

Dr. Kenneth Kidd
AML 3285; Section 2366
T 7 R 7-8
Spring 2000

Office: TUR 4214
392-6650, ext. 302
Hours: T 6&8; R 6
& by appointment

Contemporary Lesbian/Gay Literature in the United States

Texts (available at Goering's)

Hilton Als, *The Women*
Caroline Anshaw, *Aquamarine*
Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw*
Dani Cavallero, *The Body for Beginners*
Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*
Robert Gluck, *Jack the Modernist*
Jim Grimsley, *Dream Boy*
Jan Zita Grover, *North Enough: AIDS and Other Clear Cuts*
Scott Heim, *Mysterious Skin*
David Leddick, *My Worst Date*
Audre Lord, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*
Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*

And a coursepacket from Xerographic (available through Goering's)

Overview

This course explores the range and relation of sexual identities in contemporary writing for and about lesbians, gay men, and transgendered people. We'll concentrate on writing by self-identified queer folk, but we'll also address the broader rhetorical, political, and cultural contexts of that writing. We'll focus on work published in the 1980s and 1990s, chiefly novels, memoirs, personal essays, and academic essays. I have chosen what I think are compelling readings, which means that we will not be reading standard coming-out narratives, which first dominated the lesbian/gay literary scene. Students are welcome, however, to write about coming-out stories in their second essay, as well as genres that we will not have the chance to explore, such as poetry and drama (and also graphic novels, comic books, interactive and online texts, and so forth).

I welcome majors outside of English, but please realize that this is an upper-level literature course requiring a fair amount of reading and writing. We will regularly read a book each week, along with some criticism, and some of the novels are pretty long. Please also know that I will teach the course from a rigorously anti-homophobic perspective, and will expect all of us to show respect for people's various viewpoints, experiences, and so-called lifestyles.

Although I will sometimes provide you with background information, for which you are responsible, we will conduct class as a seminar, which means that participation is vital. Please come to class every day on time having read the assigned material. Be ready to share your responses. On occasion I may ask you to work in groups. If you take more than three unexcused cuts from class, your final grade will be reduced one-third of a letter grade for each excess cut. Habitual tardies will be considered absences.

Assignments and Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following assignments. There are no exams; nearly all of your grade comes from your writing. This means that while you won't have to remember all of the texts in detail, you will be writing about most of them. Because we have a lot to do in class, I don't plan to devote class time to writing issues, but I'm very available during office hours for help. I'm always happy to read drafts.

I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes if I feel that students are too far behind in the reading or if discussion lags; should we have quizzes, they will be averaged with the memos.

Memos (8)	25%
Précis	20%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	25%
Active participation	10%

Memos. Over the semester, you will write 8 reading responses of 1-2 s-s., typed pages each. Out of some thwarted business urge I call such a response a "memo." The memo is simply a short meditation on the reading. Your memo should offer a response to the book as a whole; don't turn in a memo if you haven't finished the reading. You may address a number of issues or focus more in-depth on one or two; just be as specific as you can, and support your responses with examples and details from the text. I do not expect you to have a thorough interpretation, but your memo should offer some kind of coherent evaluation or analysis. In other words, it should be more than simply random and unconnected thoughts about the work. This assignment is designed to stimulate class discussion, and to help you generate paper ideas. You may write these at any point in the semester, but you may not do more than one memo per week, and I will accept them only on Thursdays and in class -- do not email them to me, or leave them in my mailbox. I will return them the following Tuesday. They do not need to be perfect, but please try to correct spelling and typing errors. I will grade each memo and average the grades.

Précis. You will also write one 1-2 s-s pp. précis of a scholarly article or book chapter addressing some aspect of lesbian/gay literature, media, or culture. I recommend that you choose something from *GLQ (Gay/Lesbian Quarterly)*, *Differences*, *The Journal of Homosexuality*, *Genders*, *Signs*, or other journals concerned with gender and sexuality. This assignment requires to you not only to summarize, but also to analyze the method and rhetorical strategy of the article or chapter. The original article or chapter must be at least 10 pages long; I'd prefer that it be longer. It may not be from the web/internet unless

it originally appeared in a journal. Refer to specific page numbers (even when paraphrasing) so that we can locate the ideas you're summarizing and discussing. Attach a photocopy of your article/chapter, and use the following set-up:

- 1) First summarize the article or book chapter in 5-8 sentences. Explain the author's overall focus and the main claims of the piece.

