

## ENGL 390 / WMST 300 *Queer Looks—Homosexuality & Gender Queerness in Film*

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May Evening, 2008

**Office Hours:** Generally available, Monday & Wednesday afternoons, or by appointment

### Required Text:

Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) [abbreviated 'B&G' in reading schedule below]

Various readings posted to WebCT ([listed in blue in reading schedule below](#))

### Course Description:

“These were fleeting images, but they were unforgettable. And they left a lasting legacy. Hollywood, that great maker of myths, taught straight people what to think about gay people, and gay people, what to think about themselves. No one escaped its influence.”

—Armistead Maupin, *The Celluloid Closet*

Films both reflect and create cultural perceptions, about human sexuality no less than other matters. This course will examine some aspects of the history of that cinematic treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people in films, starting in the silent era and working up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition to viewing films and reading film criticism, we will also discuss a variety of historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical writings pertaining to the cultural study of homosexuality in film.

### Course Requirements:

Short directed ‘reaction paper’ writing assignments associated with each night’s reading and/or the previous class’s film. Grades for these assignments will be averaged over the semester.

One longer paper (5-7 pp.): on a film, or film comparison, of your choice, due Monday, June 16<sup>th</sup> (early submissions welcome). Your paper needs to involve the use of at least one academic article or book chapter that we have not used in class, and at least one film we have not used in class. (See my annotated list of additional relevant films available for viewing in C of C Media Library.) You may incorporate something we’ve watched (e.g., in a comparative paper), but you need to cover some novel territory in your paper.

Final in-class essay exam (Wednesday, June 25): You will be provided with a set of exam study questions a week prior to the final.

### Class Attendance:

I don’t take class attendance, but I do expect you to be in class regularly. I do notice chronic absenteeism, and that can affect your class participation grade.

### Grading:

Short writing assignments: 40%

Paper: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Class Participation (including attendance): 10%

### Grading Scale:

A	91 or better	C+	75-77.9
A-	88-90.9	C	71-74.9
B+	85-87.9	C-	68-70.9
B	81-84.9	D+	65-67.9
B-	78-80.9	D	61-64.9
		D-	58-60.9

## Screening & Reading Schedule

- May 12 *A Florida Enchantment* (Sidney Drew, 1914; 64 minutes)  
*Celluloid Closet I* (through 06 Queen Christina; 0:00-16:35)
- May 14 Reading Assignment (due for May 14<sup>th</sup> class):  
*Queer Images* parts of Intro & Ch. 1, “From Pansies to Predators” (B&G, 1-12, 14-32)  
[Vito Russo, \*Mädchen in Uniform\* \(excerpt from Russo’s \*Celluloid Closet\*\)](#)  
Films: *Mädchen in Uniform* (Leontine Sagan, 1931; 87 minutes)  
*Sign of the Cross* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1932; brief excerpts)
- May 19 Reading Assignment:  
*Queer Images* Ch. 2: “Discrete Charms: Queer Filmmakers in Classic Hollywood” (B&G 41-61)  
[Alexander Doty, “Whose Text Is It Anyway? Queer Cultures, Queer Auteurs, & Authorship”](#)  
Film: *Sylvia Scarlett* (George Cukor, 1935; 1 hour, 35 minutes)
- May 21 Reading Assignment:  
[Laura Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema](#)  
*Queer Images* Ch. 3: “Queer Audiences and Classical Hollywood Cinema” (B&G 63-84)  
Film: *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950; 2 hours, 18 minutes)
- May 26 **Memorial Day—no class**
- May 28 Reading Assignment (I):  
*Queer Images* conclusion of Ch. 1, “From Pansies to Predators” (B&G, 32-39)  
[Richard Dyer, “Queer Noir”](#)  
Films: *Celluloid Closet II* (07 Cold-hearted villains -- 11 Young Man w/ a Horn; 16:35-24:45)  
*Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941; short excerpts)  
Reading Assignment (II):  
[Jonathan Ned Katz, \*The Invention of Heterosexuality\* \(Foreward & excerpts from Chs. 2-4\)](#)  
Film: *Glen or Glenda?* (Ed Wood, 1953; excerpts)
- June 2 *Queer Images* Ch. 5: “Exploitation or Art? Queer Films beyond Hollywood” (B&G 107-128)  
[George Chauncey, “Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion?”](#)  
[Kennedy & Davis, “The Reproduction of Butch-Fem Roles”](#)  
Film: *Boy I Am* (Sam Feder & Julie Hollar, 2006; 72 minutes)
- June 4 Reading Assignment:  
*Queer Images* Ch. 4: “Fear and Loathing in Postwar Hollywood” (B&G 85-93)  
Films: *Celluloid Closet III* (12 Tea & Sympathy -- 17 Tony Curtis; 24:45-46:35)  
[Bosley Crowther, “The Screen: New ‘Children’s Hour’”](#)  
Brett Elizabeth Westbrook, “The Lesbian Vanishes”  
<http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/28/thesethree1.html>  
Westbrook, “Second Chances: The Remake of Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour*”  
<http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/29/childrenshour1.html>  
*The Children’s Hour* (William Wyler, 1961; 1 hour, 47 minutes)

June 9 Reading Assignment:

*Queer Images* conclusion of Ch. 4: “Fear and Loathing in Postwar Hollywood” (B&G 93-106)

*Queer Images* Ch. 6: “Hollywood and the Sexual Revolution” (B&G 129-151)

Films: *Celluloid Closet* IV (18 Victim -- 21 Unhappy gay people; 46:35-59:55)

*The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968; 2 hours 20 minutes)

June 11 Reading Assignment:

*Queer Images* Ch. 7: “Producing Pride: Queers Make Movies” (B&G 153-176)

Films: *The Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970; 2 hours)

*Celluloid Closet* V (22 Boys in the Band; 59:55-104:25)

June 16 Reading Assignment:

*Queer Images* Ch. 8: “Out of the Closet and into the Art House” (B&G 177-200)

[Babuscio, “Camp & the Gay Sensibility”](#)

Film: *Hedwig & the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2001; 95 minutes)

Read *after* class:

*Queer Images* remainder of Intro: “A Very Queer Film: *Hedwig & the Angry Inch*” (B&G 12-14)

June 18 Reading Assignment:

*Queer Images* Ch. 10: “Hollywood is Burning: New Queer Cinema” (B&G 219-223; 237-243)

[bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?”](#)

[Judith Butler, “Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion”](#)

Films: *Celluloid Closet* VI (23 Cabaret – 27 The Hunger; 104:25-125:00)

*Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990; 78 minutes)

June 23 Reading Assignment:

*Queer Images* Ch. 11: “Queer Eye for the Straight Hollywood Executive” (B&G 247-265)

*Queer Images* Ch. 12: “Queer Independent Film at the Turn of the Millenium” (B&G 267-291)

Films: *Celluloid Closet* VII (27 Fried Green Tomatoes – 28 Philadelphia; 125:00-136:30)

*Last film: Class choice*