

# THE MAKING OF MODERN SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

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*(If there are no academic Departments of Heterosexual Studies, even in more liberal universities, that is not only because all branches of the human sciences are already, to a greater or lesser degree, departments of heterosexual studies but also because heterosexuality has thus far largely escaped becoming a problem that needs to be studied and understood.) By constituting homosexuality as an object of knowledge, heterosexuality also constitutes itself as a privileged stance of subjectivity—as the very condition of knowing—and thereby avoids becoming an object of knowledge itself, the target of a possible critique.*

David Halperin in *Saint Foucault*, 47.

*The professionalization of gayness requires a certain performance and production of a “self” which is the constituted effect of a discourse that nevertheless claims to “represent” that self as a prior truth.*

Judith Butler in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”

This course takes the constitutive act of making in its title very seriously, offering both an historical and theoretical engagement with our current categories of sexual differentiation. It centers on that mode of difference which today is commonly called lesbian/gay/ bisexual/ transgendered and/or just queer, but which in other historical periods could have been called Uranian, inversion, sodomitical, Sapphic, butch, Wildean, homosexual, homophile and a host of other terms. More often than not over the course of human history it was simply not called anything at all—testament not only to repression, but to the potential for a different conceptual schema which did not see same sex sexuality as defining of what a person was—indeed, which may have seen it as so normative that it warranted no additional name. We will find that the notion of a variously labeled LGBTQ identity is relatively historically recent, and will therefore explore why a set of erotic practices eventually cohered into a defining (and constraining) identity that was set in opposition to a chronologically subsequent neologism: the heterosexual. Given the peculiar and particular array of pressures— political, religious, juridical among others— governing the social manifestation of queerness, an investigation into its historical past can open a window onto a range of broader ideological investments seemingly far removed from sexuality.

Using a range of works that have as their theme gay and lesbian experience and identity in, largely, the twentieth-century United States and to a lesser extent Europe, we will attempt to tease out the theoretical assumptions that undergird queer studies, from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. These works include fiction and autobiographical texts, historical and sociological materials, texts on queer theory, and films. Always, we will focus on what representations of sexuality tell us about its construction and self understanding, sensitive to the intersections between sexuality and race, ethnicity, class, gender, and nationality.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Abelow, Barale, and Halperin, eds. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* available at Labyrinth Books (aka LGS Reader)
- 2) Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* available at Labyrinth Books (aka Odd)
- 3) Course Packet available at Tyco (aka CP)

## COURSE ORGANIZATION

The organization is largely chronological and entirely interdisciplinary. We will shift our attention fluidly between various forms of representation towards an historical consideration of queer depictions and their significance. Throughout the course, in every respect, we will be attentive to the ways race, gender and social class cross-cut the story of sexuality and its representations.

## THE PROBLEMATICS OF QUEER REPRESENTATION

## INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

### SOME HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

Jonathan Ned Katz, "'Homosexual' and 'Heterosexual':  
Questioning the Terms" (handout)  
Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random* (1763)-selections (handout)  
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855)—selections (handout)  
Gayle Rubin "Thinking Sex" in *LGS Reader* (to be discussed in first section)

### THE RISE OF SEXUAL "SCIENCE"

Doan and Waters, Introduction & short selections from Krafft-Ebing and  
Carpenter (handout)  
Michel Foucault, *The Perverse Implantation* (handout)  
Magnus Hirschfeld, *Transvestites* (handout)

LKI queer/ allied student, faculty and staff welcome party:  
5-7 pm in Dwight Hall (food provided)

### IDENTITY: ESSENTIALISM & CONSTRUCTIONISM

David Halperin, "Is There a History of Sexuality?" in *LGS*  
John Boswell, "Categories, Experience, and Sexuality" in CP  
Jonathan Dollimore, "Different Desires" in *LGS Reader*  
Oscar Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" (1894) in  
CP  
Diana Fuss, "Lesbian and Gay Theory: The Question of Identity Politics" in CP  
Martin Duberman, "Writhing Bedfellows in Antebellum South Carolina" in CP  
John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" in *LGS*

