

# Queer Theory and Activism

GWS 381 Spring 2020  
Tuesdays 7:00 pm - 9:45 pm  
Dilley Room, Third Floor of Shain Library

**Professor:** Ariella Rotramel      **E-mail:** [arotrame@conncoll.edu](mailto:arotrame@conncoll.edu)      **Phone:** 860-439-2858

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 p.m and by appointment

**Office Hours Location:** Holleran Center, First Floor of Cro

*This is a live [syllabus](#) updated during the semester and must be reviewed regularly.*

## Course Description

This course emphasizes the dynamic relationship between queer theory and activism. As you are challenged to engage with key theoretical texts, cultural representations, historical and contemporary examples of queer culture and politics. This combination of materials asks that you take on a flexible learning style in order to gain a kaleidoscopic understanding of what queer means across these contexts.

As we study the development of the field of queer studies, we examine experiences of sexuality and gender across practices and identities. We focus on how queer studies encompasses critical analyses of power dynamics and the construction of sexual and gender categories. We study a range of approaches to uncovering and representing the experiences of people who deviate from sexual and gender norms in scholarship and activism. These tactics are considered within the broader context of normative gender and sexual social orders.

A key component of the course is considering the intertwining of sexuality and gender identities with other categories such as race, class, and nation. With this intersectional approach, we gain a more robust understanding of the varying experiences and understandings of sexuality and gender. As a class, we are creating a digital campaign as part of the Career Informed Learning initiative at Connecticut College. Working with alum, Alexandra Bolles, who recently served as GLAAD's Associate Director of Campaigns & External Engagement, we learn about contemporary efforts to address key issues within the community and effective strategies for communicating with an array of audiences.

## Course Learning Goals

This course meets our departmental learning goals of:

- Analyze course content and complete assignments using interdisciplinary techniques;
- Demonstrate self-reflexivity about one's ideas as well as one's social and political position within systems of oppression and privilege in national and transnational contexts;
- Describe the similarities and differences of a broad range of intersectional feminist and queer theories and practices in their specific historical and cultural contexts; and
- Design and execute independent research, creative projects and/or community engaged projects.

Our course-specific learning goals are:

- Learn and apply key queer theory concepts in course discussions and assignments;
- Understand and account for a range of LGBTQ experiences and perspectives across time and culture;
- Recognize, assess, and debate the potential and limitations of different queer theoretical and activist strategies; and

- Collaborate as a group to develop a digital campaign addressing a queer issue with the mentoring of Connecticut College alum, Alexandra Bolles.

### **Lateness and Attendance Policy**

You are required to come to class on time. Lateness and unexcused absences count negatively towards your grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. You may provide proper documentation and/or have your class dean contact me for unavoidable absences in order to avoid a negative impact on your final grade. If you do miss a class, please first contact a classmate to go over the content you missed and based on the day's focus, contact me if you cannot make my next office hours and need to schedule a meeting. For a typical absence such as a cold or migraine, I do not need to be informed of the specific issue unless there is an emerging challenge that we need to address.

### **Office Hours**

I hold office hours to provide students with an opportunity to discuss course-specific issues that we have not been able to address in class. Examples of reasons that you may visit my office hours include: discussing a course topic further; questions about your work in this course; or a personal issue has begun affecting your work and we need to strategize to address this challenge. Do not hesitate to contact me immediately with concerns, as there is little we can do at the semester's end.

The following information about office hours comes from our Dean of Faculty and is applicable to all courses at Connecticut College:

Office hours provide students with additional opportunities to review or ask questions about the class discussions and assignments. Connecticut College faculty encourage students to go to office hours so they might learn about your interests, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to talking about class material and assignments, you may find you share common interests, such as music, books, hobbies, and movies. If a professor knows your interest, they may inform you about campus programs and activities or other opportunities like fellowships and scholarships. Most importantly, a professor who knows their students writes better letters of recommendation. Successful students at Connecticut College make time to go to their office hours. All Connecticut College faculty are required to have office hours on their syllabus and posted on their office door. If you cannot make your professor's scheduled office hours, contact your professor to set up an appointment.

