

# ENGL 2850 – Intro to Queer Studies

Salt Lake Community College, (HU, DV)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to a range of postmodern and queer theories of gender construction/sexuality as represented in literature, film, and a variety of other cultural texts. The course will begin with the history of heterosexism and question modern society's treatment of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. This course welcomes everyone, whatever their identity.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Define and describe the evolution of cultural and literary theoretical perspectives and approaches that have developed LGBTQ+ Studies and the concept and applications of “queer” in its various forms as identity and relationship to society.
2. Describe and explain key terms related to LGBTQ+ identity and experience, including sex, gender, sexual identity, and more.
3. Apply course concepts (like intersectionality, queer, performativity, and more) to achieve better understanding of self and others in awareness of cultural diversity, including within queer communities.
4. Examine, analyze, and critique a variety of cultural texts (literature, film, art, music, ads, digital media, etc.) and genre choices related to LGBTQ+ experience to explain the power they have in society and culture.
5. Apply cultural and literary theories to critically examine and describe your evolving understanding of gender, sexuality, personal bias, power dynamics, and privilege within the contexts of literary and artistic representations of queer-ness.
6. Contextualize the diverse global experiences of gender, sexuality, and community to better explain the myriad of LGBTQ+ experiences and cultures in the U.S.
7. Describe your own position and vision in relation to social and political action for greater equity in U.S. society.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

This is an Open Educational Resources (OER) course, which means you do not need to purchase a textbook.

We will read chapters 1-5 & 10-11 from the Open Education Resource textbook, [\*Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach\*](#).

All of the other reading, watching, and listening homework can be found in the [“Modules”](#) section of our Canvas course site.

You are required to have all reading homework pulled up during class discussion. You are also required to take notes on watching and listening homework. Have those notes available during our class discussions so that you can contribute to the discussions. Each homework page contains "PREP QUESTIONS..." to help you take notes on the homework.

## COURSE CONTEXT

One of the most divisive issues in modern American culture has been LGBTQ+ rights, specifically issues such as marriage equality, the military's restrictions on LGBTQ+ people, adoption, hate crimes legislation, trans rights, and so forth. Such issues generate copious debate, often set up along religious or political lines without considering the questions that underpin the debate: Does gender really exist? Why are some genders privileged over others? How is gender decided? Biology? Psychology? Sociology? Are there only two distinct separate genders? What is the history of same-sex orientations and gender-diverse/non-conforming identities? Who has the authority to speak about these matters, and how do they get that authority? Are literary and media representations of LGBTQ+ people accurate/helpful/harmful?

These questions are not easily answered, especially if one considers other times and other cultures. Homosexuality had an important place in ancient Greek and Roman societies and was accepted throughout much of Japanese and Chinese history, though it was not known as "homosexuality." It flowered at certain times in early Islamic culture. Prior to European conquest of the Americas and the African continent, gender variation and same-sex behavior were widespread and accepted/tolerated. Those called transgender or trans in the U.S. are called different things in other cultures: "waria" in Indonesia, "kathoey" in Thailand, "hassas" in Morocco, "bayot" in the Philippines, "kitesha" in parts of the Congo, "fa'afafine" in Samoa, "hijras" in India, and "two spirit" among many Native American nations. Those so identified receive varying levels of acceptance and even honor within the given culture.

The larger point is that sexual and gender "otherness" has existed ***always and everywhere but*** is constrained by binary (either/or) thinking in much of the world. Therefore, this course examines a variety of lenses that have been used to study/represent LGBTQ people:

- History
- Religion/Theology
- Sexology, Psychiatry, Psychology, Medicine
- Politics, Law, Judiciary
- Fiction, Memoir, Film, and Pop Culture texts/representations
- Postmodern and Queer Theories

Overall, the course challenges the cultural norm of binary gender discourses using postmodern/post-structuralist notions:

- Gender is socially constructed.
- Social norms are not eternal and unchanging and can/should be questioned.
- Sexual practices do not determine gender.
- Binary gender roles are illogical, unnecessarily constrictive, and lead to discrimination.

