

History 275: The Long Civil Rights Movement and Queer History, Fall 2021

Professor Finn Enke

Classroom: Witte 114

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays after seminar and by appointment. Please feel free to email me at finn.enke@wisc.edu

What is this seminar about?

This Freshman Interest Group seminar focuses on LGBTQ+ Activism connected to the Long Civil Rights movements of African American activism from the early 20th into the 21st century. Historically, Black, Indigenous and People of Color individuals and communities have often been at the forefront of LGBTQ+ activism, and yet mainstream narratives of gay liberation habitually center white people. Meanwhile, most narratives of the Civil Rights movement minimize gender and sexuality and gloss over the specifically queer, trans and gender non-conforming contributions to the movement. This course redresses those erasures with a specific focus on movements for Black lives. We will be reading first person narratives, engaging with the art, literature, film, and other documents of African American LGBTQ+ activism, and the work of historians, in order to better understand the cultural and political work of the people who brought together queerness and efforts to address racism and promote social justice from the 1880s to current Black Lives Matter movements.

Guiding **questions** include: How have Black LGBTQIA people comprehended and navigated the combined forces of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia? How are the Civil Rights movement and the LGBTQ+ movements inextricably linked? How have Black LGBTQIA+ people created history, created communities and community spaces, told stories, worked, worshipped, taught, played, and made meaning? How have their lives shaped the world?

Guiding **themes** include: community; conflict; history and story; pride; intersectionality; segregation; white supremacy; violence; mutual aid; resistance; education.

Our **sources** emphasize biography, memoir, film, visual art, essay, comics, poetry, and other media from Black queer+ movements and scholarship. Each week, you will have access to a variety of materials that give you the opportunity to develop and explore questions of your own. Together, we will build a unique comprehension of the queer 20th century and Long Civil Rights movements.

Course Materials:

Required Books:

NY Pub Lib: ***A Stonewall Reader*** [You will receive a copy to use for the semester]

George M. Johnson, ***All Boys Aren't Blue*** [You will receive a print copy to use for the semester. It is also available as an audio book read by author.]

Other Materials will be provided electronically as noted on your syllabus.

Learning Outcomes:

An historian's work includes gaining an understanding of and appreciation for the contexts and perspectives of people in the past. We will be paying attention to how people built LGBTQ+ and Civil Rights movements in the face of white supremacy, sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia and created possibilities for transformative justice.

Assignments and discussions are designed to help you:

- *develop confidence in your own interests, your ability to frame historical questions and your ability to pursue them.
- *gain greater awareness of historical contexts, social institutions, and social movements.
- *develop facility with contextually appropriate vocabularies.
- *practice creative synthesis and original expression of insights gained through reading.
- *learn collaborative process, listening for and valuing questions and differing perspectives.
- *increase initiative and confidence in generating your own work.
- *find, interpret and analyze primary and secondary sources.

Accessibility:

Everyone is welcome in this seminar and I am happy to make accommodations, adjustments, and alternatives, and do whatever I can do to support your learning and well-being. While life is always full of unanticipated circumstances, I recognize that the COVID 19 pandemic creates additional burdens. It is always my policy to maximize flexibilities and respect for your particular learning needs. The McBurney Center provides useful documentation and support related to disabilities but I do not require documentation to provide support and increase access.

Course Requirements and Assignments

All components add up to 250 pts.

Assignment details are elaborated on your canvas page.

1. Seminar Discussion and Participation: 20 pts

There are as *many ways to participate* as there are people in the seminar! Knowing that we are each uniquely “wired” and that we each bring unique experience and insight to the seminar, it is important that we support each person’s presence and ways of contributing. Appreciating our diverse ways of being will give us the best possible chance to build powerful insight.

Collaborative co-facilitation:

Everyone's perspectives are essential to this endeavor. I especially encourage you to share your questions, interests and concerns, and also be a co-caretaker of seminar dynamics. We can model respect for all persons and communities by knowing that every person comes here with immeasurable insight and experience.

I encourage you to speak in the first person singular from your own experience (for example: avoid using “we” statements such as “we grow up learning x” and instead try, “I grew up learning x”). Practice refraining from making assumptions, avoid generalizing about individuals and communities, increase awareness of your biases, and approach our sources and each other with openness. As a learning community, it’s awesome to be mindful of everyone’s well-being, and help each other participate and be here as fully as possible. *This is at the heart of our work as seminar participants and as beings living in a challenging world.*

Engaging with our sources:

When reading or engaging with sources, our first job is to *attend to* what the *author* is saying. Our personal reactions can provide important insight into our own assumptions, biases, and commitments, and this is important, too. Yet it is an essential practice to do your best to comprehend the author’s perspective, experience, and purpose. Always make a note of what you think you might not understand, and any questions you’d ask of the author or source.