### SOCIAL CLASS AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

Gertrude Stein "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" in CP  
Lillian Faderman, *Odd*: 11-36, 62-67.  
Shari Benstock, "Paris Lesbianism and the Politics of Reaction, 1900-1940"  
in CP  
George Chauncey, "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion:  
Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the  
World War 1 Era" in CP  
Faderman, *Odd*: 37-61

### RACE AND SEXUAL IDENTITY 1

Garber, Eric, "A Spectacle in Color", in CP  
Lillian Faderman, *Odd*: 68-88  
listen to *AC/DC Blues* (queer blues by Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and others)

## GENDERED SEXUALITIES

Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman" in *LGS*  
Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in *LGS*  
Leslie Feinberg, "Butch to Butch: A Love Song" and "Letter to a Fifties  
Femme from a Stone Butch" in CP  
Simone De Beauvoir, *The Lesbian* in CP  
Faderman Odd: 159-187.

## CAMP RESISTANCE

Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic" in *LGS Reader*  
Patrick Dennis, *Little Me* (1962)—selections in CP  
Michael Bronski, "Judy Garland and Others" in CP  
"Gay Party at Police Station," *Mattachine Newsletter*, 1969 in CP  
Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility" in CP  
Jonathan D. Katz, "The Silent Camp" in CP  
In section see *Andy Warhol's Bike Boy*

## POLITICAL RESISTANCE

Martin Duberman, "The Night They Raided Stonewall" in CP  
John Knoebel, "Somewhere in the Right Direction" in CP  
Robert Duncan, "The Homosexual in Society" in CP  
Jonathan D. Katz, Allen Ginsberg interviewed (1989) in CP  
Esther Newton, "Just One of the Boys: Lesbians in Cherry Grove" in *LGS  
Reader*

## SEPARATISMS

Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," in CP  
Arlene Stein, "Sister and Queers..." in CP  
Faderman: 215-245.  
Cowrie. (Dec. 1973) 1-18 (you may skim) in CP  
Jill Johnston *Lesbian Nation* (1973)—selections in CP  
In section see *A Question of Equality*  
Mark Thompson, "This Gay Tribe" and "The Evolution of a Fairie" in CP  
Harry Hay, "A Separate People" in CP

## RADICALLY SEXED

Thom Magister, "One Among Many" in CP  
John Preston, "What Happened" in CP  
Dorothy Allison, "Her Body, Mine, and His" in CP  
Carol Truscott, "S/M: Some Questions and a Few Answers" in CP  
Patricia Duncan, "Identity, Power, and Difference: Negotiating Conflict in an  
S/M Dyke Community" in CP

## TRANSPOLITICS

Judy Shapiro, "Transexualism" in CP  
Sandy Stone "The Empire Strikes Back: A Post Transexual Manifesto"  
(1991) in CP

## RACE AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

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John L. Peterson, "Black Men and Their Same-Sex Desires and Behaviors" in CP  
Greg Conerly, "The Politics of Black Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identity" in CP  
Tomas Almaguer. "Chicano Men" in *LGS Reader*  
Barbara Smith, "Homophobia: Why Bring it Up?" in *LGS Reader*  
Biddy Martin, "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference(s)" in *LGS Reader* in section: See *Tongues Untied*

## CLOSETS-IN & OUT

Eve Sedgwick "Epistemology of the Closet" in *LGS Reader*

## ACT-UP TYPES AND QUEER NATIONALS

Simon Watney, "The Spectacle of AIDS" in *LGS Reader*  
Steven Seidman, "AIDS and The Homosexual Question" in CP  
Douglas Crimp, *AIDS Cultural Analyses/ Cultural Activism* in CP  
Paul Monette *Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog* in CP  
David Wojnarowicz *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*—selections in CP  
Simon Watney. "Queer Epistemology: Activism, 'Outing' and the Politics of Sexual Identities" in CP  
Phyllis Burke, *Family Values*—selections in CP  
Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience" in *LGS Reader*

## A FINAL NOTE

Your individual identity and/or sexuality is entirely your business. You will never be asked about it, though of course you are free to self-identify. Equally, being queer or not being queer is no guarantee of success or failure in this class. This is an academic course requiring considerable reading and hard work and grading will employ traditional academic standards.