### **Universal Learning and Full Participation**

I am committed to the principles of [universal learning](#) and [full participation](#). All of us learn in different ways and our course can be organized to be accommodating of all students across our differences. For example, you may learn more effectively through oral, written, or visual renderings of course topics. Our classroom, virtual spaces, learning and communication practices should be as inclusive as possible. Please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss your individual learning needs and how they can be accommodated in this course. Please also remember that along with our Office of Accessibility Services, our college offers other support services, including the Academic Resource Center, Writing Center, and Counseling Services that are available to all students and offer a range of services that are helpful for everyone at each stage of the college experience.

### **Gender-Inclusive Language Guidelines**

Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, our department encourages gender-inclusive and non-sexist language. This goal reaffirms Connecticut College's commitment to full participation by fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment where intellectual dialogue can flourish.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive and non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identities, and recognizes the difference between assigned sex and gender identity. I will ask students to share their pronouns and names at the beginning of the semester and all gender identities should be affirmed and respected by everyone in the course. If, at any point during this class, you would like me to use a different name or pronoun in addressing, please email me. (adapted from GSWS @ Pitt accessed 12/29/2017 with permission)

### **Content Warning and Class Climate**

**Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and challenging topics.** As with any course in our department, course content is often political and personal. Readings, films, online content, exercises, and discussions may trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the class; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of course content; all of us are responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous, respectful, and inclusive. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities, resources, and experiences position us in the classroom. As your professor, I am responsible for classroom management and the pedagogical approaches used during the semester that are based on my expertise.

If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips:

- read the syllabus so you are prepared in advance.
- You can approach me at office hours or make an appointment if you would like more information about a topic or reading.
- If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed.
- If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss.

**If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center** (adapted from the GSWS@Pitt 2017 website with permission).

### **Course Technology Policy**

Please review [this guide](#) for background on using Google Drive and class technology expectations. As appropriate for specific class exercises, we will use technology and you will regularly bring a charged laptop or tablet to class. Any use of phones is not allowed. Texting and phone apps should be turned off on your laptop or tablet when you are in class. You are responsible for meeting these expectations. Students who do not consistently and respectfully follow the course technology policy will have their participation grade negatively impacted and may be asked to put away and/or not use any technology in class.

## **Grading**

Your final grade is based on your performance in class and course work. The grading scale is:

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Below Average</b>	<b>Failing</b>
A = 100-93	B+ = 89-87	C+ = 79-77	D = 69-60	F= 59 and below
A- = 92-90	B = 86-83	C = 76-73		
	B- = 82-80	C- = 72-7		

Late assignments will receive a deduction of one letter grade per 24-hour period they are late.  
Assignment extensions may be requested with timely notification.

This course does not have extra credit work as students are expected to consistently dedicate themselves throughout the semester towards the course's core components.

## **Credit Hour Definition**

A semester course is normally equivalent to four semester hours. Connecticut College complies with federal regulations defining the credit hour. For each credit hour awarded, a course will provide an average of at least one hour of direct faculty instruction (class meetings, labs, review sessions, field trips, office hours, film screenings, tutorials, training, rehearsals, etc.) and at least two hours of out-of-class work (homework, preparatory work, practice, rehearsals, etc.) per week.

## **Assignments**

	<b>Course Engagement</b>	<b>MAPS Analysis Paper</b>	<b>Queer Activisms Roundtable</b>	<b>Queer Digital Campaign</b>
Due	ongoing	Jan. 21-Feb. 21	Feb. 25-Mar. 27	Mar. 31-Finals
%	20%	25%	25%	30%

## **Course Engagement**

This component includes engagement in and outside of the classroom including class discussions, group work, and online communication. Consistent, critically engaged participation is crucial for a successful and productive course. Class discussions are in relationship with the course readings and themes, and you must come to class having completed all assigned reading.