*Readings for each week should be done *prior* to seminar. (e.g. read the readings listed for Sept 15 seminar prior to seminar that day.)

2. Journal. 20 pts

Keep a journal in which you reflect on your thoughts and questions in relation to class material and seminar, and any other observations or questions that seem relevant. Many weeks I will suggest a journal topic. You may write as much or little as you want, and you should feel free to draw, doodle, or whatever feels meaningful to you. I encourage you to use your journal on a regular basis—it will really pay off! I will not ask you to hand in your journal; however, three times in the semester I will check in with you about your journal and how it is working for you.

3. What’s Beyond Stonewall Reader Paper: 20 pts. Due Sept. 29 See Sept 29 for instruction.

4. Conversations with Pride: Two Papers, 20 pts each. Due Nov. 10 and Dec. 15

This assignment asks you to bring two or three people we are learning about into conversation with each other. What sorts of things they might ask each other, what important things can they teach each other? As you learn about historical actors, you might gain a sense of their priorities, challenges and commitments. You will see some challenges, strengths, and insights that people have in common but also some ways they offer unique voice and perspective. Knowing that all people’s perspectives are limited, conversations across difference can open up whole new worlds of understanding. What can any two or three people offer one another? Length guideline: 4-5 pages. *You will receive a separate assignment sheet for this.*

5. Black Queer Movements and Broader Contexts. 1 page. 2 x 10 points each. (total 20 pts)

This assignment is due twice during the semester. The first is due any week prior to Oct 20; the second is due any week prior to Dec 8. Plan to share them informally in seminar.

A. Make note of some of the relevant people, events, organizations or noteworthy things that happened during the last hundred and some years, from seminar material and/or exploration of additional sources such as online history websites or archives. Place things on a timeline that you can add to through the semester.

B. How are the lives and actions of individuals and communities connected to larger contexts such as major events, circumstances, systemic structures, organizations, and other shaping forces? Informally write about this. Share in seminar.

Collectively, we will build a sense of history and a collective timeline, using what you have identified from our shared readings and from your individual explorations.

Extra Credit: Options include handing in “for seminar discussion” suggestions, having watch parties to watch and discuss documentaries that we are not watching during seminar, attending relevant talks by guests at UW, and other possibilities. Consult with me if you are interested.

Seminar Schedule

Introducing The Long Civil Rights Movement and Queer History:

Sept 8 **Introductions: Meeting each other!**
Civil Rights and Queer Movements have a long history indeed....

Sept 15 **Key questions in Black Queer Movements and LGBTQIA History**
Read: from *All Boys Aren't Blue*: Author's Note, Introduction, and Chapter Five.
(you will read the whole book later in semester)

Read: This short piece documents the companions who founded a Philadelphia Shaker Community in the 1880s: <https://qspirit.net/two-rebeccas-queer-black-shaker/>

Read: “The Black Drag Queens Who Fought Before Stonewall.” This short piece introduces William Dorsey Swann, who petitioned the U.S. President to give Black queer communities the right to assemble.
<https://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/channing-joseph/drag-party>

Assignment: a) In your journal, write your thoughts in response to the George Johnson (*All Boys*) reading. What comes up for you, as you read this? What about the histories that are not being taught, and how this matters to you, and to George as a Black, gay, nonbinary boy?
b) for seminar discussion: what is most surprising and/or compelling to you in the short pieces you read online about building Black queer communities in the late 1800s? How might George have responded to discovering this history?

Is Stonewall the Right Place to Start?

Sept 22 **From *The Stonewall Reader*:**

Read: Introduction by Jason Bauman (pp. xiii-xxii)

Section one, Before Stonewall: Pages 3-95. Focus especially on pieces by Lorde, Nestle, Martin and Lyon, Kameny, Prince, Delany, Gittings, Eckstein, Grahm, Martino

Assignment: for seminar discussion: What *seminar themes* and/or *questions* stand out to you in any piece, and how do they seem significant? What *social movements* are present in these pages? Whose larger history are you seeing in each of these various pieces?

