

Approaches to Queer and Trans Histories

Hilary Term 2022

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Course description

How have historians sought to understand sexual and gender diversity in the past? Where—in what types of sources—do we find evidence of sexual and gender diversity? What paradigms might we use to interpret those sources? What is the state of the field in queer and trans history today? This course introduces students to key questions in queer history and trans history, situates historical scholarship in relation to the distinct but related theoretical and methodological traditions of queer studies and trans studies, and prepares students to do their own research in these and related fields.

Each week focuses on a different primary source genre that has previously been central to queer and trans historiography: life writing, social movement archives, critical theory, science and 'expertise', legal and governmental records, and visual and material culture. Students will engage with primary sources from each of these genres and with both classic and more recent secondary literature that has made use of such sources. The geographical and temporal scope of the course emphasises, but is not limited to, modern Western Europe and the United States.

Requirements and assessment

Each week, students should complete the indicated primary source exercise. They should also read the required secondary reading and come to class prepared to discuss what they have read. At least once in the term, students will be asked to work together with another student to prepare a short presentation about that week's material, providing an overview of the week's reading and posing some questions to frame the seminar discussion.

Option Papers are assessed by either one extended essay of between 8,000 and 10,000 words, or two extended essays of between 4,000 and 5,000 words. Students should begin thinking about their essay topics as soon as possible in order to allow themselves ample time for research and writing, and are strongly encouraged to meet with the course tutor early in term to discuss their ideas. Students should submit drafts of their essay(s) to the course tutor by **5pm on Friday of 6th week**. The tutor will return formative feedback to students by the end of 8th week. Final drafts are due to the University examination submission system at **12pm on Friday of 9th week**.

Classroom principles

The Oxford History Faculty is committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment in which everyone is able to pursue intellectual enquiry and to fulfil their potential. Some key principles that allow us to work toward this aim in our classroom include:

1. We start from a position of trust, assuming you already know how to engage constructively with each other. Unkind and discriminatory speech and behaviour will be addressed, but we will 'call in' rather than 'calling out' wherever possible.
2. This is a learning, not a 'knowing', space—we can all learn from each other and we are all responsible for our own learning. However, we respect and validate expertise where it exists, whether this is academic or in the form of lived experience or professional skill.
3. We believe in dialogue, not 'debate'—we explore issues with an emphasis on listening and empathy, and try to move away from adversarial understandings and engagement.¹

We will work together to build on these principles and agree on a common basis for our conversations during our first class session.

Further information and resources are available here:

<https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity#/>

<https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/home#/>

How to use this syllabus

Each of our class sessions focuses on a different type of primary source material that historians have used to write queer and trans histories. Each week, students should pick one of the listed primary sources to explore, enough to get a sense of what kind of document it is and the kinds of questions one might ask of it. They should also read the core secondary reading, and may choose to read additional secondary reading, in accordance with their interests. The syllabus includes both classic and more recent work, but is selective (for example, it is weighted toward the tutor's own research specialism in modern British history) and should not be understood as a comprehensive bibliography. Students are also encouraged to read beyond this syllabus, especially when identifying topics for assessed essays.

Introductory reading

If you are new to queer history, this optional background reading might help to orient you.

- Regina Kunzel, 'The Power of Queer History', *American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018): 1560–82
- Gayle Rubin, 'Geologies of Queer Studies: It's Déjà Vu All Over Again', in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 347–356
- Susan Stryker, 'Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 212–15
- Anna Clark, 'Twilight Moments', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1 (2005): 139–60
- Jeffrey Weeks, 'Queer(y)ing the "Modern Homosexual"', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 523–39

¹ Adapted from Alison Phipps (University of Sussex), 'Gender Theory Syllabus', accessed 24 July 2021, <https://genderate.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/gender-theory-syllabus-1.pdf>

- Laura Doan, 'Queer History / Queer Memory: The Case of Alan Turing', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2017): 113–36

Week 1: Narrative, Life-Writing, and Literature

How have queer and trans people represented themselves and their stories? What narrative structures have writers used to tell these stories? How can historians draw on and interpret these documents? What opportunities and challenges do ego-documents offer? How might (or might not) historical approaches to these documents differ from approaches taken by literary scholars?

