(updated 31 January 2016)

Department of English and Cultural Studies
McMaster University

English and Cultural Studies 3AA3E
Cultural Studies and Critical Theory 3AA3E; Women’s Studies 3HH3E

Gender and Sexuality:
Queer Theory, Queer Lives

Baby Makes 3, 1984 (General Idea)
Collection: The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa

Instructor: Dr. David L. Clark

E-mail: dclark@mcmaster.ca
Office: CNH 210
Office Hrs: 11:30am-12:30pm
Class time: Wed. 7-10 pm
Classroom: TSH B-106

T.A.: Ms. Emma McKenna
E-mail: mckennej@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Wed. 5:30-6:30 pm, CNH 228
Course Description:

This course explores the cultural, historical and theoretical foundations of queer theory and critical practice.

Beginning in the 1980’s, activists and researchers re-appropriated the term *queer* to name the richly dissenting and fluidly differentiated ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality communicate with each other and articulate desirously thinking human life. What had once been a vicious slur now became a positive rallying point for new possibilities for experience and for thinking about justice, equality, and embodiment. *Queer theory*, the specific focus of this course, is the rigorous and still unfolding critical reflection on these possibilities—the politics, ethics, desires, and practices of non-normative life, in all of its myriad manifestations.

Our investigation falls into three movements:

1.0 “Queer Theory: Some Opening Moves”
2.0 “Queer Critical Practices”
3.0 “Queer Cultural Locations”

In the *first* prefatory part of this course, we briefly survey the definitional questions and problems swirling around queer life and thought, focussing on the transgressive questions that queer studies raises about sex, gender, and sexuality. In the *second* part, we turn to examination of the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, three of queer theory’s most influential thinkers. These theorists—each one at once difficult, challenging, and welcoming—will provide us with a useful vocabulary with which to explore the meaning and importance of queer knowledges and queer questions. Then in the *third* part of the course we will explore a selection of specific cultural locations in which to consider the heterogeneous nature of queer lives, ranging from the complex ways in which questions of gender and sexuality got caught up in the emergence of HIV/AIDS in North America, to the challenges of representing transgendered and transsexual subjects in mainstream film.

Note that the assigned readings for the course are concentrated in its first half, this, so that students may focus on the preparation for and composition of their major essay during the second half.

This course affirms the joyful diversity of queer pleasures, desires and forms of embodiment. To do that work, we’ll be using the frankest possible language, verbal and visual. Students should be prepared to work with this language and to think with it. Because queer pleasures, desires, and forms of embodiment are sometimes subjected to violently exclusionary practices, we will also need to address that violence in candid ways.

Required texts:

English and Cultural Studies 3AA3E Course-pack (Available from the Campus Bookstore)

Materials available on-line (through the Mills Memorial Library portal; on Avenue-to-Learn; or on the web). See the list of *Course Readings* below for the specific locations of all on-line materials.

Films (screened in class):

- *Brokeback Mountain*
- *Boys Don’t Cry*
- *Pariah*

Course assignments and weighting:

Midterm examination: 20%
Essay (10-12 pages / 2500 words): 45%
Final Examination (2 hours): 35%

Updates and notifications on Avenue.
Please make sure that you change your Avenue settings so that you receive real-time notifications when new content, news, or other course events are available. For instructions on how to change your settings, see: http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/help/docs/setting_up_notifications.pdf

**Essay due date and late submission policy:**

You have the choice of two essay due dates. Essays are initially due in class, at start of class, Wednesday 16 March 2016. Essays submitted at this point will receive a full marking commentary. Essays handed in after 16 March will be graded exactly the same way but without comment. Essays may be submitted up to 7 pm, Wednesday 6 April, the last day of the course. No essays will be accepted after 7 pm, Wednesday 6 April. A grade of zero/F will therefore be assigned to essays not submitted by 7 pm, 6 April. No essays can be accepted as e-mail attachments or dropped off with the Department of English and Cultural Studies.

If you are a smoker, please ensure that you print your essay in a smoke-free environment.

**Sources of readings for this course:**

The sources of the assigned materials for this course fall into four categories:

1) Materials collected in the Course-pack to be purchased from the Campus Bookstore.
2) Materials available on the web or on-line from the periodicals collection and e-books at Mills Library (durable url’s provided below)
3) Materials posted on Avenue-to-Learn.
4) Films and excerpts from films screened in class.

