

QUEER MOVEMENTS

Queer of Color Literature and Theory, 1950s–Present

ENGL:3444

Instructor: Enrico Bruno

MAJOR COURSE TEXTS

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

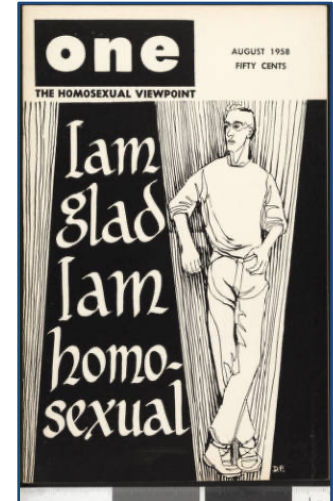
James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

Arturo Islas, *The Rain God: A Desert Tale*

Randall Kenan, *A Visitation of Spirits*

Danez Smith, *Don't Call Us Dead*

Maia Kobabe, *Gender Queer: A Memoir*



ONE Magazine, August 1958.
Courtesy of ONE Archives at
the USC Libraries.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In January 1953, the Los Angeles-based gay rights organization ONE, Inc., published the first issue of *ONE Magazine*, a monthly publication featuring news, fiction, essays, and other content curated for a queer reading public. While it was not the first queer periodical ever published, *ONE Magazine* was the first to be distributed nationally, marking the beginning of a period that saw the rapid outpouring of queer art and political action on a national scale. This course navigates the history of queer life in America in the 75 years since that initial publication. As we examine the artistic and political history of this period, we will focus primarily on queer writers of color—who were often at the forefront of queer liberation movements—attending to how their identities impacted their relationships to art and political action.

We begin in the 1950s, when writers such as James Baldwin and Audre Lorde began to write and publish work that spoke to the unique intersections of class, race, and gender. We'll then move through the gay liberation movement of the '60s and '70s, focusing on both direct action demonstrations as well as writing that emerged from it. As we study the HIV/AIDS crisis of the '80s and '90s, we will engage with the concept of “queer anti-urbanism” in works by Arturo Islas (who writes about the US-Mexico border) and Randall Kenan (whose novel is set in the US South), as well as the New Queer Cinema movement that captured the crisis and its aftermath on film. Our readings will conclude by thinking about how queerness is made legible in the 21st century in work from two non-binary artists: poet Danez Smith and graphic artist Maia Kobabe.

For our final project, we will engage directly with the queer community of Iowa City by working on a project with the LGBTQ Iowa Archive. This project will allow us to research the queer history of Iowa City and collect this history into a public-facing presentation that will survive beyond the end of our time together in this class. It will also allow us to more directly participate in the very important ongoing project of building and celebrating local queer communities.

Over the course of the semester, we will have open and honest discussions about the trials and successes of queer life and artistic practice, all while considering our own positions in relation to the course materials. At times, these works of art will remind us of the histories of oppression that attempted to stifle queer expression, but my hope is that another narrative emerges from the material, one of pride and perseverance via the expression of queer love and liberty.

GRADING

Final grades will be determined on the University's A–F grade scale, with A as the highest possible grade. Course grades depend mainly on a series of major writing assignments. The rest of your grade depends on engaged and respectful participation and a course presentation.

Final Grade Percentages:

10%	Poetry Presentation
15%	Essay #1
25%	Essay #2
30%	Final Project
20%	Course Engagement

Earning a C in this class signifies an average performance. You are producing competent college-level work, completing all projects satisfactorily and on time, contributing positively to the classroom environment, and showing improvement across the semester.

To earn a B, you must exceed the aforementioned requirements. You do this by producing proficient work that shows good evidence of revision and attention to course materials, by being an active, constructive participant in the classroom, by completing all activities thoroughly and with care, and by showing preparation, organization, and improvement in every area.

To earn an A, you must excel consistently. This will include producing polished, well-crafted work that demonstrates mastery of techniques and skills, using the revision process strategically, and taking an active, thoughtful leadership role in the classroom.

Earning a grade of D or lower means that you have not shown consistent effort, have not met minimum class standards in some way, and/or have hurt your grade by plagiarizing, not turning in work, or failing to participate. Students most often get D and F grades because they are not participating in any way or not completing assignments.

Course Engagement and Antiracist Statement:

Joining our virtual discussion on Zoom is the first step in course engagement. In order to earn full credit, you are expected to not only attend class, but to frequently participate in our discussions. Engagement can take many forms; you may join the conversation with a direct comment, volunteer to read aloud, take the lead in a small group discussion, etc. You should not only participate often, but do so in a respectful manner. There is usually room for debate in our discussions, but any responses to your peers should come from a place of genuine inquiry. Respectful participation also means recognizing when to allow other voices to be heard.

I am committed to cultivating and enacting antiracist practices in my life and work, including in our classroom. This includes fostering a classroom environment that does not allow students to avoid, dismiss, or argue with the reality of racial injustice in this country or the white supremacist foundations of our national institutions and culture, which we will discuss throughout the semester. In this course, I will not only share voices and writing that work to dismantle white supremacy, but will encourage all of us to use our own voices and writing to do the same.

