

QUEER HISTORY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (HIST 293B/393B, FEMGEN 293B/393B)

Matthew Sommer Spring 2015 Monday 2:15-5:05 PM Room 380-381T

This course explores the comparative history of same-sex desire, relations, and identities through highlights of recent scholarship on different periods and parts of the world. Our reading covers the classical Mediterranean, early modern and modern Europe, late imperial and modern China, and the United States in the 20th century.

We begin with a basic inquiry into how to study the history of “homosexuality.” Does this term constitute a coherent historical topic? Is it possible to trace essential threads of continuity across time and between cultures – and if so, how do we do that? Do we need to employ different approaches in order to understand the experiences of women versus those of men?

Bearing these questions in mind, we spend weeks 3-5 exploring how same-sex desires and acts were structured, experienced, and represented in the premodern world of normative hierarchy. In weeks 6-10, we examine the advent of modernity in different times and places. How does sexuality define the modern (and vice versa), and to what extent have new egalitarian paradigms supplanted the traditions of the premodern world? Has globalization spread Western norms inexorably around the world, or do local same-sex traditions persist? If sexuality has a history, what is its future?

Comparative queer history provides an ideal opportunity to engage classic problems of historical method. Which features of human experience are universal, which are historically and culturally specific, and how can we tell them apart? What has changed over time, and why? What kinds of evidence survive from the past, and what is it possible (and not possible) to learn from them? What conceptual categories and vocabulary are most useful for interpreting that evidence? How do we make the past meaningful in the present, without distorting by anachronism? Finally, how should historical scholarship be informed and animated by the political priorities of the present day?

This course is offered for both graduate and undergraduate credit, both in History and in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (for details see below). For undergraduates, this course counts for the WAYS requirements in Engaging Diversity (ED) and Social Inquiry (SI).

Reading assignments:

Please complete all reading assignments prior to the class meeting when we plan to discuss them. I recommend reading texts in the order listed on the syllabus, which is usually (but not always) the order of publication. Some of the works we will read have generated controversy and all are engaged in debate with other scholarship, so it is a good idea to survey the published reviews of assigned books. But please bear in mind that other people’s reviews are no substitute for reading and thinking through the assigned material yourself.

Most of the reading assignments for this class are available online to Stanford users (via links in Searchworks), but the following books are not, so you may wish to order copies for yourselves:

Terry Castle, 1993: *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*
 Michel Foucault, 1978: *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: Introduction*
 Wenqing Kang, 2009: *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950*
 Regina Kunzel, 2008: *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality*
 Helmut Puff, 2003: *Sodomy in Reformation Germany and Switzerland, 1400-1600*
 Jens Rydström, 2003: *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880–1950*
 Tze-lan D. Sang, 2003: *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China*

All of the assigned books are on reserve at Green Library; the articles are available online or are posted on Coursework. If you have any trouble obtaining the reading, please let me know as early in the week as possible, so that I can help you.

Requirements for all students:

1) Punctual attendance at all class meetings; completion of all reading assignments (and online film viewings) in advance; and consistent participation in discussion (including helping to present the reading on a rotating basis). If you must miss class, please try to let me know in advance – you can make up your absence by meeting with me during office hours to discuss the reading from the missed session *or* by writing an extra short paper.

2) Please submit all papers in two forms: a regular Word file attached to an email message sent to me, and a hard copy submitted in person; I will return the hard copy to you with comments and keep the electronic copy for my records.

3) No extensions or incompletes will be granted except for illness or other emergency.

Requirements for undergraduate credit (HIST/FEMGEN 293B):

1) Reading assignments marked with an asterisk (*) are optional for undergraduates, but all others are required.

2) **Three short papers (5 pages double-spaced)** summarizing the main arguments and issues in a given week’s reading; you may choose which weeks to write, but remember that each paper is due in class *on the day we discuss that reading*; the first paper is due by week 3, the second by week 6, and the third by week 10.

3) **One longer “thought piece” (10-12 pages)**, due by 5:00 PM on Monday, June 8th. This paper represents your effort to sum up the course by closely considering one or more key themes that run through the course as a whole (see me at least one week before the deadline to discuss your proposed topic). You should make a clear argument, support it with evidence from the reading, and come to a clear conclusion. This is not a research paper, and no reading is required other than that listed on this syllabus. Make sure to push your analysis of your chosen theme beyond the level of your short papers and our weekly class discussions. *(Please do not plagiarize from your short papers or simply string them together into a longer essay – such a paper will receive zero credit.)*

Requirements for graduate credit (HIST/FEMGEN 393B):

1) All reading assignments.

2) **Four short papers (5-6 pages double-spaced)** summarizing the main arguments and issues in a given week's reading; you may choose which weeks to write, but remember that each paper is due in class *on the day we discuss that reading*; the first paper is due by week 3, the second by week 5, the third by week 8, and the fourth by week 10.

