AIDS Literature and Film

The year 2011 marked the 30th anniversary of the AIDS epidemic. Once regarded as a catastrophic event of unthinkable magnitude, AIDS has increasingly been rendered commonplace and mundane. The emergence of the term “post-AIDS” in the last two decades reflects a newly adopted attitude towards AIDS in gay and mainstream cultures alike. This course will introduce students to a range of literary and visual texts produced in response to the AIDS epidemic over the last three decades. Through close analyses of autobiography, fiction, poetry, drama, film, and other genres of commemoration, we will explore how writers and filmmakers address the personal, sociocultural, and political consequences of AIDS. We will examine how HIV/AIDS shapes and is shaped by identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, class, and generation. In addition, our discussions will consider how the epidemic has led to reformulations of intimacy and interpersonal relations and to the creation of new rituals of commemoration, a revitalized ethics of caregiving, and a complex rethinking of the subject’s relationship to embodiment, time, and history. A primary goal of our course is to investigate the significant, though often unexamined, role of HIV and AIDS in our everyday lives. While the majority of our materials will focus on gay men’s experience of AIDS in the United States, we will also devote time to exploring texts written by and about women.

Please note that some of the literary and visual texts in this course contain graphic descriptions.

Goals

- To obtain knowledge of a diverse range of AIDS literature and film and their historical, cultural, and formal dimensions
- To develop strategies of interpretation, including an ability to use critical and theoretical terms, concepts, and methods in relation to a variety of textual forms and other media
- To acquire the ability to engage with the work of other critics and writers, using and citing such sources effectively
- To develop the ability to write persuasively and precisely in scholarly forms

Strategies for reading and preparing for class

- You must bring your books and printed copies of the readings to class.
- This is a discussion and close reading course. Attendance and productive participation are important in our work during class meetings.
- It is your responsibility to reflect, in advance of our class meetings, about the set of interrelated issues, objectives, and arguments presented by the author in the text.
- When preparing for class, follow the “K-WIC” method of reading by paying attention to keywords, key images, and key concepts, and by writing down the page numbers for these passages. By following this method, you will be more inclined to see and establish connections between textual details and multiple larger contexts.
Keywords: What are the key phrases and words in the literary or scholarly work? How does the work explore each of these keywords?

Key images: What are the most evocative images that appear and/or are repeated in the work? How do these intersect with or complicate the main concepts and keywords?

Key concepts: What are the main concepts or central issues addressed in the work? How does the author present his or her core arguments about those issues? How are these key concepts articulated stylistically or in terms of form? How do these issues challenge our initial understanding of the text’s concerns?

Required books

Required readings (marked with an asterisk [*] and accessible through SAKAI)

Critical secondary readings
- *Lawrence K. Altman, “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals”*
- *Michael Bronski, “AIDS, Art and Obits”*
- *Robert Dawidoff, “The NAMES Project”*
- *Michael Denneny, “AIDS Writing and the Creation of a Gay Culture”*
- *Andrew Holleran, “Reading and Writing”*
- *Larry Kramer, “1,112 and Counting”*
- *Carol Muske, “Rewriting the Elegy”*

Autobiography
- *Cleve Jones, “A Vision of the Quilt”*

Poetry
- *David Craig Austin, “The Gifts”*
- *Jed A. Bryan, “Voices”*
- *Rafael Campo, “The Gift of AIDS”*
- *Rafael Campo, “Prescription”*
- *Justin Chin, “Undetectable”*
- *Melvin Dixon, “Aunt Ida Pieces a Quilt”*
- *Melvin Dixon, “The 80’s Miracle Diet”*
- *Melvin Dixon, “One by One”*
- *Mark Doty, “The Embrace”*
*Mark Doty, “Tiara”
*Mark Doty, “Turtle, Swan”
*Thom Gunn, “The Man with Night Sweats”
*Thom Gunn, “The Reassurance”
*Thom Gunn, “Still Life”
*Essex Hemphill, “Commitments”
*Essex Hemphill, “When My Brother Fell”
*Marie Howe, “The Promise”
*Greg Johnson, “The Foreign Element”
*Michael Klein, “Naming the Elements”
*Joan Larkin, “Inventory”
*Michael Lassell, “How to Watch Your Brother Die”
*Timothy Liu, “The Quilt”
*Timothy Liu, “SFO/HIV/JFK”
*Michael Lynch, “The Terror of Resurrection”

**Short Fiction**
*Allen Barnett, “Philostorgy, Now Obscure”
*Allen Barnett, “The Times As It Knows Us”
*Ben Francisco, “Tio Gilberto and the Twenty-Seven Ghosts”
*Thomas Glave, “The Final Inning”
*Steve Kammon, “A Ghost Story”
*Susan Sontag, “The Way We Live Now”
*Edmund White, “An Oracle”

