

Perspectives in History: LGBTQ Archives

Rutgers-Newark, Spring 2020

21:510:315

Monday, 6-9pm

Conklin Hall 446

Professor: Whitney Strub

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Office hours: Monday 5-6pm, and by appointment (I'm pretty flexible, just email!)

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Course Description

How do historians *do* history? That's the key question of the Perspectives seminar, and each uses a different theme to dig into the question of methodology and sources: where do you, as historians, find the materials that let you write original historical work? That is, when the history you're interested in hasn't already been written and there's no book or Wikipedia page to consult, where do you find information?

The answer, for most historians, is in the archive. "What is the archive" is a good question, and one we'll investigate in more depth, but briefly put, it's where the raw materials of history reside: letters, photos, diaries, memoranda, and more, the stuff historians use to develop their narrative and analysis.

LGBTQ history provides a revealing window into these issues, because for decades, centuries even, it was suppressed: first LGBTQ *people* were hidden, then their histories. Only since the 1970s have historians really begun excavating LGBTQ history, digging it out from places that concealed it and then building LGBTQ archives themselves. So, in short, that's what our class is about! You'll learn about LGBTQ *historiography*—that is, we might say, the history of how the history has been written—but also more broadly about historical methods and the finding and reading of what we call *primary sources* (those raw materials mentioned above). If all goes well—and with your active participation, it should—this course will help develop your historical skills but also offer some enjoyable detective work.

Learning Objectives

This is primarily a methodology course, and so a central goal will be to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources, as well as how scholars employ both in their work. Thus you will identify and analyze different types of evidence using critical thinking skills, and develop your skills in writing original historical scholarship based on research and analysis. This is a **writing intensive course**, and so writing skills will also be centered, including peer-review and revision.

Required Texts

Our readings will be on Blackboard and online. You are expected to **print and bring to class** the readings for each given meeting; see laptop policy below.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Punctuality: You are expected to attend every class, from start to finish. Attendance is mandatory. Your overall course grade will be lowered by one half letter for each unexcused absence beginning with the fourth one. More than eight absences for any reason will result in a loss of credit for the course. Only *documented* emergencies and medical occasions, or officially school-sanctioned activities, will qualify as excused absences.

Class Participation. All students are required to participate in the discussions during class. As a result, you must arrive at class having completed that day's reading assignment and prepared to talk about it. A valuable part of discussions is the posing of questions; no one is expected to grasp perfectly the significance of all the readings. Engaged questions are just as important as comments. Your participation grade will reflect both the frequency of your participation and the quality of your comments and questions. Note that participation also includes active *listening*; sleeping, texting, side conversations, and other forms of non-listening will be met with punitive measures on the participation front.

Journal: You are expected to keep a journal of your reflections on our readings and other assignments. These reflections can be **informal**, and should range from a few paragraphs to a page; an entry should be written for each class meeting, in advance of class. You can type or write by hand, but hard copies should be kept on hand and brought to class each meeting; they will be collected irregularly, and you receive credit only for those that are turned in when collected.

Here's what they should contain: your thoughts, observations, analyses, reflections, critiques, of the assigned materials. DON'T summarize the material; rather, assume you're writing for someone who's also read it, and write about what interests, surprises, offends, delights, or challenges you.

Short papers: You will complete **two** short analytical paper (4-5 pages), about oral history and historical methodology. The first will be due in class, **March 2** and **March 30**

Creative project: You will undertake a creative project involving primary sources from LGBTQ history, and briefly present it to the class. Deadline will be on a rotating basis, and we will discuss further in class.

Final project: This will be an investigation of a specific topic through primary sources—in short, something of a preliminary research paper of the sort you will write in the senior seminar. It will involve outlining and drafting, giving and receiving peer review with your classmates, and then making revisions for a final paper. There will be preliminary deadlines, but the final essay will be due **Monday May 11, by 11pm**

Grade Breakdown

Attendance/participation: 20%

Journals: 10%

Short essay 1: 20%

Short essay 2: 20%

Creative project: 5%

Final project: 25%

Grading Guidelines

A: work of exceptional quality, showing profound and meaningful engagement with the materials in question, thoughtful and comparative analysis, superior writing—and most importantly, containing a clear, inventive, and persuasive thesis.

B: work that is above average—shows knowledge and/or contains a thesis, but does not develop it as strongly as it could.

C: adequate work that fulfills the assignment—often based on summarizing rather than thesis or analysis.

D: subpar work that falls short of fulfilling the assignment but deserves some credit.

F: work that fails to earn credit for the assignment, including plagiarism.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be negotiated under extenuating circumstances (which do *not* include computer-related issues), with some grade deductions, *before* the due date.

No incompletes will be granted unless the matter has been discussed with me in advance.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. **All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge.**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and possibly including a course grade of F. Likewise for cheating on exams; these are behaviors for which I have no sympathy, and should they occur, they will be handled in a suitably draconian manner.

Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

Policy on Disabilities (Statement from the Office of Disability Services)

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at [\(973\)353-5375](tel:9733535375) or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Policy on Classroom Courtesy

Do not bring food, active cell phones, or other communications devices into the classroom. If you mistakenly do bring an active phone and it rings, silence it immediately; answering will

constitute an egregious violation of this course's basic social contract. Texting in class will also result in drastic penalties to your total course grade.

In class discussions, I expect universally respectful interactions. In examining our texts, there may be differing perspectives, disagreements, and debates. This is fine; through such dialogue comes greater understanding. When challenging someone else's perspective, though, refrain from personal attacks or blistering scorn. If someone makes what you consider an offensive or disrespectful comment, note that this does not absolve you of adhering to the iron-clad rule of respect in responding to it.

Failure to abide by these rules may result in a lowered course grade, or removal from the classroom.

Laptop policy: Research shows that open laptops detract from learning environments, both for their users and those around them. This will be a *qualified laptops-closed* classroom: open laptops during lecture material for note-taking, closed during class discussions. You must print the reading materials, though if you have a flat reading device, that is also acceptable.

I am aware that some students have special needs, and I will absolutely work with you if that pertains; please speak with me immediately, and we can make arrangements. If you see another student with an open laptop, please understand that it is for a good reason, and does not confer permission for others to do the same.

Policy on Office Hours

My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to say hello. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class period; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Content notice

Some of the material in this course will deal with charged issues of race and sexuality, and some material will include coarse language, scenes of violence, and depictions of sexuality, including sexual abuse. I will try to alert you to anything that might be potentially upsetting in advance, but know that throughout, the course features adult content. If you are concerned about specific triggers, please speak with me early, and I will work with you.

Tentative syllabus of readings

Week 1 (Jan 27): Introductions

- get acquainted
- go over syllabus
- “field trip” in Conklin Hall for Queer Newark exhibit
- discussion: primary and secondary sources

Week 2 (Feb 3): Formative LGBTQ Histories

- Selections from Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History* (1976), John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983), Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* (1993), George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (1994) (Blackboard)

Freedman, Estelle B. "The Burning of Letters Continues": Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality." *Journal of Women's History* 9.4 (1998): 181-200 (library)

Week 3 (Feb 10): "The Archive"

Manoff, Marlene. "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4.1 (2004): 9-25 (library)

Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell, "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives* (Blackboard)

Stein, Marc. "Canonizing homophile sexual respectability: Archives, history, and memory." *Radical History Review* 2014.120 (2014): 53-73 (library)

In-class exercise: Where do you even begin—where are archives?

Week 4 (Feb 17): Sources of LGBTQ History

Holmes, Kwame. "What's the Tea: Gossip and the Production of Black Gay Social History." *Radical History Review* 2015.122 (2015): 55-69. (library)

Moore, Darnell L., et al. "A community's response to the problem of invisibility: The Queer Newark Oral History Project." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1.2 (2014): 1-14. (library)

Primary sources: Alcoholic Beverage Control reports, selection (Blackboard)

Week 5 (Feb 24): Building LGBTQ Archives

Kate Eichorn, "Queer Archives: From Collections to Conceptual Framework," in *The Routledge History of Queer America*, ed. Don Romesburg (Routledge, 2018) (Blackboard)

Nestle, Joan. "Who Were We to Do Such a Thing? Grassroots Necessities, Grassroots Dreaming: The LHA in Its Early Years." *Radical History Review* 2015.122 (2015): 233-242. (library)

In-class screening: *Watermelon Woman* (1996)

Week 6 (Mar 2): Trans History

Grantmyre, Laura. "'They lived their life and they didn't bother anybody': African American Female Impersonators and Pittsburgh's Hill District, 1920-1960." *American Quarterly* 63.4 (2011): 983-1011. (library)

Apple, Harrison. "The \$10,000 Woman: Trans Artifacts in the Pittsburgh Queer History Project Archive." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2.4 (2015): 553-564. (library)

Primary sources: Transgender Digital Archive sample
***PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS**

Week 7 (Mar 9): HIV/AIDS and History

Roque Ramírez, Horacio N. "Gay Latino histories/dying to be remembered: AIDS obituaries, public memory, and the queer Latino archive." *Beyond el barrio: Everyday life in Latina/o America* (2010): 103-28. (Blackboard)

Selected documents from Newark Community Project for People with AIDS records, Newark Public Library Digital Collections (online)

ACT-UP Oral History collection (online)

****Remainder of semester to be organized with collective input from class—not 100% democratically, but democratic-ish, with Paper #2 due in class on March 30****

Some possible avenues:

Queer Erotics

Strub, Whitney. "Indexing Desire: The Gay Male Pornographic Video Collection as Affective Archive," *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (2015): 125.

Embree, Desirae. "Archive Trouble: Searching for Lesbian Adult Media." *Feminist Media Histories* 5.2 (2019): 240-254.

Queer theory: Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* selection

Methodology: Reichard, David A. "Animating ephemera through oral history: Interpreting visual traces of California gay college student organizing from the 1970s." *The Oral History Review* 39.1 (2012): 37-60.

****Final essay due Monday May 11, by 11pm****