Poetry Presentation:

At one point in the semester determined via sign-up sheet, you will be asked to pair up with a classmate and present a single poem to your peers. Your presentation will include a brief background on the poet and a persuasive analysis of the poem, reached via class discussion. In other words, you will *teach* the poem to the class, combining your deep knowledge of the poem with your ability to guide your peers through your close reading. More information is available in an assignment sheet posted on ICON.

CALENDAR OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

This is a tentative calendar and is subject to change. Updates will be posted to ICON and/or shared in class. Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments as the semester progresses.

WEEK 1

T, 1/26: Introduction to course & each other

Th, 1/28: The Black Feminist Tradition

Read: Whitney Strub, “Gay Liberation (1963–1980)”; Combahee River Collective Statement; Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” [ICON]

WEEK 2

T, 2/2: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*: Childhood in New York

Read: Preface/Prologue, Chapters 1-14 (pp. 3-103)

Th, 2/4: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*: Travels to Connecticut & Mexico

Read: Chapters 15-22 (pp. 103-176); **Assign Essay #1**

WEEK 3

T, 2/9: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*: The East Village Scene

Read: Chapters 23-Epilogue (pp. 176-256)

Th, 2/11: *Giovanni's Room*: “the presence of a new barman”

Read: Part 1: Chapters 1-2 (pp. 3-43)

WEEK 4

T, 2/16: *Giovanni's Room*: “the longer and lesser and more perpetual murder”

Read: Part 1: Chapter 3; Part 2: Chapters 1-3 (pp. 44-118)

Th, 2/18: *Giovanni's Room*: “a terrific scandal”

Read: Part 2: Chapters 4-5 (pp. 119-169)

Essay #1 due Friday, 2/19 at midnight

WEEK 5

T, 2/23: Stonewall and STAR (New York City, 1969)

Read: *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*; collection of Black Cat demonstration documents (ICON); **Assign Essay #2**

Th, 2/25: *Poetic Interlude I*

Student Presentations (Nikki Giovanni, Pat Parker, June Jordan, Cherríe Moraga)

WEEK 6

T, 3/2: **NO CLASS; UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTIONAL BREAK**

Th, 3/4: QoC Theoretical Interlude: Disidentification

Read: José Muñoz, “Introduction: Performing Disidentifications” and “Famous and Dandy like B. ‘n’ Andy: Race Pop and Basquiat” [ICON]

WEEK 7

T, 3/9: Queerness and the Border

Read: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, excerpts (Chs. 2, 5, and 7) [ICON]

Th, 3/11: *The Rain God*

Read: Judgment Day, Chile (pp. 3-51)

WEEK 8

T, 3/16: *The Rain God*

Read: “Compadres and Comadres” and “Rain Dancer” (pp. 53-138)

Th, 3/18: *The Rain God* / Art of the HIV/AIDS Crisis

Read: *The Rain God*: “Ants” and “The Rain God” (pp. 141-180); Manuel de Jesús Vega, “Chicano, Gay, and Doomed: AIDS in Arturo Islas’ *The Rain God*” [ICON]

WEEK 9

T, 3/23: *Poetic Interlude II*

Student Presentations (Essex Hemphill, Assotto Saint, Marvin K. White, David Frechette)

Th, 3/25: The Importance of the Queer Archive

John D’Emilio, *In a New Century* (excerpts); Joan Nestle, “The Will to Remember” [ICON];

Essay #2 due Friday, 3/26 at midnight

WEEK 10

T, 3/30: New Queer Cinema

Tongues Untied (Dir. Marlon Riggs, 1989)

Th, 4/1: 'Quare Studies'

Read: E. Patrick Johnson, "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother"; excerpt from Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* [ICON]

WEEK 11

T, 4/6: *A Visitation of Spirits*

Read: White Sorcery & Black Necromancy (pp. 1-103)

Th, 4/8: *A Visitation of Spirits*

Read: Holy Science (pp. 107-168)

WEEK 12

T, 4/13: *A Visitation of Spirits*

Read: Old Demonology & Old Gods, New Demons (pp. 171-257)

Th, 4/15: Contemporary Poetry

Read: Danez Smith, *Don't Call Us Dead* (full text)

WEEK 13

T, 4/20: *Gender Queer: A Memoir*, Adolescence in Eden

Read: pp. 3-131

Th, 4/22: *Gender Queer: A Memoir*, A Sanctuary in Art

Read: pp. 132-240

WEEK 14

T, 4/27: Final Project meetings

Held at LGBTQ Iowa Archives and Library (120 N. Dubuque St.) or via Zoom

Th, 4/29: *Poetic Interlude III*

Student Presentations (Carl Phillips, Tommy Pico, Kitty Tsui)

WEEK 15

T, 5/4: Queer Futures

Read: José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction: Feeling Utopia" and "Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism" from *Cruising Utopia*; Randall Kenan, "The Foundations of the Earth" [ICON]

Th, 5/6: Final Project Presentations