Primary source exercise

Choose one of the following to look through, noting down any questions you have for or about the source:

- Anne Lister, *Diaries* (1806–1840) (I recommend the edition edited by Helena Whitbread)
- John Addington Symonds, *Memoirs* (1889) (editions edited by Phyllis Grosskurth or Amber Regis)
- E.M. Forster, *Maurice* (1913–14; published 1971)
- Ralph Werther, *Autobiography of an Androgyne* (1918) (edition edited by Scott Herring)
- Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928)
- Michael Dillon, *Self: A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology* (1946)
- Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* (1988)

Required secondary reading

- Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Ch. 5
- Rachel Mesch, *Before Trans: Three Gender Stories from Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), Introduction & Ch. 1

Additional secondary reading

- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America', *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1–29
- Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)
- Emily Rutherford, 'Impossible Love and Victorian Values: J. A. Symonds and the Intellectual History of Homosexuality', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 4 (2014): 605–27
- Anna Clark, *Alternative Histories of the Self: A Cultural History of Sexuality and Secrets, 1780–1917* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017)
- Jennifer Ingleheart, *Masculine Plural: Queer Classics, Sex, and Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

Week 2: Subcultures, Communities, and Social Movements

How have people conceptualised themselves as members of gender and sexual minority communities? How have they defined membership in these groups? What political claims have they made on the basis of these identities and communities? How do gender and sexual diversity intersect with other identity-political categories? How have historians written the histories of these communities? What kinds of sources have they used? Does queer history itself have a politics?

Primary source exercise

Take some time to explore at least one of the following, making notes about any documents that you found especially interesting:

- Independent Voices database: <https://www.jstor.org/site/reveal-digital/independent-voices/lgbt/>
- BFI: LGBT Britain: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/collection/lgbt-britain>
- Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993) (read this as a primary source!)

Required secondary reading

- H.G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), Ch. 5
- Nadia Ellis, 'Black Migrants, White Queers and the Archive of Inclusion in Postwar London', *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 6 (2015): 893–915
- Martha Robinson Rhodes, 'Bisexuality, Multiple-Gender-Attraction, and Gay Liberation Politics in the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 32, no. 1 (March 2021): 119–42

Additional secondary reading

- Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977)
- Rebecca Jennings, 'The Gateways club and the emergence of a post-Second World War lesbian subculture', *Social History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 206–225
- Todd Shepard, "'Something Notably Erotic': Politics, "Arab Men," and Sexual Revolution in Post-Decolonization France, 1962–1974', *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 1 (2012): 80–115
- David Minto, 'Mr Grey goes to Washington: the homophile internationalism of Britain's Homosexual Law Reform Society', in Brian Lewis, ed., *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 219–243
- Sarah Schulman, *Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987–1993* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021)
- Craig Griffiths, *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation: Male Homosexual Politics in 1970s West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021)

Week 3: Theory

What is 'theory'? How have scholars of queer and trans history engaged with or responded to it? How do theorists and literary scholars think about 'history' or 'historicism'? Is theory useful to the historian? What opportunities and challenges does interdisciplinary scholarship pose? Are this week's readings 'primary' or 'secondary' sources? Both? Neither?

Required reading

- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Introduction
- Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (2013), Chs. 1–2

Additional reading

- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978)
- Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," in Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (1993)
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1996)
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and *Tendencies* (1994)
- Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (1998)
- Anjali Arondekar, 'Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (Jan–Apr 2005), 10–27
- Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007)
- Carolyn Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2 (May 2007): 177–95
- Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (2017)
- Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Dreger, 'After Trans Studies', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (February 2019): 103–116
- Christopher Chitty, *Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System* (2020)
- Susan Stryker, ed., *Trans* Studies Now*, special issue, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (August 2020)

Week 4: Science and Expertise

What role has 'expertise' played in fashioning categories of gender and sexual identity? What kinds of 'expertise' are there? How have queer and trans people variously used and challenged expert concepts and categories? What can the methods of intellectual history and the history of science tell us about queer and trans histories?

Primary source exercise

Skim one or more of the below texts. Make some notes about who is writing, the forms of knowledge on which they are drawing, and the language they use to express their claims about gender and sexual diversity. If you have time, compare the approaches taken by different authors.

