

PS Writing Queer, Writing Gender(s)

Syllabus

Let's get this out of the way: Like the preceding terms, winter term 2021/22 will be yet another experiment in pandemic pedagogics – albeit one where you will get to be on campus again (fingers crossed!). It is also my first term at the University of Passau, so please bear with me! I look forward to experimenting with different forms of (online) teaching, but I will need your help. Please keep in touch, take part in the Zoom classes, and use the forum and Perusall for asynchronous coursework (see schedule). Most importantly, please let me (and the other course members) know if something does not work for you or if you have different ideas about how to do things. Let's do this together!

class:

- **Tuesday, 16:15-17:45** [online]

As Zoom is not the perfect medium for everyone (and some of you might struggle with technical issues) the seminar will combine synchronous Zoom classes with a number of asynchronous sessions (see schedule & tasks below).

contact:

- [office: PHIL 270, Innstraße 25]
- **e-mail:**
- **office hours:** Wednesday, 14:00-15:00 (and on appointment) on Zoom – please send me an e-mail for the Zoom link.
- **twitter:** @susannegruss

resources:

- **StudIP:**

literature:

- Please **buy** the following texts (any edition will do):
 - (1) Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (1992)
 - (2) Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (1998)
 - (3) Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (2004)
 - (4) Paul Mendez, *Rainbow Milk* (2020)
- All **other texts** that are mandatory reading are available on StudIP.
- Please check the **bibliography** for further references (full bibliographical details, further reading).

course description:

How is our reading and understanding of a text influenced by the sex/gender of the narrator – and what happens if Jeanette Winterson does not let us know? How does Alan Hollinghurst shape a cultural and political narrative of homosexuality in Britain – and which role do class and privilege play? How about female masculinity and passing – and Jackie Kay's Scottishness? And what happens when Paul Mendez throws intersectionality – Blackness, class, and gender – into the mix? These are some of the questions we will approach in this class in an attempt to explore current narrative explorations of queerness and gender(s). Our close readings of the primary texts Winterson, Hollinghurst, Kay, and Mendez will be supplemented by an analysis of theoretical texts from the fields of (trans)gender, queerness, and intersectionality.



e-mail and Zoom etiquette:**- e-mail:**

Please give me some time to answer your **e-mails** (up to 4 days). I will not write e-mails after 8pm or on weekends.

As I teach five different classes, it would be very helpful if the class you are taking with me appeared somewhere in the body of your e-mail.

- Zoom:

Please **mute yourself** if you are not talking. If you feel uncomfortable talking into the camera (or if you have connection issues), feel free to use the **chat** to contribute to class discussions.

I obviously will not (and cannot) force anyone to turn on their **camera** when we zoom but would still kindly ask you to do so. Yes, staring at yourself onscreen can be cringeworthy, but if we want to use Zoom to create a **seminar experience**, being able to see each other's faces and nonverbal communication just makes everything so much easier for me (and you). Imagine trying to keep a discussion going while staring into a void of black rectangles.

Most of us will zoom from our **private spaces** – this means that my kids might make an appearance at some point (sorry). Zoom bombing family members, flatmates or pets are always welcome! Added bonus: you get to eat and drink during classes (as long as you have muted yourself, see above).

Our Zoom meetings should be a **safe space** for everyone. Recording (parts of) sessions or taking (and posting) screenshots is an absolute no-go. All material shared onscreen will be made available to you on StudIP.

- I am not exempt from the occasional **technical blip** – please be patient if I freeze and simply wait for a couple of minutes. Like the terminator, I will be back, promised.
- **Be kind (to yourself, to each other, and to me).**

course performance & requirements:

- Apart from preparing the **compulsory reading**, please stick to the tasks detailed in the course schedule below.
- I expect you to take part in class **regularly** and **actively**, both in synchronous and asynchronous sessions (I will also track your activity in the forum and on Perusall). Communication is key, so talk to me if you are struggling.
- Instead of an oral presentation, each of you will write one brief **response paper** (ca. 1.000 words) on one of the articles we will discuss during asynchronous sessions / reading weeks. Use this task as an **exercise in academic writing**: describe the main thesis of the article in question, the development of its argument, and your own takeaways.
- For **asynchronous sessions**, I have indicated the tasks I expect you to cover over the week in the schedule below. This should not take more time than the 90-minute course slot (plus the time you would normally take to read/prepare for class).

term paper:

- If you need to write a term paper for this course, please stick to the department's style sheet, attend the Zoom session on term papers, and do the tasks in the asynchronous session.
- Developing a topic **independently** and coming up with a suitable **thesis** is part of your assignment. Please talk to me/chat with me as soon as possible – I will not accept & grade your term paper if I have not talked to you about your topic.