In addition, as the course unfolds, various materials relevant to the development of the course will be posted on Avenue. These materials include:

1. Course Outline
2. Supplemental remarks posted on Avenue (see below)
3. Midterm Examination Format and Study Tips
4. Essay Question Assignment
5. Midterm Examination Debrief
6. Online Course Evaluation Form Link
7. Final Examination Format and Study Tips

I will be using Avenue to post supplemental remarks about the lectures and course materials. These remarks are not lecture summaries but comments and queries designed to help you consolidate your understanding of the lectures and the assigned texts. They therefore form part of the course content for which you are responsible. For example, you can expect to see keywords and important dates, names, concepts, and critical terms associated with the materials that we study in class, as well as questions designed to return you to significant points made in lectures about the texts that we are taking up together. So if you haven’t already done so, please change your Avenue settings so that you receive notification when “News” items related to the course are posted or updated.

Students are warmly encouraged to liberate this course from the confines of the Thursday night classroom, and to form independent study groups to discuss and debate the course materials and questions. In previous years, these study groups have proved to be very helpful to students.

Students interested in considering my evolving view of undergraduate education and the role of the university in fostering a more critical citizenry are encouraged to consider “Thought & Theory,” an unfolding reflection on teaching and learning posted on my website, http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/interviewBtL.html. See also brief interviews with me at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alBSM7Ny4mY (“Faculty of Humanities Professor Q&A with David Clark”) and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eESDrmDhe-4 (“David Clark with Queer Theory”). See also: “What does it mean to welcome Omar Khadr? University students and
the lesson of hospitality” [1] and “The Canadian University and the war against Omar Khadr” [2]

### Provisional Lecture Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Prefatory remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Queer Theory: Some Opening Moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Queer Critical Practices: Michel Foucault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Queer Critical Practices: Judith Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Queer Critical Practices: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Midterm Examination (no class after the examination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>No class / Reading Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Trans- Theory and Trans-Lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boys Don’t Cry (Introduction to the film and film screening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Boys Don’t Cry (Lecture and Discussion)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Pariah (Introduction to the film and film screening)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Pariah (Lecture and Discussion)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Brokeback Mountain (Introduction to the film and film screening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brokeback Mountain (Lecture and Discussion)</td>
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</tbody>
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### Course Readings:

#### 1.0 Queer Theory: Some Opening Moves and Background Reading


2.0 Queer Critical Practices

2.1 Michel Foucault


2.2 Judith Butler


2.3 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick


3.0 Queer Cultural Locations

3.1 Trans-


### 3.2 Boys Don’t Cry


### 3.2 Pariah

http://www.focusfeatures.com/pariah/overview

### 3.5 Brokeback Mountain


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**Please note the following important policies and statements regarding this course:**

**Academic Dishonesty**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.
Email correspondence policy
It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines
McMaster University reserves the right to change or revise information contained in course outlines in extreme circumstances. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check regularly their primary email account via their @mcmaster.ca alias and course websites.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)
In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean’s office.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances
Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments.

Cancellation policy
In the event of class cancellations, students will be notified on Avenue and the English Department Website. It is your responsibility to check these sites regularly for any such announcements.

Course evaluation
Students will be requested to complete an online course evaluation at the end of the course.

Smart Phones and Internet Use in Class
The use of social media (texting, surfing, receiving or making phone calls, etc.) during class is forbidden. Internet usage must be limited to materials being discussed in class. Please be respectful and courteous to your classmates, teaching assistant, and professor by concentrating on the work at hand in class. Students unwilling to refrain from social media or unwarranted internet use will be asked to leave class.

Copies of Essays
Keep a copy of the essay that you submit for the course.

Students with Letters of Accommodation
I am happy to assist students with their accommodation needs. Student Accessibility Services reminds students that students who register with that office bear the following four “Responsibilities:”

-- Students must, within a reasonable time, provide…the instructor a letter of accommodation under SAS letterhead, during office hours or by appointment.
-- Students must negotiate with the instructor appropriate implementation and timelines of accommodations (e.g. due dates for assignments, etc.).
-- Students must negotiate with the instructor timely information regarding difficulties encountered with or during the course
-- Students must discuss with the instructor all information related to scheduling and administration of class tests and exams.