We will take a question-posing approach to our readings, presentations, and discussions. For example:

- Why and how have heterosexual privilege and heteronormativity dominated human history?
- What exactly is queer theory and how is it useful?

- How does one respond to ongoing sexual prejudice, heterosexism, and homophobia?
- Why does a culture that, on paper, believes “all *Men* are created equal” still allow open discrimination against some groups?

### **CONTENT DISCLAIMER**

This course is designed to expose students to a myriad of belief systems and diverse perspectives, thus, potentially challenging personal, political, and cultural values. Please be aware that challenging these values is intended to help us study important issues in context and to encourage more critical examination of our own lived experiences in connection with the lives, histories, and stories of people with whom we share this planet. We will delve into texts that contain the following content: profanities, descriptions of sex and sexuality, descriptions of various forms of violence, interrogations of gender “norms” and sexuality. All of this will make more complex our understanding of our individual and collective humanity.

I will not offer alternative materials/assignments because the histories, stories, voices, and experiences that we will engage with are part of the breadth and depth of our interrogations of gender, sexuality, and more. This intellectual experience is designed allow us to better understand each other, ourselves, and the different experiences of gender and sexuality that comprise the complex, multicultural individualities, and societies with which we identify with and/or misunderstand or have never engaged with.

**Trigger Warnings & Checking Egos:** Our course materials and activities will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging issues of identity, power, privilege, inequality, and forgotten/erased American histories and experiences. As with any Diversity (DV) and Humanities (HU) course materials and activities are often political *and* personal. Materials and activities might trigger strong feelings and maybe even memories. You may experience feelings of frustration, empathy, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, trauma, and even boredom as part of the emotional fluidity in engaging with the course materials and activities. If you think a particular course text (video, film, reading, podcast episode) or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, email me early in the week so we can work through it together.

I expect everyone to engage with and participate in discussing course materials in mature and respectful ways. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read through the weekly homework requirements in advance so that you know what is coming up; watch and read all cultural theory texts; read all of the assigned literature; ask me for help if you need it; ask questions when you have them about the cultural theories or literature before you participate in discussions, assignments, etc.

Some of us will have emotional responses to the materials; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers’ interpretations of the materials; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree), be mindful of the ways in which our identities position us in the classroom, acknowledge that our experiences are valid but that they’re not the only valid experiences that we’ll be exploring and discussing in the classroom, be aware that our experiences and beliefs might be limited in scope/geography/diversity, check your egos—the literature, cultural theories, current events, cultural and pop cultural texts that ground this course invite us to step back from our egos so that we might consider the world that we share with others from different lenses and perspectives.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

*Preparation:* Your voice matters! Your presence matters! Your preparation matters! You are expected to read each text selection and prepare all writing assigned ahead of the class period in which it will be discussed (upload work to Canvas as assigned). You are asked to bring questions to class for discussion of our reading. Please plan to indicate your preparation by participating in discussions, whether in small groups or with the whole class.

*Participation & Attendance:* English Department policy stipulates that at least ten percent of your final grade will be based on your involvement in class. In this course, participation and attendance is worth about 30% of the final grade. More than ten percent of unexcused absences (3 class sessions) will result in a reduction of one half a letter grade for the course. To earn at least a C in this course, you must complete *all* major assignments on time (exams, presentation, paper). Because I value your involvement in this course, I will be taking attendance each day. Additionally, being present for class but intellectually absent from it does not count as attendance. Participation is required for the course.