As this is a seminar course, you must come to class well prepared to: 1) ask questions; 2) provide commentary on reading; and 3) engage in active dialogue. As a member of this course, you respectfully engage all members of the classroom and talk only in your turn. Interruptions, hostile remarks, side-talk, or inappropriate non-verbal communication will not be tolerated. Use of electronics in class is solely for work related to our course.

As necessary, we will utilize in-class writing exercises based on course readings' themes. These exercises are designed to assess your completion and comprehension of the day's readings. I will assess your work on these exercises and track your performance throughout the semester. You will not be able to make up missed exercises.

## MAPS Analysis Paper

We review the [issues](#) studied by the Movement Advancement Project together in class. Each student picks a specific issue to analyze for this paper. You will draw upon MAP content along with academic sources to understand this issue more deeply. Your paper includes a unique argument about the salience of this issue for the LGBT community that is well-supported by your research. Further guidelines are provided during the semester.

## Queer Activisms Roundtable

“Queer” is used in many contexts with varying meanings today. Your research illuminates at least one meaning of queer through your case study of a particular form of activism. The topic may either be explicitly about sexuality and/or gender or it can be understood as queer vis-à-vis theoretical frameworks such as Cathy J. Cohen’s usage. After studying your topic from scholarly and activist angles, you partner with two or three students to plan your roundtable discussion. This 15-20 minute conversation highlights key ideas from your research and cross-cutting ideas across everyone’s projects. You prepare and share out a handout for the class that includes your key points and information and a bibliographic list of sources that are cited in the handout (minimum of 5 sources).

## Queer Digital Campaign

Our class is working with the former GLAAD Associate Director of Campaigns & External Engagement, Alexandra Bolles, to develop a Queer Digital Campaign. Bolles’ work, particularly around bisexual visibility, has garnered awards such as PFLAG Queens’ Brenda Howard Award. The class determines a campaign topic and takes on the set of components necessary to create a well-researched and dynamic project. Students are assessed throughout the project and are evaluated based on the group’s work and their individual performance. An assignment guide is shared and refined through the semester in conversation with the class and Alexandra Bolles as the project moves forward.

## Books



Amory, Deborah and Sean Massey, editors. [LGBTQ+ Studies: An Open Textbook](#).

[Online version](#), [PDF \(no links, best for printing\)](#), and [PDF \(live links, best for devices\)](#)

This reader is in Beta testing, please use [Chapter Feedback form](#) and [General Feedback form](#)



Foucault, Michel. [History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction](#). Reissue edition. Vintage: New York, 1990. ISBN: 978-0679724698



Strouse, A.W. [Gender Trouble Couplets: Volume 1](#). Earth, Milky Way: punctum books, 2019. ISBN: 9781950192519



Anzaldúa, Gloria. [Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza](#). Fourth/25th anniversary edition. Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 2012. ISBN: 9781879960855

All other reading materials are available as links to the online resource or as links to the PDF in our course readings folder.

## Borrowing Textbooks

There are many places on campus where textbooks are available for loan either for the entire semester or a few hours. For help, contact: [refdesk@conncoll.edu](mailto:refdesk@conncoll.edu) or visit Shain Library.

**Course Reserves:** Search for course reserves material in [the catalog](#). Reserves are located on the first floor of Shain Library at the Circulation Desk.

**Lending Library:** Sponsored and maintained by the Office of Sustainability, textbooks are donated by students at the end of a semester, and made available to students for a semester-long loan. Locations are listed on [website](#).

