GSWS 318-4: DRAG CULTURES: FROM RIOTS TO RUPAUL

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Office hours: TBA  
Lecture: Mondays 17:30 – 21:20; HC 1600

This course takes place on the unceded and stolen lands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Until quite recently, drag cultures- particularly those associated with ‘drag queens’- have been situated primarily in queer and transgender communities and representations of ‘camp’ in popular culture. Yet ‘drag’ as a deliberate expression and theatrical performance of gender transgression is remarkably common cross-culturally and in many historical periods, from the 17th century British stage, to Harlem ball culture, to Kabuki theatre. This course will explore the cultural and social histories of ‘drag’ in the U.S. and Canada from the early 20th century to present day.

We will examine different iterations of drag performance within LGBTQ history; the different ways that drag and drag performers have operated in explicitly queer/transgender spaces, such as bars or nightclubs; and more recently as reality TV stars, and in ‘family-friendly’ contexts, reading to children in public libraries (Drag Queen Story Hour). We will explore representations of drag performers/performances in literature (Our Lady of the Flowers), film (Divine), and TV (Drag Race; Dragula). Students will explore the ways that different drag cultures have been mediated through experiences of race and racialization; poverty and upward mobility; and gender difference. We will read accounts of drag cultures and performers as revolutionaries and radicals within social movement organizing, including the Stonewall Riots and early pride marches and protests. We will consider the implications of mainstreaming certain representations of drag, and the impact of wide-spread visibility and popularity of drag queens outside queer and transgender spaces.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS:
For more detailed information please see the GSWS website: http://www.sfu.ca/gsws/courses/Educational_Goals.html

COURSE TEXTS AND COURSEWARE:
All readings are available on Canvas or through SFU Library Online Database.

COURSE EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS:
Attendance and Participation: 35%  
  Attendance (13 weeks): 10%  
  In-class participation: 10%  
  Group Reading Presentation: 15%  
Short Written Assignments: 15%  
Creative Project: 15%  
Take Home Exam: 35%

PREREQUISITE: 30 units, including three units in GSWS.