*Late Work:* If you need an extension on an assignment, just explain the circumstance and ask in advance of class and you will not be penalized. Canvas email is the best way to do this. Unexcused late work is penalized with a reduction in points. The later the work, the greater the reduction. Please plan to submit assignments on time.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • Class Sessions Preparation & Participation              | 300 pts. |
| • <a href="#">CCRAs</a> (due most Thursdays 13 x 15 pts.) | 195 pts. |
| • Throughline Project                                     | 150 pts. |
| • Queer Reclamation Project                               | 150 pts. |
| • Final Project: Queer Futures Book Club Project          | 150 pt.  |
| • Conferences (4 x 30)                                    | 100 pts. |
| • Miscellaneous Assignments                               | 50 pts.  |
| <b>TOTAL: 1,095points</b>                                 |          |

## GRADING SCALE

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (59 and below)

**Required Conferences:** We will meet with each other four times throughout the semester. If you want feedback and a score on your "Throughline" and "Queer Reclamation" Projects as well as support for upcoming projects, you are REQUIRED to conference with me. These conferences are mandatory. They will be held in my office or via my Zoom room. As much as possible, I will try to accommodate your schedule to make the conferences as convenient as possible for you.

- We'll go over how to schedule and attend conferences during the second week of classes.

After week 1, you will engage in **Critical & Creative Response Activities (CCRAs)** that ask you to work in a small group to make critical, creative, and reflective thinking connections between the homework and course discussions for that week. NOTE: we will not have a CCRAs due during Weeks 9 & 15. You will post your CCRAs as a group in the respective CCRA discussion forums on Canvas.

The **Throughline Project** asks you to select 10 people, places, events, and/or cultures that we will discuss during weeks 2-6 and create your own Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies chapter. The goal is to have you conduct further research on people, places, events, and/or cultures in the first five chapters of our textbook that really stood out to you in some way and share what you learned about them with other Queer Studies students.

The **Queer Reclamation Project** asks you to focus on an LGBTQ+ trope that has been used in storytelling and other forms of media to represent queer people and communities. This project also asks you to develop your own LGBTQ+ media that subverts and/or plays with the trope that you will focus on in some meaningful, tangible way.

The final project for the course is the **Queer Futures Book Club**. This project is a group project in which you will read the same “queer futures” novel with 2-3 other students in the class. You will work together to create discussion and book club activities so that you and your group can engage in a rigorous discussion on queer histories, representations, and futures as explored in the novel that your group has selected. The book club discussion will take place during our final exam time.

### **Signature Assignments & Reflection for Gen Ed ePortfolio**

Each of your major projects (Throughline Project, Queer Reclamation Project, and Queer Futures Book Club Project) for the course must be showcased in the ENGL 2850 page of your Gen Ed ePortfolio. For the final project, the Queer Futures Book Club, you will synthesize your research and discussions from this semester’s readings, films, textbook, book club novel, and your own original research to explore your learning and connection-making over the course of the semester.

#### **Final Reflection:**

Regardless of the name or form, reflection requires the learner to think critically and creatively about their learning across contexts and experiences by making connections they make among those experiences. Reflection provides time and space for students to place their learning into deeper and possibly broader personal, intellectual, cultural, historical, political, environmental, and economic contexts.

For your final 400-700-word or multi-media reflection, choose 2-3 of the following prompts in addition to the **bolded, required prompt** to help you shape and structure the reflection. Feel free to mix and match reflection prompts based on how you would like to reflect on your learning and connection-making throughout the course.

Consider writing/creating your reflection as your memoir about the most resonant learning experiences that you had throughout the course.

- **What readings, activities or assignments made you think or feel differently about human experiences? Why do you think that is? How does your answer relate to the Humanities?**