- 2) Describe that author's critical methodology and perspective(s): Is the essay informed by a feminist sensibility? Does the writer emphasize psychological themes, or provide useful historical contextualizations? Is there any attention to socioeconomic issues (i.e. use of Marxist criticism)? Or is it a more traditional "close reading" of a text's language and plot? Often writers rely on a variety of methodologies: if so, what approach seems dominant, and does that primary approach effectively organize secondary ones? If the writer's method doesn't seem easy to categorize, just describe that method -- how does s/he approach the topic?

- 3) Offer an analysis of the essay's rhetorical strategy (the way it's designed to affect the audience): why is it organized the way it is? What makes it effective (or not)? What sorts of logic patterns does the writer rely on? Are there appeals to emotion, and if so, are they appropriate and successful? What makes it (or keeps it from being) effective and convincing? Describe the writer's ethos.

- 4) Speculate about the implications of the information, both for our understanding of the text and beyond. What's useful about the essay? How could you expand it? What questions does it raise about the story, author, reader, etc.? What, in other words, is the piece good for? You may also want to comment on what's ignored or devalued in the analysis: is the writer overlooking something which complicates (or even undermines) her argument? Does his or her commitment to a particular critical methodology rule out other interpretations?

Essay 1. Write a 5 d-s pp. analysis of any literary text we've addressed (or will address) in class; you do not have to use any additional material, but you may. Any topic and approach is fine, as long as you support your interpretations. Do not repeat what we've already said in class. Use your memos to brainstorm. If you cite anything besides your primary text, provide a Works Cited page, using MLA format.

Essay 2. Write a 7 d-s pp. analysis of topic of your choice, drawing from at least one primary text and from one of our critical readings or another critical reading of your choice. The only restrictions are that it must address some aspect of lesbian/gay literature or culture. Provide a Works Cited page, using MLA format.

I give A's to essays using an original and spirited argument to illuminate complexities of language and theme. I give B+'s to well-organized, well-developed, relatively error-free essays with sparks of originality or daring, and B's to competent essays needing more complex development and/or clearer focus. Lower grades mean greater problems with development, structure, and grammar. Recurrent grammatical errors lower the grade;

occasional spelling errors and typos don't. The best essays sustain complex and or audacious arguments; a good B essay capably summarizes and compares themes.

Active participation means attending regularly, asking questions, offering insights, sharing memos -- in short, being actively involved. I respect individual styles, and I do not expect you to talk all of the time, but plan to contribute to discussion.

Schedule

January

- T 11 Introductions.
 R 13 Sedgwick, "Queer and Now"; Cavallaro, "Why the Body?" and "The Body
 and Society" through "Taboos" (ending p. 47).
 T 18 Katz, "The Debut of the Heterosexual"; Cavallaro, "The Body and
 Philosophy" (ending p. 99).
 R 20 Film screening: *Before Stonewall*.
 T 25 Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (ending p. 115).
 R 27 *Zami* continued (through ending); McRuer, "Introduction: Reading the
 Queer Renaissance."

February

- T 1 Gluck, *Jack the Modernist* (ending p. 83).
 R 3 *Jack* continued; Cavallaro, "The Body in the Visual Field" and "The Body in
 Cyberculture."
 T 8 Moraga, *Loving in the War Years* (ending p. 73).
 R 10 *Loving* continued; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian
 Existence."
 T 15 **Précis due.** Anshaw, *Aquamarine* (ending p. 72).
 R 17 *Aquamarine* continued.
 T 22 Heim, *Mysterious Skin* (ending p. 186).
 R 24 *Mysterious Skin* continued.
 T 29 Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (read at least half).

March

- R 2 *Stone Butch Blues* continued.
6-10 Spring Break.
- T 14 Grimsley, *Dream Boy* (ending p. 109).
R 16 *Dream Boy* continued.
- T 21 **Essay 1 due.** Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw* (Parts 1-3); Hausman,
"Introduction."
R 23 *Gender Outlaw* continued (Parts 4-7).
- T 28 Leddick, *My Worst Date* (pp. 1-91); Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids
Up Gay."
R 30 No class.
- April
- T 4 *My Worst Date* continued (pp. 92-178); Kidd, "Introduction: Lesbian/Gay
Literature for Children and Young Adults."
R 6 *My Worst Date* continued (pp. 179-259).
- T 11 Als, *The Women* (Part 1, ending p. 66).
R 13 *The Women* continued (Parts 2 and 3).
- T 18 Grover, *North Enough: AIDS and Other Clear-Cuts* (Chs. 1-3).
R 20 *North Enough* continued (Chs. 4-7)
- T 25 **Essay 2 due.** Last class day. Lassell, "How to Watch Your Brother Die."