

WGSS 2367.03
US Lesbian Writers:
Text and Context

Autumn 2013

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274 University Hall
Office Hours: W 4-5:00
and by appointment

Lesbians in the US have written their lives, fears, desires, fantasies, aspirations, and politics. Has lesbian writing changed over time? Or have our expectations of lesbian writing changed? This course examines lesbian experience in the US since the 1950s, with an emphasis on intersections between fiction/creative non-fiction and lesbian socio-political history. Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies 2367.03 fulfills the "writing and related skills" and the "social diversity in the United States" GEC requirements. WGSS 2367.03 may also be applied to the major or minor requirements in the Sexuality Studies Program

Required Texts

Patricia Highsmith, *The Price of Salt* (1951)
"Vin Packer," *Spring Fire* (1952)
Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973)
Karla Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (2000)
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006)

Readings on Carmen

- Craig Loftin, *Masked Voices*, "Introduction: The Masks of McCarthy"
- Marijane Meaker, *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s*, Chapters 1-5
- Katherine V. Forrest, editor, *Lesbian Pulp Fiction: The Sexually Intrepid World of Lesbian Paperback Novels 1950-1965*, Introduction

Course Requirements

You must complete all readings by the dates indicated on the schedule below. I expect you to attend all class meetings, and I will keep track of attendance through the distribution of a roll sheet at the beginning of every class period. You may miss 3 classes without penalty; for every absence after the 3rd, 3 points will be subtracted from the final score for your papers. Students with problems that require long absences from class during the quarter must bring me university-approved documentation. Late arrival at class should only occur in the event of an emergency. All cell phones and other electronic equipment must be turned off for class, and texting should never be done in any class. If you consistently arrive late or leave class early you will be counted absent for those days. In the absence of special circumstances you should be prepared to begin class on time with the necessary materials for the day's work.

The class will be conducted in a mixed lecture/discussion format; I will use lectures to deliver background and explanatory information. I expect that students will participate in class discussions in a candid, thoughtful, and respectful manner. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. You should plan to take notes during lectures and discussions in order to enhance your understanding and retention of information. You will be tested on material from class lectures and discussions as well as on assigned readings. **If you miss class you are responsible for the material you missed; you should never ask a professor for class notes.**

This course is designated to enhance writing and related skills. Writing and Related Skills coursework develops students' skills in written communication and expression, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Through critical analysis, discussion, and writing, students demonstrate the ability to read carefully and express ideas effectively
2. Students apply written, oral, and visual communication skills and conventions of academic discourse to the challenges of a specific discipline
3. Students access and use information critically and analytically

Students should make use of the OSU Writing Center in the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW), which offers free writing tutoring. CSTW is located at 475 Mendenhall Lab. You can obtain more information about the Center and tutorials at 688.5865 or online at <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter>.

The Office for Disability Services (ODS) offers a variety of services and auxiliary aids for students with documented disabilities. To access services, students must provide ODS with documentation of the disability. ODS is located in 150 Pomerene Hall; you can contact them at 292.3307.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#)

Quizzes

On Wednesdays throughout the semester I will give a quiz at the beginning of the class that tests your knowledge of class material from the previous week (ie, lecture material from the previous Wednesday and Friday classes as well as information from the previous Wednesday and Friday reading assignments). These quizzes are designed to encourage you to keep up with the reading and to retain knowledge that is essential to mastery of the subject matter of the course. No make-

up quizzes will be given; if you miss a quiz for any reason—including that you arrive late for class—you will not have an opportunity to retake it.

Paper Assignment

In this class you will write four short papers; these papers will collectively constitute 2/3 of the final course grade. Each paper must be turned in on the date designated for that paper in the syllabus. Late papers will be marked down one grade level (e.g., B+ to B) for each day beyond the due date that the paper is late. We will discuss writing in class, but basic guidelines for the papers are as follows:

1. Each paper should **address the question** for that paper
2. Each paper should be **no briefer than 3 full pages** of text and no longer than 4 full pages of text in 12-point Times New Roman typeface
3. Each paper should have (default) **one-inch margins**
4. Include a **page count** at the bottom of your paper
5. Papers must be clearly written with attention to **content, organization, style, and mechanics**. The grade you receive for each paper will reflect all these dimensions of writing (I will provide a handout with some guidelines for paper writing, and we will discuss writing in class)
6. Be aware of the University's **plagiarism policy**. Papers must include a cover page that contains your signature and a brief **honors statement**
7. You must use the sources designated in the question to write your paper. You may incorporate another source *if you need to do so*, but any outside source you use must be cited and may not substitute for the **use of class texts and other required class material**

Grading

Quizzes	1/3
Papers	<u>2/3</u>
	100

Grading scale: A (95-100) A- (90-94) B+ (88-89) B (85-86) B- (80-84) C+ (77-79) C (75-76) C- (70-74) D+ (68-69) D (65-66) E (64 and below)
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Grading Criteria for Papers