- John Addington Symonds, 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' (1883) and 'A Problem in Modern Ethics' (1891)
- Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) (use the Strachey translation if you can)
- Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* (1908)
- Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ivan Crozier (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Required secondary reading

- Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), Chs. 2 and 4

Additional secondary reading

- Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, 'The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France', *GLQ* 1, no. 4 (1995): 419–438
- Chris Waters, 'The Homosexual as a Social Being in Britain, 1945–1968', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 685–710
- Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017)
- Howard Chiang, *After Eunuchs: Science, Medicine, and the Transformation of Sex in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)
- Kadji Amin, 'Glands, Eugenics, and Rejuvenation in *Man into Woman*: A Biopolitical Genealogy of Transsexuality', *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (November 2018): 589–605
- Jeffrey Merrick, ed., *Sodomites, Pederasts, and Tribades in Eighteenth-century France: A Documentary History* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2019)
- Ruby Ray Daily, "'Dear Dr K": Mobility, Sex, and Selfhood in Alfred Kinsey's British World Correspondence, 1948–58', *Twentieth Century British History* 32, no. 1 (March 2021): 24–45

Week 5: The Law and the Police

Where do gender and sexual diversity appear in state archives? What categories have states used to regulate gender/sexual diversity? What opportunities and challenges do these archives pose? Why have so many queer and trans histories been written out of state archives? Have gender and sexual diversity always been subject to surveillance and persecution?

Primary source exercise

Explore one of the following databases, or another of your choosing, for evidence of gender and sexual diversity. Make notes about anything that you found especially interesting:

- UK Parliamentary Papers (search in SOLO to access)
- Old Bailey Online <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>
- Newspapers (various) — see Bodleian LibGuide here: <https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/newspapers>

Required secondary reading

- Matt Houlbrook, “‘The Man with the Powder Puff’ in Interwar London’, *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007): 145–71
- Laurie Marhoefer, 'Lesbianism, Transvestism, and the Nazi State: a Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939–1943', *American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (October 2016): 1167–1195
- Adrian Kane-Galbraith, 'Male Breadwinners of "Doubtful Sex": Trans Men and the Welfare State, 1954–1970', in *Twentieth Century British Masculinities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming)

Additional secondary reading

- George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994)
- Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005)
- Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)
- Orna Darr, 'Narratives of "Sodomy" and "Unnatural Offenses" in the Courts of Mandate Palestine (1918–1948)', *Law and History Review* 35, no. 1 (February 2017): 235–260
- Simon Joyce, ‘Two Women Walk into a Theatre Bathroom: The Fanny and Stella Trial as Trans Narrative’, *Victorian Review* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 83–98
- Elwin Hofman, ‘The End of Sodomy: Law, Prosecution Patterns, and the Evanescent Will to Knowledge in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, 1770–1830’, *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 2 (November 2020): 480–502

Week 6: Visual evidence and material culture

Primary source exercise

Go on a scavenger hunt! Find an object or piece of art that relates to queer or trans history in a museum or gallery in Oxford, elsewhere, or online. Take a photo (if permitted) and be prepared to briefly present your chosen object to the class.

Required secondary reading

- Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Chs. 3–4
- Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Ch. 3

Additional secondary reading

- Jason Goldman, "'The Golden Age of Gay Porn': Nostalgia and the Photography of Wilhelm von Gloeden', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (1 April 2006): 237–58
- Dan Healey, 'Active, Passive, and Russian: The National Idea in Gay Men's Pornography', *The Russian Review* 69, no. 2 (April 2010): 210–230
- Alison Oram, 'Going on an outing: the historic house and queer public history', *Rethinking History* 15, no. 2 (2011): 189–207
- Dominic Janes, 'Frederic Rolfe's Christmas cards: Popular culture and the construction of queerness in late Victorian Britain', *Early Popular Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (March 2012): 105–124
- Matt Cook, 'Domestic Passions: Unpacking the Homes of Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 618–40
- Jen Grove, "'Firm Outlines and Hard Muscles Immortalised": Ancient Statuary and E.P. Warren's "Uranian Ideal"', in *Sculpture, Sexuality and History: Encounters in Literature, Culture and the Arts from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Jana Funke and Jen Grove, *Genders and Sexualities in History* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 171–94