**Academic Resource Center:** Located on the second floor of Shain Library, ARC loans a limited number of textbooks to students for a semester.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Tuesday, January 21**

- ❑ In-class reading and discussion of
  - ❑ [Brown, "5 key findings about LGBT Americans"](#)
  - ❑ [GLAAD, Accelerating Acceptance 2019](#)
  - ❑ [Movement Advancement Project, Issues](#) and [Paper Assignment](#)

### **Tuesday, January 28**

- ❑ Complete [student information questionnaire form](#)
- ❑ [Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 437-465](#)
- ❑ [Najmabadi, "Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories..." 11-21](#)
- ❑ [LGBTQ+ Studies Chapter 3: Global Sexualities: LGBTQ Anthropology Past, Present...](#)
- Research session w/ Ashley Hanson 8:30-9:45 pm

### **Tuesday, February 4**

- ❑ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 1-50
- ❑ [Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms," 1-24](#)
- ❑ [LGBTQ+ Studies Chapter 2: Thirty Years of Queer Theory](#)
- Conn archives session w/ Rose Oliveira 8-9:45 pm (meet in Palmer Room)

### **Tuesday, February 11**

- ❑ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 51-102
- ❑ [Somerville, "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body," 243-266](#)
- ❑ [Ross, "Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm," 161-189](#)
- ❑ [LGBTQ+ Studies Chapter 5: U.S. LGBTQ History](#)

### **Tuesday, February 18**

- ❑ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 103-160
- ❑ [Costanza-Chock, "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination"](#)
- ❑ Catch up on readings from last week
- ❑ Guest lecture by Abby Ferland on honors thesis - 7-7:30pm

**Friday, February 21 @ 5:00 pm MAPS Analysis Paper Due in Student Work Folder**

**Tuesday, February 25      Guest Professor Denis Ferhatović**

- Strouse, [Gender Trouble Couplets: Volume 1](#)
- Butler, excerpts from *Gender Trouble* - [Preface](#) and [Conclusion](#)
- Optional: [Butler, "Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures," 11-20](#)
- Introduction of [Queer Activisms Roundtable Assignment](#)

**Friday, February 28th *Fun Home* in Tansill Theater**  
**Meet at 7:15 pm sharp - No late seating after 7:30 pm**

**Prof Rotramel has tickets for students who confirmed availability by Feb. 24 at 2 pm**

**Tuesday, March 3              *Fun Home* Debrief with Professor Ginny Anderson and cast members**

- [Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids up Gay," 18-27](#)
- Read [Dykes to Watch Out For](#) Selections - take clear notes on content, context, tone, style
- [LGBTQ+ Studies Chapter 11: Screening LGBTQ+](#)

**Spring Break March 6-22**

**Tuesday, March 24**

- [Shotwell, "Open Normativities: Gender, Disability, and Collective Political..." 989-1016](#)
- [Kafer, "Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-bodiedness," 77-89](#)
- [Bettcher, "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression..." 383-406](#)
- [Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex Without..." 223-236](#)

**Tuesday, March 31              Queer Activism Roundtables**

**Tuesday, April 7              Queer Digital Campaign Introduction with Alexandra Bolles**

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- Review the following materials and take notes:
  - [GLAAD's Media Reference Guide](#)
  - [GLAAD's 2016 In Focus: Reporting on the Bisexual Community](#)
  - [#BiWeek](#)
  - [More than a Number report](#)
  - [Bathroom Bill Guide](#)
  - [I Love Being Trans BC](#)
  - Inclusive Screens/Pantalla Inclusiva [Campaign](#) & [Report](#)
  - [Studio Responsibility Index](#)
  - [Amp](#)

**Tuesday, April 14**

- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 1-17 and 267-284
- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 18-61

**Tuesday, April 21**

- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 63-120
- [Anzaldúa, "To\(o\) Queer the Writer - Loca, escritora y chicana," 249-261](#)

**Tuesday, April 28              Guest Professor Hubert Cook**

- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 121-221

**Tuesday, May 5**

## Digital Campaign Presentations and Feedback Session

- ❑ [Jordan, "A New Politics of Sexuality," 54-58](#)
- Please bring a charged laptop to complete the all-campus course evaluation

## Finals Period      Digital Campaign Reflection Essay

- Non-graduating Students Due Wednesday, May 13 at 12:00 p.m.
- Seniors Due Monday, May 11 at 5:00 p.m.