- A → Demonstrates informed mastery of content [and]
Follows all instructions for the assignment [and]
Writes polished prose that contains few (if any) grammatical errors, misspelled words, or infelicities of expression
- B → Demonstrates good understanding of content
Follows most instructions for the assignment
Generally writes well, with few grammatical errors, misspelled words, or other infelicities of expression
- C → Demonstrates an average understanding of content
Does not follow instructions adequately

- Writing displays multiple errors, misspelled words, or other infelicities of expression
- D → Demonstrates poor understanding of content
Does not follow instructions
Writing displays multiple errors, misspelled words, or other infelicities of expression
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Schedule of Readings and Examinations

This schedule is subject to change. Changes announced in class and/or on Carmen will be understood to have been added to the course syllabus. Please check Carmen regularly throughout the semester for updates.

Introduction

W Aug 21 and Introductions

Before “Stonewall”

F Aug 23 **Craig Loftin**, *Masked Voices*, Introduction

W Aug 28 **Barbara Gittings**, “Founding New York Daughters of Bilitis, 1958” (interview with Ned Katz)
http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Barbara_Gittings:_Founding_New_York_Daughters_of_Bilitis,_1958

F Aug 30 **No Class.** **Patricia Highsmith**, *The Price of Salt*, Chapters 1-4

W Sep 4 **In-class writing clinic:** Bring questions you have about writing to class. In addition, print, read, and bring to class the following documents from the OSU Writing Center website (<http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter/handouts>):

Drafting and Style

- [*Developing a Thesis Statement*](#)
- [*Getting Started*](#)
- [*Introductions*](#)

- *Paragraphs*
- *Style: Sentence Combinations and Word Choice*
- *Conclusions*
- *Correcting Common Errors in Sentence Structure*
- *Parentheses and Dashes*
- *Sentence Types*
- *Summarizing and Paraphrasing*

Editing

- *Proofreader's Checklist* (this is a PowerPoint file on the Writing Center homepage under "Editing")

Grammar

- *Comma Use*
- *Article Use*

F Sep 6

Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*, Chapters 5-10

W Sep 11

Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*, Chapters 11-14

F Sep 13

Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*, Chapters 15-20

W Sep 18

Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*, Chapters 21-23; Afterword;

Recommended: Terry Castle, [“Pulp Valentine: Patricia Highsmith’s Erotic Lesbian Thriller”](#)

Paper #1 Due

- F Sep 20 **Katherine V. Forrest**, *Lesbian Pulp Fiction*: Introduction
- W Sep 25 **Marijane Meaker**, *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s*, Chapters 1-5
- F Sep 27 **Film in Class; no new reading**
- W Oct 2 **“Vin Packer,”** *Spring Fire*, Introduction-Chapter 6
Film in Class
- F Oct 4 **“Packer,”** *Spring Fire*, Chapters 7-12
- W Oct 9 **Rita Mae Brown**, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, Chapters 1-6
- F Oct 11 **Brown**, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, Chapters 7-10
- W Oct 16** **Brown**, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, Chapters 11-18
Paper #2 Due
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After “Stonewall”

- F Oct 18 **Karla Jay**, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, Prologue-Chapter 4
- W Oct 23 **Jay**, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, Chapters 5-6
- F Oct 25 **Jay**, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, Chapters 7-11
- W Oct 30 **No Class; Jay**, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, Chapters 12-Epilogue
- F Nov 1 **No Class. No new reading**
- W Nov 6 **Alison Bechdel**, *Fun Home*, Chapters 1-3
- F Nov 8 **Bechdel**, *Fun Home*, Chapters 4-5
- W Nov 13** **Bechdel**, *Fun Home*, Chapters 6-7
Paper #3 Due
- F Nov 15 **Combahee River Collective**, [“The Combahee River Collective Statement”](#)
- W Nov 20 **Pam Spaulding** of [“Pam’s House Blend”](#): “I see myself as an average person; a woman living in the Mid-Atlantic South who happens to be black, a lesbian and concerned about my civil rights.”
- F Nov 22 **Last Day of Class.**

W Nov 27

No Class. Thanksgiving

F Nov 29

No Class. Columbus Day Observed

M Dec 2

Paper #4 Due

Some Further Reading

Dorothy Allison, *Bastard out of Carolina; Trash* (short stories)

Bechdel, *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*

Rita Mae Brown, *Six of One*

Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife* (poetry)

Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*

Nikki Giovanni, *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni*

Stephanie Grant, *The Passion of Alice; Map of Ireland*

Marilyn Hacker, *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (poetry)

Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country*

Pat Parker, *Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker, 1961-1978*

Jane Rule, *Desert of the Heart*

Sarah Schulman, *After Dolores*

Linda Villarosa, *Passing for Black*

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit; Sexing the Cherry*