**Obituaries**
*Allen Barnett’s Obituary in the New York Times
*Paul Monette’s Obituary in the New York Times
*Bay Area Reporter Obituaries (Paul Monette, Essex Hemphill, Joseph Beam, Keith Haring, Vito Russo, and David Wojnarowicz)

**Films and documentaries**
Stephen Daldry, The Hours (2002) [film]
Jonathan Demme, Philadelphia (1993) [film]
Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein, Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt (1989) [documentary]
John Greyson, Zero Patience (1993) [film]
Norman René, Longtime Companion (1990) [film]
Ira Sachs, The Last Address (2009) [short film]
Greta Schiller, After Stonewall (1999) [documentary]
David Weissman, We Were Here (2009) [documentary]

**Requirements**
Attendance and participation. Attendance is mandatory, as is active reading, listening, and participation. Please make every effort to come to each class having read and reflected on the readings for the day. Although multiple class meetings are allotted to individual primary texts, you are responsible for reading the assigned text in its entirety prior to the first class
meeting for that text. Our meetings will involve class discussion, and our goal will be to produce knowledge collaboratively in the classroom.

- **Absence policy.** I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. Students are expected to attend ALL classes. If you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. You are allowed 3 absences for any reason whatsoever; more than 3 absences for any reason will result in a drop in your final grade; more than 6 absences for any reason will result in an automatic failure for the course. Repeated excessive lateness (over 10 minutes) will count as absences. I reserve the right to assign a grade of D or F to students whose attendance and punctuality are deemed unsatisfactory.

- **Quizzes and in-class writing exercises.** Be prepared to encounter occasional short quizzes or brief writing assignments at the start of class periods. These are meant to ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, and will also be used to jumpstart class discussion. Because we go over the answers right away, *I do not allow make-up quizzes if you are absent or late.*

- **Papers.** You will complete two term papers as writing assignments. I will provide more specific guidelines about these assignments as the due dates approach. Both papers are due at the beginning of the class period. Bring a printed copy of your paper to class and, in addition, upload the Word document to your individual Dropbox in the SAKAI classpage before class on the same day. Each day a paper is late will result in a 5-point drop in your grade (e.g., 80% to 75% or, in this scenario, C+ to C).

- **Assignments.** With the exception of the final exam, all assignments must be completed by the last day of class.

- **Undergraduate Symposium on Asians in the Americas and the Diaspora.** In April 2013, the university will host its third annual undergraduate symposium in Asian American studies. If you write your second paper on Chay Yew’s *A Language of Their Own*, you are eligible to submit it for presentation at the Symposium.

- **Extra credit opportunities.** There will be several opportunities to earn extra credit by attending specific events during the semester. The extra points you earn will be tabulated into your final quiz grade.

- **Final exam.** You will be evaluated on your comprehensive comprehension of all the materials we read and discuss in class during the entirety of this semester. *Failure to complete the final exam at the scheduled time will result in an automatic failure for the course.*

- **Final grade.** You will be evaluated both for consistency and/or for improvement in your performance during the course of the entire semester.
Grade distribution
- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 15%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Term paper 1: Kramer/Barnett/Monette/Hoffman (6-8 pp): 20%
- Term paper 2: Brown/Yew/Cunningham (10-12 pp): 25%
- Final exam: 20%
- TOTAL: 100%

Grade chart
Note the following chart for grades in this course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>92-100</td>
<td>87-91</td>
<td>81-86</td>
<td>77-80</td>
<td>70-76</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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Office hours
- I will hold office hours every Tuesday from 1:00 to 2:30 pm. As a courtesy, please email or speak to me in advance to confirm a meeting during office hours.

Accessibility
- The Office of Disability Services for Students, located in the Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, on Livingston Campus (54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue), offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODSS at (848) 445-6800, or visit http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/.
- All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention in the first 2 weeks of the semester.

Academic misconduct and plagiarism
- Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as your own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If the OSC determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct, the sanctions for the violation could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. For more information about academic integrity, visit http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity.

Class cancellation policy
- I will email you in the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency.