- What did you learn this semester about analyzing and interpreting the diversity of LGBTQIA+ experiences through various forms of literature and other cultural texts (poetry, creative nonfiction, short fiction, music, films, and drama)? How did you learn what you learned? Be specific.
- Which of the selected readings this semester challenged you the most? Why? (Go beyond your personal preferences--I'm not as interested in which pieces you personally preferred and which ones you didn't as I am interested in those that challenged your ways of thinking about cultural narratives, cultural diversity, exploring the human condition, monsters, etc.)
- What diversity themes/concepts and/or cultures/countercultures did you encounter in this class which you may want to explore further in the future? Why?
- What specific concepts from specific cultural, political, and/or literary theories stand out to you as being particularly useful in understanding the broader and deeper implications of literature, politics, and other cultural texts (rituals, films, TV, video games, ads, etc.)?
  - o AND how these cultural texts influence our way of seeing ourselves and others?
  - o How might this class have helped you to consider more critically the popular culture you encounter in TV, movies, video games, comics, etc.? What stereotypes, tropes, etc. in popular culture are you now more conscious of because of this class?
- Make at least 2 explicit connections between what you studied in this course and other classes you are taking/have taken. How did what you learned in this class enhance what you learned in other courses, and vice versa?
- Thinking about the current conversations about identity, privilege, inequality, survival, and human dignity going on in the United States today, explore a throughline that you've discovered between the past, the present, and the literary text and cultural theories that we explored this semester. Consider using this throughline as the theme/framework for the entire reflection.

## GENERAL EDUCATION

Regardless of your major, General Education courses build a foundation of broad knowledge and skills that help you in your further career and life. <http://www.slcc.edu/gened>

This course fulfills two General Education categories: Diversity (DV) and Humanities (HU). Diversity courses are supposed to challenge your assumptions and question your biases by examining the history, contributions of and challenges confronting diverse groups within the U.S.'s multicultural society. In an academic community all viewpoints will be and should be critically interrogated. We foster the free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect, in an inclusive classroom, as these form necessary conditions for effective learning. All viewpoints are welcome, with the understanding that we will strive to challenge our own cultural biases, understand new perspectives and ideas, and back up our opinions and ideas with well-supported, reasonable arguments.

Humanities courses explore the big human condition questions about what it means to be human, what it means to be free, and so much more. Writers, artists, and performers have been posing and responding to these questions for millennia. In humanities, we seek patterns and shared meanings. We trace ideas and practices back through time and across geographical space to create a clearer view of the future, and we sharpen skills to help us live, work and think creatively, critically and ethically.

Consider the importance of weaving together explorations of diversity and humanities within the context of gender and sexual identities across time, place, cultures, and representations.

**COLLEGE CONDUCT POLICY:** Plagiarism is a violation of SLCC’s Student Code of Conduct. You commit plagiarism when you submit another author’s work as your own. Plagiarism also includes the failure to attribute unique phrases, passages, or ideas to their original source. If you commit plagiarism, you will receive an automatic “E” for that assignment or an “E” for the course, depending upon the severity of the infraction. If you have questions about using and citing sources, please ask.

We will also adhere to the following from the Code of Conduct: “Any expression of hatred or prejudice is inconsistent with the purposes of higher education in a free society. So long as intolerance exists in any form in the larger society, it will be an issue on the College Campuses. Salt Lake Community College is committed to maintaining an environment free from prejudice.” The bottom line is that we treat no one/no group as “less than.”

**PRONOUNS IN CANVAS:**

To respectfully support all individuals at SLCC, students, faculty, or staff may change their pronouns in Canvas easily. Here is a tutorial on this process: [How Do I Select Personal Pronouns in Canvas?](#)

**NAME CHANGES IN CANVAS:**

Canvas names are populated by student records, but if you would like to change any of your personal information (preferred name, legal name, SSN, birthdate, sex/gender, etc.) students may do so by submitting a personal information change form on the SLCC website: [Personal Information Change Form](#)

**For additional information about student services, resources, accommodations, rights, and responsibilities, please read SLCC’s [“Institutional Syllabus.”](#)**

