consideration of an extension or absence is "approved" until it is approved by the professor in the course! Professor decides this based on class design, built-in accommodations and other relevant factors.
- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help students improve their learning skills. They offer presentations on time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.
- Students should review the [policy](#) for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test.
- Students who are in acute emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) to obtain help.
- If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support [here](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

- Faculty of Arts and Humanities required statement on Gender-based and sexual violence reads as follows: “Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [this](#) website. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.”

Please note: under the new Gender-based and Sexual Violence [policy](#) instructors are required to refer any and all incidents of sexual violence disclosed to them. The student will then be contacted by the GBSV Survivor Support Case Manager and can receive and decline assistance of that office.

- Additional student-run support services are offered by the [University Student Centre](#).