Cell phones
- All cell phones must be turned off during class.
**Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class 1  
Introduction  
*Mark Doty, “Tiara”  
*Thom Gunn, “Still Life”

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<tr>
<th>Homework</th>
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| David Fanning, *The Age of AIDS*  
View Parts 1 and 2 of the documentary on your own at  
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/aids/view/ |

**AIDS IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S. GAY AND LESBIAN HISTORY**

**Week 2**

Class 1  
*Andrew Holleran, “Reading and Writing”  
*Lawrence K. Altman, “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals”  
Discussion: David Fanning, *The Age of AIDS*  
👩 In-class screening: Norman René, *Longtime Companion*

Class 2  
*Michael Denneny, “AIDS Writing and the Creation of a Gay Culture”  
👩 In-class screening and discussion: Norman René, *Longtime Companion*

**AIDS AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION**

**Week 3**

Class 1  
Larry Kramer, *The Normal Heart*  
*Larry Kramer, “1,112 and Counting”*

Class 2  
Larry Kramer, *The Normal Heart*

**AIDS LITERACY**

**Week 4**

Class 1  
*Allen Barnett, “Philostorgy, Now Obscure”*

Class 2  
*Allen Barnett, “The Times As It Knows Us”  
*W. H. Auden, “If I Could Tell You”*
POV I: THE LOVER

Week 5
Class 1  Paul Monette, Borrowed Time
Class 2  Paul Monette, Borrowed Time

POV II: THE FRIEND AND/AS THE FAMILY

Week 6
Class 1  Amy Hoffman, Hospital Time
Class 2  Amy Hoffman, Hospital Time
*Essex Hemphill, “When My Brother Fell”
*Greg Johnson, “The Foreign Element”
*Michael Lassell, “How to Watch Your Brother Die”

Week 7
Class 1  Term paper 1 due: Kramer/Barnett/Monette/Hoffman
      ♻️ In-class screening: Jonathan Demme, Philadelphia
Class 2  *Susan Sontag, “The Way We Live Now”
        *Jed A. Bryan, “Voices”
        ♻️ In-class screening: Jonathan Demme, Philadelphia

GENRE OF COMMEMORATION I: THE OBITUARY

Week 8
Class 1  ♻️ In-class screening and discussion: Ira Sachs, Last Address
      *Michael Bronski, “AIDS, Art and Obits”
      *Paul Monette’s Obituary in the New York Times
      *Allen Barnett’s Obituary in the New York Times
      *Bay Area Reporter Obituaries (Paul Monette, Essex Hemphill, Joseph Beam, Keith Haring, Vito Russo, and David Wojnarowicz)
      ♻️ In-class screening and discussion: Jonathan Demme, Philadelphia

GENRE OF COMMEMORATION II: THE QUILT

Class 2  *Cleve Jones, “A Vision of the Quilt”
        *Robert Dawidoff, “The NAMES Project”
        *Melvin Dixon, “Aunt Ida Pieces a Quilt”
        *Michael Klein, “Naming the Elements”
        *Timothy Liu, “The Quilt”
**POV III: THE CARETAKER**

**Week 9**
- **Class 1**
  - Rebecca Brown, *The Gifts of the Body*

- **Class 2**
  - Rebecca Brown, *The Gifts of the Body*
  - *David Craig Austin, “The Gifts”*
  - *Rafael Campo, “The Gift of AIDS”*

**Genre of Commemoration III: The Elegy**

**Week 10**
- **Class 1**
  - *Carol Muske, “Rewriting the Elegy”*
  - *Rafael Campo, “Prescription”*
  - *Justin Chin, “Undetectable”*
  - *Melvin Dixon, “The 80’s Miracle Diet”*
  - *Melvin Dixon, “One by One”*
  - *Joan Larkin, “Inventory”*

- **Class 2**
  - *Mark Doty, “Turtle, Swan”*
  - *Thom Gunn, “The Man with Night Sweats”*

**AIDS and the Racial Politics of Desire**

**Week 11**
- **Class 1**
  - Chay Yew, *A Language of Their Own*

- **Class 2**
  - Chay Yew, *A Language of Their Own*
  - *Timothy Liu, “SFO/HIV/JFK”*

**Week 12**
- **Class 1**
  - *Thomas Glave, “The Final Inning”*
  - *Essex Hemphill, “Commitments”*

- **Class 2**
  - Thanksgiving: No class

**Connective Histories: Literature and Loss**

**Week 13**
- **Class 1**
  - Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*

- **Class 2**
  - Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*

**Week 14**
- **Class 1**
  - **Term paper 2 due: Brown/Yew/Cunningham**
  - 🎞️ In-class screening: David Weissman, *We Were Here*
POV IV: THE DEAD / GENRE OF COMMEMORATION IV: THE GHOST STORY

Class 2  
* Edmund White, “An Oracle”  
* Steve Kammon, “A Ghost Story”  
* Mark Doty, “The Embrace”  
* Marie Howe, “The Promise”  
* In-class screening and discussion: David Weissman, *We Were Here*

Week 15

Class 1  
* Ben Francisco, “Tio Gilberto and the Twenty-Seven Ghosts”  
* Michael Lynch, “The Terror of Resurrection”  
* Thom Gunn, “The Reassurance”

Class 2  
Review

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<th>Final Exam</th>
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Bibliography