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### Classroom Recording

With the exception of those granted accommodations through the Office of Student Accessibility Services, students are prohibited from audio, video, or photographic recording during class periods or out-of-class meetings with the instructor without explicit permission from the instructor. Recordings approved in this manner may not be shared in any form without permission of the instructor. Violations of this policy shall be considered an Honor Code violation.

### The Connecticut College Honor Code

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, falsifying data, misrepresenting class attendance, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students violating the Honor Code may be referred to the college's Honor Council for resolution. It is your responsibility to ask for assistance if you need clarification or support with any academic concerns, such as how to properly cite sources or prepare for course assignments.

### Title IX Statement

As a faculty member, I am deeply invested in the well-being of each student I teach. I am here to assist you with your work in this course. If you come to me with other non-course-related concerns, I will do my best to help.

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are trained and required to report any incidents of gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. This means that I cannot keep information confidential about sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. Rachel Stewart, the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, can advise you confidentially as can Counseling Services and any of the College chaplains. Rachel can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. You can reach Rachel at 860-439-2219 or [rstewart1@conncoll.edu](mailto:rstewart1@conncoll.edu), and her office is in Cro 222.

The student sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, and non-discrimination policies are in the Student Handbook, which can be found on CamelWeb, in the "Documents/Policies" section, under the Student Life section. There you will find the policies, definitions, procedures, and resources. If you need to report an incident or have any questions about the policy, you can contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusion at 860-439-2035 or Unity House.

### Academic Support Library Research Liaison

Our research and instruction librarian is Ashley Hanson, MLIS. She welcomes your research questions and is available to meet one-on-one to assist you with your developing projects. Ashley can be reached via e-mail at [ashley.hanson@conncoll.edu](mailto:ashley.hanson@conncoll.edu) and her campus phone is x2653.

### **Academic Resource Center**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching and tutoring. Its offices are located on the second floor of Shain Library. Please visit it or call 860-439-5294 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

### **Writing Center**

The Roth Writing Center provides one-to-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call 860-439-2173 or stop by the Writing Center at 214 Blaustein. If you're a confident, experienced writer the Center can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer it can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work before you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.

### **Accessibility and Campus Support Services**

#### **Office of Student Accessibility Services**

Connecticut College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability and have been approved for academic accommodations, please have your Faculty Notification Letter emailed to me through the Student Accessibility online management system (AIM) and schedule a meeting during my office hours as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss the logistics of your accommodations. If you are not approved for accommodations, but have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or have questions about applying for accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services at 860-439-5428 or [sas@conncoll.edu](mailto:sas@conncoll.edu).

### **Student Health Services**

[Student Health Services](#), located in the Warnshuis Student Health Center behind the library, is available to all full-time, matriculated students. Our purpose is to help students maintain optimal general health through the disciplines of physical and mental health, and health education around lifestyle choices. This is accomplished through a full-time staff and a variety of professional consultants in many disciplines. All professional services are delivered with attention to confidentiality. In the event of a serious illness or injury, parents or guardian will be notified at the discretion of the staff. You can schedule an appointment Monday through Friday by calling 860-439-2275. Information on Care When We Are Closed, Our Services, and Student Health Insurance may be found on Camelweb, in the Student Life Section, under Student Health Services.

### **Student Counseling Services**

The mission of the Student Counseling Services is to promote the emotional and psychological growth and well being of the students at Connecticut College. The Student Counseling Services' goal is to enhance each individual's ability to learn, to create and to be fully participating members of the College community by utilizing safe, culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches to mental health treatment. To carry out this mission, Student Counseling Services makes available to students a wide range of outpatient clinical services in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere including:

Evaluation	Individual and group counseling	Crisis intervention services	Psycho-educational forums
Outreach and consultation to the College community			
Psychopharmacological evaluation and medication management			
Referral to off-campus clinicians for specialized and/or intensive treatment			

Connecticut College [Student Counseling Services](#) has been accredited by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services (IACS) since 2005. Appointments may be made by phone at (860) 439-4587 or via email at [SCS@conncoll.edu](mailto:SCS@conncoll.edu).