Sept 29 **From *The Stonewall Reader*:**

Read: Section 2, During Stonewall: Focus on Segal, Johnson and Wicker, Rivera, Woodlawn, Miss Major

Section 3, After Stonewall: Jay, Hay, Perry, Brass, Cordova, Johnson, Kuromiya, Hall, Arcade, McCray

Assignment: Paper Due: length guideline: 3 pages if 12 pt font, 1" margins. Submit to Assignments tab of Canvas by 10 pm Sept 29.

For each section of *The Stonewall Reader*,

1. choose *two* things you want to learn more about. (For example, who was Audre Lorde? Do a tiny bit of research to find out more about her life or read something else by her. What was Cherry Grove and Fire Island?)
2. write a paragraph about what interests *you* most in what you find—that is, what do you find meaningful and why?
3. Write a paragraph about how this speaks to any of our seminar themes or question.

Notes: You will be writing about a total of 6 things. Put your NAME and a title on paper.

Be sure to name each thing you learned more about, and remember to cite your sources. I urge you NOT to rely on Wikipedia; you can find better sources.

Another Way to Begin: The Harlem Renaissance

Oct 6 **Read:** Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*,

"A note on pronouns," Intro, and Chs 1 and 2. This may be downloaded from:

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9913051923302121>

Read: Pauli Murray, "Little Man from Mars" (in Files tab, Canvas)

Assignment: journal: What are three things that stand out to you the most in your reading about Pauli Murray so far?

Watch in seminar: *Harlem Renaissance: A Prospectus*

T'Ain't Nobody's Business: Queer Blues Divas

Oct 13 **Read:** *Jane Crow*: Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6

Assignment: journal: Considering what you had learned about the Civil Rights movement in high school, what surprises you in the life of Pauli Murray? What themes stand

out to you the most in these readings? How do you feel about Rosenberg's choice about pronoun use? Would you do it differently?

For seminar discussion: How did Pauli Murray's racial identity and gender/sexual identity interact as Murray experienced segregationist America? How did segregation, white supremacy, and sexism work together in the contexts Murray experienced? (what are some specific examples?)

Oct 20 Finding History, Making History

Read: Bruce Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies and Jade," "You See, I Am a Homosexual"

Read: Langston Hughes, "A Raisin in the Sun"

Read: Nugent's Harlem Renaissance biographies for the Federal Writers Project: Georgette Harvey; Gloria Swanson; Alexander Gumbay

Look at Nugent's visual art here:

FILM: *Brother to Brother* or *Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis at 100*. (watch together in class)

Movements Growing: Race, Gender, Sexuality at Mid-Century and Beyond

Oct 27 Lorraine Hansberry:

Read: *Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry*: Chapters One, Two and Five. Introduction highly recommended.

[Chapters in Files tab Canvas, and full book available online from UW Libraries.]

Recommended documentary: *Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes, Feeling Heart*.

This is available for streaming via UW libraries.

Assignment: Journal: What is standing out to you the most in this reading? Were you familiar with Hansberry's life or work prior to this seminar? What do you find yourself wishing, or wanting to know more about?

For seminar discussion: What seminar themes and/or questions does this reading engage, and what insights about that do you gain?

Nov 3 Bayard Rustin, Lorraine Hansberry, and James Baldwin:

Read: John D'Emilio, "Homophobia and the Course of Post- World War II Radicalism: The Career of Bayard Rustin." This **article** gives perspective on the ways homophobia and white supremacy worked together to suppress the Civil Rights Movement, and how Rustin was one center of a conflict within the movement. (in Files tab of canvas).

Read: Kevin Mumford, "Losing the March," **an essay** about Baldwin, Hansberry, and Rustin, their 1963 meeting with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and Black Civil Rights Activism. (chapter 1 in *Not Straight, Not White*, available online via UW library)

Watch: *Bayard and Me*. This recent 17-minute **documentary** interviews Walter Naegle, Rustin's life partner. (available via YouTube)

Assignment: Journal: What comes up for you when you read each of these two pieces? What surprises and interests you the most? What about the documentary?
Consider for Seminar discussion: How do homophobia and racism shape the contexts discussed in these articles and in the documentary? What additional biases and systemic oppressions are present (for example, in the documentary *Bayard and Me*), and how do Rustin and others respond to or resist those oppressions?

