

UC Center Program Courses - Fall 2015  
PCC 133. **Sexuality and its Subjects in French Culture**  
Prof. William Bishop

**contact:** william.willbishop@gmail.com  
Office Hours:  
By appointment

**Lecture**

Monday 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Wednesday 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

**Course Description**

This course will explore what it has meant to be marked as a subject to sexuality at different eras in French culture. After acquiring some useful tools from the early days of queer theory in articles by Gayle Rubin, Eve Sedgwick and José Muñoz, we will begin the course with a discussion of Manet's 1863 portrait of *Olympia*, pivotal for both all of modern art and for its portrayal of the sexual subject that the prostitute is when s/he finds the space to rise above his or her status as an object of (male) desire. We will then turn to two early 20<sup>th</sup> century novels by Gide and Colette which both stage a first person's confrontation with various aspects of his and her sexuality. We will conclude the first part of our course with an autobiographically-based novel from the period just after the Second World War: Genet's *Thief's Journal*, a text that problematizes its relation to truth and anticipates the gay liberation movement of the 1970's. The second part of our course will focus largely on several films, but we will begin with a novel about a woman who can't escape the film that keeps playing in her head: Marguerite Duras's *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*. We will then consider Virginie Despentes's theorization of her sexuality and film work in *King-Kong Theory* before turning to two contemporary films that portray lesbian sexuality from very different cultural standpoints: Colline Scianna's *Naissance des Pieuvres* (*Water Lillies*, 2007) and Abdelatif Kechiche's international and controversial hit, *La Vie d'Adèle* (*Blue is the Warmest Color*, 2013). We will end the semester with Abdellah Taïa's *An Arab Melancholia* and its portrayal of an openly gay man's emergence in between Morocco and Europe. **5.0 credits.** Suggested subject areas for this course: *Gender Studies/Film/Comp Lit*

**Learning Outcomes:**

The course seeks to develop students' written and oral rhetorical skills as well as their analytical skills through the following activities and assignments:

- Class discussion
- Class readings of texts, articles, and films
- Well-argued written and oral responses to texts and films

The mid-term and final exams test students on their familiarity with the texts and films through quotation identifications and a choice of several essay questions that bring together different themes and topics broached by the different texts and films and push students toward broader comprehension.

**Themes/Topics:**

- Literary theories and accounts of the formation of human sexuality
- Basic concepts in feminist, queer, and affect theories
- Global and historical variation of sexual identities
- Intersectional analyses of sexuality with race and class

**Course Materials:**

Course Reader ([CR] hereafter)

André Gide, *The Immoralist*

Colette, *The Vagabond*

Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal*

Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*

Virginie Despentes, *King-Kong Theory*

Abdellah Taïa, *An Arab Melancholy*

**Course Requirements:**

Attendance at lectures and excursions is mandatory. It is essential that students attend all classes and excursions and participate actively in class. As per the UC Paris Attendance Policy, excessive absences and tardies will result in a lowered final grade. Please refer to UC Paris Academic Handbook for the policy on absences and tardies.

Reading assignments are critical. Students are expected to read the material as it is assigned and come to class prepared.

**Grading**

Weekly Readings and Class Participation: 15 %

Writing Assignments

Paper 1 (4-6 pages): 15%

Paper 2 (6-8 pages): 20 %

Mid-term exam: 25 %

Final exam: 25 %

**A Note on Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a serious offense and could result in your dismissal from the program. All instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported to EAP for disciplinary action. If you borrow words or an idea from any source, whether it be a book, journal, magazine, the Internet, or a lecture, you need to indicate where the information came from. Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* identifies three different acts that are considered plagiarism: "(1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases [of other texts] into your own words" (Hacker 261). (By both citing the source of this definition of plagiarism and by "enclosing borrowed language in quotation marks," this syllabus has avoided charges of plagiarism.) If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please ask me.

**A Note on Electronic Devices**

As a courtesy to your instructor and fellow students, please do not use cell phones, laptops, tablets, e-readers, or other electronic devices during class, even to check the time. Make sure phones are turned off. Use of these devices will lower your participation grade. No recording (audio or visual) of class sessions will be permitted.

## Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction, readings from Gayle Rubin (“Thinking Sex”), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (“Queer and Now”) and José Esteban Muñoz (“Feeling Utopia” and “Queerness as Horizon,” Intro and Chapter 1 of *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*) [CR]

Week 2 – Manet, *Olympia*, Readings on painting by TJ Clark and Griselda Pollock [CR]  
Wednesday class visit to the Musée d'Orsay

Week 3 – Gide, *The Immoralist*, PAPER 1 DUE

Week 4 – Gide, *The Immoralist* (continued); Colette, *The Vagabond*

Week 5 – Colette, *The Vagabond*; Genet, *The Thief's Journal*

Week 6 – Genet, *The Thief's Journal*

Week 7 – Midterm Review and Exam (Date and time TBA)

Fall Break (October 31<sup>st</sup> – November 8<sup>th</sup>)

Week 8\* – Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*

\*Exceptional course meeting on Friday, Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> (11h30-13h00) to make-up Wed Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>

Week 9 – Desportes, *King-Kong Theory*

Week 10 – Scianna, *La naissance des pieuvres (Water Lilly)*, PAPER 2 DUE

Week 11 – Kechiche, *La Vie d'Adèle (Blue is the Warmest Color)*

Week 12 – Abdellah Taïa, *An Arab Melancholia*

Week 13 – Final review and exam (Date and time TBA)