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**WGST 3030: Topics in Sexuality: Queer Studies**  
Elyce Rae Helford, professor

**Description:** Topics in Sexuality: Queer Studies introduces students to "queerness" as a conceptual, theoretical, and practical tool in the historical and cultural study of gender and sexuality. From its history as a slur to its activist mobilization, students will learn how "queer" has been and can be defined, and how diverse individuals and groups (including scholars and activists) use the term today to explore self and world, locally and globally. Together, the class will explore how queerness complicates and problematizes such notions as "orientation," "gender," and "sexuality" and how a queer studies approach destabilizes reductive understandings of cultural artifacts and phenomena, offering more open-ended and multiple interpretations.

**Objectives:**

- Develop reading, analytical, and critical thinking skills.
- Improve oral and written expression.
- Develop understanding of queer studies (theory and methodologies) at an introductory level.
- Learn to apply queer studies theory and methodologies to cultural phenomena (e.g. media).
- Recognize the relationship of queer studies to broader study of sexuality and gender (at personal, local, and global levels).

**Required Texts:**

- Bornstein, Kate and S. Bear Bergman, eds. *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*

This anthology features 40+ personal essays by diverse individuals who identify as queer, trans, and/or "gender outlaw." Develops discussion of queer as a category related to sex and gender, to personal identity formation, and intersectionally (inflected simultaneously by race, ethnicity, class, nation, and other experiential categories). Provides diverse personal perspectives to broaden definitions and understanding.

- Doty, Alexander. Excerpts from *Making Things Perfectly Queer* and *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon*

These books feature an engaging and influential definition of "queer" as a perspective and tool for studying cultural phenomena, particularly visual media—television and film. Students will be required to purchase MTPQ and the Introduction and one or two body chapters of FC will be put on e-reserve. Provides a methodology students can analyze and apply.

- Edwards, Dylan. *Transposes*.

This graphic novel offers biographies of trans men whose complex gender/sex identities complicate traditional binaries of male/female and straight/gay. Provides an exemplification of a queer(ed) text: hybrid (literary/visual) that discusses hybrid identities.

- Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*

Jagose discusses the development of queer theory as it developed from gay liberation and lesbian feminist perspectives. Provides vital historical context.

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## Schedule & Assignments:

### Weeks 1-3

Topic: Defining "Queer"  
Readings: Jagose, "Introduction"  
Doty, "Introduction"  
+Additional article about queerness from popular media (selected by student)  
Screening: *Adventures in the Gender Trade* (documentary, 25 minutes)  
Assignment: Introductory Writing: 300-500 words on defining queerness and student interest in subject  
Oral Report: 3-5 minute presentations on additional articles

### Weeks 4-5

Topic: Queer History and Theory  
Readings: Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*  
Assignment: In-class Examination: Jagose book

### Weeks 6-7

Topic: Reading Queerly 1  
Readings: Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer* and *Flaming Classics* (excerpts)  
Screening: *Sylvia Scarlet* or other film discussed by Doty  
Assignment: Take-home Exam: queer film study (on a film screened outside of class, e.g. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*)

### Weeks 8-9

Topic: Reading Queerly 2  
Readings: Edwards, Dylan. *Transposes*  
Assignment: Essay: Application of Doty and/or Jagose to *Transposes*

### Weeks 10-12

Topic: Claiming Queer Identity  
Readings: Bornstein and Bergman, eds. *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation* (excerpts)  
Assignment: 500-word personal essay, working with excerpts from *Gender Outlaws*

### Weeks 13-15

Topic: Final Project  
Assignment: Final Project: Compose an essay (1200+ words) or complete a creative project (with written explanatory element)

### Final Examination Date

Oral Presentation of Final Projects plus submission of essay or written element

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### Grades:

Course grade is based on MTSU's +/- scale. Total points = 600. Final grades are determined by percentage of points earned, on a standard scale: 90-100% = A, 87-89 = B+, 83-86% = B, 80-82% = B-, 77-79% = C+, 73-76% = C, etc.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Introductory Writing and Oral Report	100
In-class Exam (over Jagose book)	100
Take-home Exam (Queer Film Reading)	100
Essay (over <i>Transposes</i> )	100
Personal Essay	100
Final Project (oral + written elements)	150