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+ Module



▼ **Module 1: Queer Theory & Histories**



**The Course Syllabus (Read Me!)**



**Week 1: Aug. 20-24**



**Aug. 22nd: Transformers, Some Feminism & Queer Context**

Aug 22



**Week 2: Aug. 26-31**



**Aug. 27th: Thirty Years of Queer Theory & Towards Unerasure**

Aug 27



**All Set Up in Canvas**

Aug 27 | 25 pts



**Aug. 29th: The Problem with Queer Histories**

Aug 29



**Week 3: Sept. 3-7**



**Sept. 3rd: Global Sexualities**

Sep 3



**Week 4: Sept. 9-14**



**Sept. 5th & Sept. 10th: CCRA--Queer Intersectionality**

Sep 10 | 15 pts



**Sept. 12th: CCRA--Queer New World**

Sep 12 | 15 pts





**Week 5: Sept. 16-22**



 **Sept. 17th: U.S. Queer History & Unerasure**  
Sep 17



**1st Conference: Checking in & Brainstorming Ideas for Your  
Throughline Project**   
Sep 17 | 25 pts



 **Sept. 19th: CCRA--Borderlands/La Frontera**   
Sep 19 | 15 pts




**Week 6: Sept. 23-28**



 **Sept. 24th: The Fight for Rights**   
Sep 24



 **Sept. 26th: CCRA--Making Connections Between Our Weeks 1-6  
Work**   
Sep 26 | 15 pts



**Week 7: Sept. 30-Oct. 5**





 **Oct. 1st: Disabilities Studies & Crip Camp Documentary**   
Oct 1



 **Oct. 3rd: CCRA--Throughline Project Work**   
Oct 3 | 15 pts



 **Throughline Project**   
Oct 6 | 150 pts



 **▼ Module 2: Media Literacy & Queer Representation**





**Week 8: Oct. 7-12**



 **Oct. 8th: Queer Representation in Media--Queer Coding, Baiting, and Catching**   
Oct 8



 **Oct. 10th: CCRA--Queer(ing) the Gothic: Hauntings**   
Oct 10 | 15 pts



**Week 9: Oct. 14-16**



 **Oct. 15th: Postmodern Monster Reclamation: Vampires**   
Oct 15



 **2nd Conference: Feedback on Your Throughline Project**   
Oct 15 | 25 pts





**Week 10: Oct. 21-26**



 **Oct. 22nd: Threshold of Becoming: Zombies & Found Families**   
Oct 22



 **Oct. 24th: CCRA--Alienation, the Uncanny, & Bringing Monsters Together**   
Oct 24 | 15 pts



**Week 11: Oct. 28-Nov. 2**



 **Oct. 29th: The Werewolf Zeitgeist & Coming of Age**   
Oct 29



 **Oct. 31st: CCRA--Halloween & the Final Girl Trope**   
Oct 31 | 15 pts



**Week 12: Nov. 4-9**



 **Nov. 5th: Where is "Nature" At?--Queer Eco-horror**   
Nov 5





### Nov. 7th: CCRA: Queer Reclamation Project Work



Nov 7 | 15 pts



### Queer Reclamation Project



Nov 10 | 150 pts



### Module 3: Queer Futures & Futurism



### Week 13: Nov. 11-16



### Nov. 12th: Inventing Genre--Queer Futurism



Nov 12



### Queer Futures Book Club--Novel Selection & Possible Group



### Formations



Nov 12 | 25 pts



### Nov. 14th: CCRA: Queer Environmental Art & Activism



Nov 14 | 15 pts



### 3rd Conference: Feedback on Your Queer Reclamation Project



Nov 14 | 25 pts



### Week 14: Nov. 18-23



### Nov. 19th: Love During Cultural Crises--Pandemic Literature



Nov 19



### Nov. 21st: CCRA: Love During Cultural Crises--Alternate Histories &



### Futures



Nov 21 | 15 pts



### Week 15: Nov. 25-26





### Nov. 26th: World Building & Fantasy



Nov 26 | 15 pts



## Week 16 & Finals Week: Dec. 2-12



### Dec. 3rd: Role Playing Games



Dec 3



### Dec. 5th: CCRA--Judgmental Maps & Queer Book Club Prep Work



Dec 5 | 15 pts



### 4th Conference: Book Club Group Check In & Discussion



#### Planning



Dec 5 | 25 pts



### Final Project: Queer Futures Book Club Discussion &



#### Reflection



Dec 12 | 150 pts



#### Participation



300 pts