Schedule

 mandatory reading / study
 to write
 background reading (optional)

- 01** 19.10.21 **organisation**
tools (Flinga, Padlet, Perusall)
How do you write queer / write gender(s)?
to read / to do:
 /
tasks:
- Have a quick look at the forum **before we start** and introduce yourself (including your pronouns) – if you want to, you can also upload a selfie and/or a picture of your workspace. And if you have a pet, upload a pic for us (pretty please).
 - prep for class:** Think about **the role of the narrator & their gender** and how it impacts you as a reader.
 - after class:** Use the forum thread **“Feedback”** to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**. Please do so each week – I will get back to your open questions at the beginning of each session.
- 02** 26.10.21 **genealogies of theory**
from feminism to gender studies to queer studies to masculinity studies
to read / to do:
- R. Connell, “Gender Theory & Theorists: A Short Global History” (52-71) 
 - M. Bragg, “Feminism” (podcast) 
 - B. Hughes, “Call Yourself a Feminist.” (podcast, 3 episodes) 
 - write & hand in a **response paper** on Connell (you need to write 1 for the seminar) 
- tasks:
- Before** today’s session, please read & comment on **Connell’s chapter (Perusall)**, link in today’s session on StudIP). We will then discuss any problems you might have had with Perusall in today’s class.
 - prep for class:** If you have the time, listen to Bragg’s podcast. If you have even more time on your hands, listen to Hughes’s podcast (3 episodes). As a starting point for today’s discussion, think about what you already know about theoretical approaches (**feminism, gender/queer/masculinity studies**).
 - after class:** Use the forum thread **“Feedback”** to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.



03 02.11.21 The “godmother” of queer: Judith Butler
asynch. performing gender

to read / to do:

- J. Gleeson, “Judith Butler: ‘We Need to Rethink the Category of Woman’” (*Guardian*) 
- J. Butler, “Critically Queer” (18-31) 
- write & hand in a **response paper** on Butler (you need to write 1 for the seminar) 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** How does Butler understand **queerness** (and, by extension, performativity)?
- Read** Butler’s recent *Guardian* **interview** (link in today’s session on StudIP) and **take notes** while doing so.
- Read & comment** on **Butler’s article** (Perusall).
- Use the **forum** thread “**Judith Butler**” for open questions and further discussion.
- after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**

04 09.11.21 Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (1992) 1
plot – narrator – narrative structure

to read / to do:

- read the novel 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** How does Winterson’s **narrator** depict themselves – and can you find any clues as to their **gender**? For next week: How are **love** and **desire** framed by language?
- prep for class:** How does knowing about the **gender/sexuality** of a narrator influence your reading?
- after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**

05 16.11.21 Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (1992) 2
desire & the language of love

to read / to do:

- /

tasks:

- prep for class:** Have a closer look at the **language** of the novel – how would you describe it? Which parts of the novel would you like to look at in detail?
- after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**



- 06 23.11.21 Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (1992) 3
asynch. queer experiments (Tyler Bradway)

to read / to do:

- T. Bradway, "Preface" & "Introduction" (*Queer Experimental Literature* v-xv, 27-63) 
- write & hand in a **response paper** on Halberstam (you need to write 1 for the seminar) 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** Read Bradway's preface/intro & think about how his ideas could be applied to **Winterson's novel**.

note: There will be a reading/discussion event with Tyler Bradway (organised by Florian Zitzelsberger) later this term to which you are all cordially invited – more info coming soon!

- Read** Bradway's "**Preface**" and **take notes** while doing so.
- Read & comment** on **Bradway's "Introduction"** (Perusall).
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions**.

- 07 30.11.21 Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (1998) 1
plot – narrator(s) – narrative structure

to read / to do:

- read the novel 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** How does Kay **structure** her novel – and what effect does that have on you as a **reader**? For next week: How is **masculinity** constructed in the novel?
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions**.