3) **One longer "thought piece" (15 pages)**, due by 5:00 PM on Monday, June 8th. This paper represents your effort to sum up the course by closely considering one or more key themes that run through the course as a whole (see me at least one week before the deadline to discuss your proposed topic). You should make a clear argument, support it with evidence from the reading, and come to a clear conclusion. This is not a research paper, and no reading is required other than that listed on this syllabus. Make sure to push your analysis of your chosen theme beyond the level of your short papers and our weekly class discussions. *(Please do not plagiarize from your short papers or simply string them together into a longer essay – such a paper will receive zero credit.)*

Contact information for Professor Sommer: msommer@stanford.edu; office: 200-315

Office hours: Tuesday 2:15-3:30 PM and by appointment; if you plan to come to office hours, please email me in advance to set a time.

Stanford's Honor Code – Make sure you know it:

See: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/honorcode>. If you have any questions, please ask Prof. Sommer.

Students with disabilities:

Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>). Also, please inform your instructor(s) during the first week of the existence of the disability (discretion assured).

Weekly Schedule

I. "HOMOSEXUALITY" AS AN HISTORICAL TOPIC

Week 1: Introduction (March 30)

Recommended: *If you have time, flip through one or both of the following classics, to get a sense of the authors' basic arguments and use of sources:*

*John Boswell, 1980: *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* [online]

*Lillian Faderman, 1981: *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (I especially recommend Faderman's new introduction to the 1998 edition – uploaded on the Coursework website for this class)

Week 2: Issues, Sources, and Approaches (April 6)

David M. Halperin, 1989: "Is There a History of Sexuality?" *History and Theory*, 28: 3, pp. 257-274. [online]

John Boswell, 1990: "Concepts, Experience, and Sexuality," *Differences*, 2: 1, pp. 67-87. [reprinted in Edward Stein, ed., *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy*, pp. 133-174]

Martha Vicinus, 1992: "'They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity," *Feminist Studies*, 18: 3, pp. 467-497. [online]

Terry Castle, 1993: *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (chapters 1-3)

David M. Halperin, 2000: "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 6: 1, pp. 87-123. [online]

II. BEFORE HOMOSEXUALITY?

Week 3: Sexuality, Gender, and Hierarchy in the Classical Mediterranean (April 13)

Bernadette J. Brooten, 1996: *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (introduction, chapters 3-6, & conclusion) [online]

Craig A. Williams, 1999: *Roman Homosexuality* (introduction, chapter 1, 4*, 5*, conclusions) [online]

Week 4: Same-Sex Desire and Relations in Late Imperial China (April 20)

*Bret Hinsch, 1990: *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (skim enough to get a sense of the author's argument and sources)

Matthew H. Sommer, 2000: *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (introduction & chapter 4: "The Problem of the Penetrated Male") [online]

Sophie Volpp, 2001: "Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 61: 1, pp. 77-117 [online]

Tze-lan D. Sang, 2003: *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (chapters 2 & 3)

Wu Cuncun, 2004: *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (forward by Chris Berry, introduction, & chapter 5: "The Commercialization of Male Love: The World of Boy Actors")

[April 23, 4:15-6 PM: talk by Robert Beachy: "The Rise and Fall of Ernst Röhm: Männerbund, National Revolution, and the Coming of the Third Reich"]

Week 5: The Peculiar European Crime of "Sodomy" (April 27)

Michael Rocke, 1998: *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (introduction, chapters 2, 3, & 5, epilogue) [online]

Helmut Puff, 2003: *Sodomy in Reformation Germany and Switzerland, 1400-1600* (introduction, *chapters 1 and 4, conclusion)

Laura Stokes, 2011: *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430-1530* (introduction, chapter 8, conclusion)

III. ADVENT OF THE MODERN

Week 6: Foucault and the History of Sexuality (May 4)

Michel Foucault, 1977: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (chapter 1: "The Body of the Condemned" & final chapter: "The Carceral")

Michel Foucault, 1978: *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: Introduction* (pp. 3-73, 100-114, 145-159)

David Halperin, 1995: "The Queer Politics of Michel Foucault," in his *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* [online]

Week 7: When did Europe Become Modern? (May 11)

Theo van der Meer, 1989: "The Persecutions of Sodomites in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam: Changing Perceptions of Sodomy," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 16: 1/2, pp. 263-307. [online]

Terry Castle, 1993: *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (chapters 5 & 6)

Jens Rydström, 2003: *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950* (introduction, chapters 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, concluding discussion)

Week 8: Globalization of Sexuality? The Case of China (May 18)

Anchee Min, 1994: *Red Azalea* (part 2)

Tze-lan D. Sang, 2003: *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (introduction, *chapters 4-6, epilogue)

Wenqing Kang, 2009: *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950* (introduction, chapters 1, 2, 5, conclusion).

Emily Honig, 2003: "Socialist Sex: The Cultural Revolution Revisited," *Modern China*, 29: 2, pp. 143-175. [online]

Lisa Rofel, 2007: "Qualities of Desire: Imagining Gay Identities in China," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 5: 4, pp. 451-474. [online]

Week 9: Memorial Day – no class (May 25)

***If enough students express interest, we can add an optional session during this week on a topic of your choosing.*

Week 10: When did the USA Become Modern? (June 1)

George Chauncey, 1995: *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (introduction, chapters 1-4, 12, epilogue; *skim the rest*) [online]

Regina Kunzel, 2008: *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (introduction, *chapters 2-4, 6, epilogue)

****Monday, June 8: Final Papers Due (by 5:00 PM)**