In seminar we will watch together: *Out of the Past*, a documentary on the long trajectory of LGBTQ+ life in U.S. history including the Civil Rights Movement. Features material on Bayard Rustin while focusing on efforts of high school students in Utah to establish a Gay-Straight Alliance. (stream via UW Library)

Nov 10 Love and Action

Read: James Baldwin, "A Letter to My Nephew"

online, accessed here: <https://progressive.org/magazine/letter-nephew/>

Read: Ernestine Eckstein, interview in 1966 *The Ladder* (pdf in Files tab of Canvas)

- a) This **podcast** website has links to a lot of other relevant things you might be interested in, and an audio recording of the entire interview with Eckstein. A great listen!

<https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/ernestine-eckstein/>

- b) This **short essay** gives perspective on Eckstein's impact and trajectory in the larger movements for justice:

<http://www.newnownext.com/ernestine-eckstein-gay-civil-rights-pioneer/02/2019/>

In seminar we will watch together:

James Baldwin on the Dick Cavette show, 1968. (YouTube title "I Am Not Your Negro.")

James Baldwin, "On Love" (from interview with Rebecca Gould, via YouTube.)

Assignment Due: Conversations with Pride. Among all the people you've encountered in our seminar thus far, what two or three people would you like to put in conversation? Further guidance provided separately. Length guideline: 4-5 pages if 12 pt font, 1" margins. Submit to Assignments tab of Canvas by 10 pm, Nov 10.

The Centrality of Black Feminism

Nov 17 Words to Live By

Read: The Combahee River Collective Statement here:

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977/>

Read: these 3 influential short essays by **Audre Lorde** (Files tab of canvas):

"Poetry Is Not a Luxury"

"The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"

"The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"

Read: these 2 essays by **Barbara Smith** (Files tab of canvas)

“Blacks and Gays: Healing the Great Divide”

“Working for Liberation and Having a Damn Good Time” (Read **essay** and look at **whole issue** of *Black/Out* 1986. Pdf in Files tab of Canvas, under *Black/Out*.)

Audre Lorde: A Litany for Survival. Documentary stream via UW libraries

Assignment: journal: what, for you, are the most powerful aspects or parts of these readings? Any passages or statements that you want to keep track of? If so, write them down!

For seminar discussion: Do you see these Black feminist writings echoing and building those who came before? What examples come to mind? How do these writings also resonate with the present moment?

Nov 24 NO CLASS

Dec 1 Read: George Johnson, *All Boys Aren't Blue*

Assignment: journal: what is coming up for you as you read this book? Do you feel it resonating with other things you have engaged with or experienced this semester?

Consider for seminar discussion: What for you stands out as the most significant challenges George faces? What do you see as George's greatest personal strengths and, and also as their greatest sources of support?

In seminar, we will watch portions of *Tongues Untied*, by Marlon Riggs.

Dec 8 Finish: George Johnson, *All Boys Aren't Blue*

Assignment: journal: Who would you love to hear George in conversation with, and why? Who might offer George some useful inspiration or perspective?

Dec 15 Reflections on history and movements for social justice.

Assignment Due: Conversations with Pride. For your last Conversation paper, please put George Johnson and any two additional people in conversation. Further guidance provided separately. This is due by 10 pm, December 15.

Additional Resources (please feel free to add to this tiny list!)

Webpage with biographical information and links to interviews and other media by and with comic artist **Rupert Kinnard**. (webpage done by student in class w/ Dr. Ajuan Mance)

<https://comicsofcolor.wordpress.com/2019/05/07/rupert-kinnard/>

James Tinney, 1986. “Why a Black Gay Church?” (pdf in Files tab of Canvas)

Ashia Ajani, "How Barbara Smith Launched a Black Feminist Revolution"

<https://www.them.us/story/barbara-smith-launched-a-black-feminist-revolution>

FILMS (available to stream via UW library unless noted)

Major! This **documentary** illuminates the life and work of **Miss Major Griffin-Gracy**, a Black transgender elder and activist who has been fighting for the rights of trans women of color for over 40 years. (Stream via UW Libraries.)

The Believers. This **documentary** records the creation and impact of the world's first transgender gospel choir. (Stream via UW Libraries)

Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis at 100 (2003) (stream via UW Libraries)

Tongues Untied by Marlon Riggs (stream via UW library)

Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria (Stream from UW Library)

Watermelon Woman (Stream from library here)

Out of the Past (stream via UW library)

Brother to Brother

WEBSITES and ARCHIVES (many include podcasts, videos, visual material as well as text)

Out History

<https://outhistory.org/>

Digital Transgender Archive

<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>

CREDIT HOUR definitions:

A single credit hour is defined by the university as one hour (i.e. 50 minutes) of classroom or direct instruction/discussion and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week over approximately 15 weeks.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.