- 08 07.12.21 Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (1998) 2
asynch. Jack Halberstam, female masculinity

to read / to do:

- J. Halberstam, "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men" (355-374)
- write & hand in a **response paper** on Halberstam (you need to write 1 for the seminar) 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** Read Halberstam's article & think about how his ideas could be applied to **Winterson's novel**.
- Read & comment** on **Halberstam's "Introduction to Female Masculinity"** (Perusall).
- Use the **forum** thread "**Discussion questions**" for next week – we will focus on close readings of the novel, so tell us which aspects or passages of the play you would like to look at in detail!
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions**.



- 09 14.12.21 Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (1998) 3
close readings
term papers 1 – to dos & no gos
to read / to do:
• /
tasks:
 prep for class 1: Have a look at the forum thread “Discussion questions”, look up the passages, & start to think about how you would analyse them.
 prep for class 2: Think about any **specific question** you might have about **academic writing**.
 after class: Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 10 21.12.21 Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (2004) 1
How to do the history of male homosexuality
to read / to do:
• read Part 1 of the novel, “The Love-Chord (1983)” 
• D. M. Halperin, “How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality” (262-286) 
tasks:
 reading prompt: Read Hollinghurst’s novel with a focus on **homosexuality** (obviously) and his depiction of class and (British) history and politics.
 Read **Halperin’s** article and take some **notes** – we will discuss **questions** in class.
 after class: Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 28.12.21 Christmas Break
04.01.22 (no class)
- 11 11.01.22 Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (2004) 2
class – Thatcherism – AIDS
to read / to do:
• read Parts 2 and 3 of the novel, “‘To whom do you beautifully belong’ (1986)” & “The End of the Street (1987)” 
tasks:
 prep for class: Brush up your knowledge on **Thatcherism** and the **AIDS epidemic** in the 1980s.
 after class: Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.



- 12 18.01.22 term papers
asynch. developing a topic / a thesis / an abstract
- to read / to do:
- /
- tasks:
- prep for class:** If you have not done so already, think about a **topic** for your term paper.
 - I have uploaded a **research exercise** and a **sample abstract**. Please complete the exercise & comment on the abstract (detailed instructions on uploaded handout).
 - Use the **forum** to post questions about academic writings (problems you have encountered before, things that are not entirely clear) and engage in **discussions** with the others to try and help them with their problems.
 - after class:** Use the forum thread **“Feedback”** to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 13 25.01.22 Paul Mendez, *Rainbow Milk* (2020) 1
black queerness
- to read / to do:
- read the novel 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read *Rainbow Milk* in comparison to Hollinghurst’s novel, written almost 20 years earlier. How does Mendez’s **intersectional depiction** of homosexuality (religion, blackness, class) impact his novel?
 - prep for class:** Quickly google the **Jehovah’s Witnesses**.
 - after class:** Use the forum thread **“Feedback”** to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 14 01.02.22 Paul Mendez, *Rainbow Milk* (2020) 2
intersectionality
- to read / to do:
- M. Romero, “4 Intersectionality and Social Identities: Examining Gender” (79-114) 
- tasks:
- Read **Romero’s** chapter and take some **notes** – we will discuss **questions** in class.
 - after class:** Use the forum thread **“Feedback”** to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 15 08.02.22 round-up & open questions
- to read / to do:
- /
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Think about what you have learned in this class – do you have any open questions?



Literature

primary literature

please note: bibliographical details are for the editions of primary texts I use

Hollinghurst, Alan. *The Line of Beauty*. London: Picador, 2005 [2004].

Kay, Jackie. *Trumpet*. New York: Vintage, 2000 [1998].

Mendez, Paul. *Rainbow Milk*. London: Dialogue Books, 2020. Kindle file.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Written on the Body*. London: Vintage, 1996 [1992].

secondary literature

Barker, Meg-John. *Queer: A Graphic History*. Illustr. by Jules Scheele. London: Icon Books, 2016.

Bradway, Tyler. *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Bragg, Melvyn. "Feminism." *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 07 January 1999. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00545b0>.

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*. Eds Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 18-31.

Connell, Raewyn. *Gender in World Perspective*. Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2021 [2002].

Gleeson, Jules. "Judith Butler: 'We Need to Rethink the Category of Gender.'" *The Guardian*, 07 September 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender>.

Halberstam, Jack. "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Eds Rachel Adams and David Savran. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002. 355-374.

Hall, Donald E. and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter, eds. *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

Halperin, David M. "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*. Eds Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 262-286.

Hughes, Bettany. "Call Yourself a Feminist." BBC Radio 04, March 10-24, 2009.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00j188w/episodes/player>.

Romero, Mary. *Introducing Intersectionality*. Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018.

Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