**The importance of the final essay**
Note the weight given to the final essay--worth 45% of the final mark. Why that weighting? My position is that students in third-year should be given every opportunity to demonstrate their abilities to write and think in an expansive way that only a full-scale essay can afford. The midterm and the final examination are important ways to measure your understanding of the material, to be sure, but those sorts of assignments test quite different strengths than writing an essay. Critical theory—including Queer Theory—is largely about rigorous analysis and clear-minded argumentation; moreover, it is about taking the time to parse and explore challenging questions and difficult knowledge. There is no better place to affirm those strengths and to demonstrate them than in a carefully written essay.

Once the course is underway, you’ll be given some suggested essay topics, plus encouraged to develop an essay topic of your own. Emma will be available to help you craft your essay. There are also wonderfully helpful resources on campus to help you with your essay writing skills, including [Writing Support Services](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html) and the Writing Tutors in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at engltut@mcmaster.ca

**Class attendance, preparedness, and intellectual development**
Although there is no roll-call, attendance in lectures is mandatory. Be aware that missing one evening class is equivalent to forfeiting a full week of the course—a loss that will be very difficult to make up. Uneven class attendance will have a profound impact on your ability to thrive in the course and to do well in the term work and in the final examination. Make every possible arrangement to ensure that you are able to attend lectures. If you must miss class, arrange to borrow good notes from others. Ensure that you come fully prepared for lectures by reading the assigned materials with care.

Some of you will struggle to attend an evening class. I am fully cognisant of the challenges that many of you are facing: working full-time, holding down one or more part-time jobs, raising a family, caring for elders and siblings. Some of you are exhausted from a long day of classes on Thursdays, or feeling deeply dispirited about or bored with your education. Preparing for and coming to a three hour evening class can be difficult. *Yet I call upon you to muster your energies and to try as best you can to organize your hectic days to attend class without fail.*

Read the course materials prior to the lecture since I will be referring to those materials and will do so in ways that assume you have tackled them. It’s perfectly okay not to understand everything that you are reading! The texts that we are reading together are difficult because the questions that they ask and the problems that they explore are difficult. *You aren’t meant to get everything, much less get it all at once.* Be patient, but curious and hospitable to new ways of thinking of gender, sexuality, desire, and embodiment. Return to the assigned materials, weaving together, step by step, what you do understand. Go back to the texts after class, connecting what was said in lecture to what you are reading. Like engaging anything that matters, understanding Queer Theory takes time, patience, intellectual suppleness and flexibility….and generosity of spirit.

Don’t forget to take notes during the lectures. You’ll need those notes to do well in the course, so taking lots of them in class is a very good habit to learn. If you don’t take notes, or many notes, ask yourself: *Why?* Is not taking notes enriching your education . . . or is it compromising it?

Bring assigned materials to class. I will be referring to them throughout the course. Having the course materials in front of you will go a long way towards helping you understand those materials.
Why not use this term to make a concerted effort to develop and mature as a thinker, reader, and writer? No undergraduate student I have ever met is doomed to stay in one place, intellectually speaking. Far from it. Every student can strengthen, complicate, and improve her or his school-work . . . and although a one-term evening course goes by pretty quickly, it remains an auspicious and generative place to realize that kind of change if you put your mind to it. After all, the critical theories of the sort that we study on this course treat life as a complex scene of transformation and self-transformation. Movement, not stasis, is their call-sign. Are you up to that sort of change in your own educational practices? For example, why not use the course to determine precisely how you can improve your essay-writing and exam-writing skills . . . and then do so? Or how about finding ways to bolster your note-taking abilities? Are you having trouble actually making it to all the classes? A course like this one—meeting but once a week—is a good occasion to think carefully about why that is so, where that trouble is coming from, what effect it is having on your education, and most important, what you can do to participate more fully in your own learning and to take responsibility for your own education. Is there room for you to improve your time-management and organizational abilities? What can you do in this course to ensure that—step-by-step—you ensure that your experience is crazily hectic but not overwhelming? Queer theorists are not alone in offering this encouragement: don’t be a victim of your own prejudices and fixed ideas, in particular ideas you that you might have about school, writing essays, going to class, and being a student. What kind of student have you been schooled into becoming? Is that the student that you want to remain? Beware of the unproductive habits sapping the life out of your own learning! Instead, try as best you can to break with these habits. Jettison the things that don’t work or work very well when it comes to being a student. Be creative, i.e., approach the course with curiosity, energy, and courage. Take responsibility, i.e., engage the course material as something to which you are answerable, as a series of questions that are querying you, here, and now.

McMaster University Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Equivalent Grade Point</th>
<th>Equivalent Percentages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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