Course Description and Objectives

Queer Geography

This course is designed to help us think about the critical role of place and space in the production of sexual identities, practices, communities, and subjectivities. As scholars and researchers of queer space, we will consider its location, nature, and definition, its history, memories, events, and subcultures, and the relationship between space and social justice. Themes will include queer phenomenology and orientation, queer cartographies and identities, sexualized spaces and places (global and local), and sites of queer resistance. We will examine these at a number of intersections, including the body, the home, the neighborhood, the community, the nation and the globe as well as race, class, and gender.

Participants will be expected to engage critically with readings, lectures, and course materials as we interrogate 'space,' examine alternate sexualities, and consider the relationships between them. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to analyze, critique, and debate issues of sexuality, as well as understand connections between geography and sexuality.

Participants will be evaluated though their weekly responses, a fieldwork project, course participation, and a research paper (see below). Weekly responses should demonstrate critical engagement with course readings, discussions, and presentations and the ability to make scholarly connections among them (credit will not be given for simple summaries of the arguments presented). In the fieldwork project, participants will visit a local space (predominantly ‘queer,’ ‘heterosexual’ or some combination of the two) and prepare a presentation to be offered in week four (either individually or in pairs). Weekly responses and project submissions will be accepted in any form that demonstrates critical engagement, reflection, and analysis (including writing, digital imagery, video, or these in combination). The research paper (between 8 - 12 pages) should offer an original perspective on an aspect or aspects of the content offered in the course. It should follow current standard writing guidelines for journals in the field.

Required texts
Book chapters will be available as a course package, and articles will be available free from the library. Additional readings may be set as the course evolves.
**Evaluation**
Weekly Responses  30%  
Fieldwork Project  25%  
Research Paper  30%  
Participation  15%  

**Tentative Course Outline**

**Week 1) May 9th and 11th**  
**Queer Phenomenology: What does it mean to be oriented?**  
“If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as “who” or “what” we inhabit spaces with.” Ahmed (2011)

In *Session One*, we will look at an overview of the course and its requirements, then consider how heterosexual norms are produced and reproduced spatially.

In *Session Two*, we will take up Ahmed’s phenomenological framing of queer orientation, as we consider how queer individuals have positioned themselves and how they have been positioned in our culture. We will also co-create some of the research questions and methodologies that might guide our fieldwork investigations over the next two weeks.

**Readings**
https://youtu.be/Rdua6xvcalg

**Week 2) May 16th and 18th**  
**Queer Geography: Introductions, Definitions, and Key Questions**  
Queer Geography is a relatively new field of study, which emerged in the 1980s and 90s in an attempt to move beyond the mapping of LGBTQ2S identities as ‘dots on the map.’ Drawing from queer and feminist theory as well as social, political, and cultural geography, it is now a well-established discipline that is making its way into high school
curricula. In this week’s sessions, we will discuss some seminal texts, trace the history of the field’s emergence, and consider some of the current tensions in the field. We will also further discuss the fieldwork project and finalize research questions and methodologies.

Readings
Podmore, J., & Brown, M. (2015) Introduction to the Special Issue: Historical Geographies of Sexualities? Historical Geography, 43: 5-16

Week 3) May 25th and May 30th
Queer Spaces: From bookstores to bath houses.

Queer spaces can include gay neighborhoods and urban enclaves, lesbian communes and collectives, queer bookstores, online communities, gay tourist venues, queer archives and museums, queer and feminist land and festivals, queer community centres and retirement homes, sex clubs, BDSM parties, bath houses, sports clubs, bars, streets, parks, churches and public toilets. These have largely arisen as a response to the heteronormative cultures that dominate many public spaces, as places to resist this heteronormativity, and as sites in which to organize and celebrate queer lives, histories, and achievements.

In Session One, we will consider the history and importance of queer spaces, and also co-create questions for speakers in Session Two.

In Session Two, we will hear from speakers from two segments of the queer population who argue that they have special and largely unmet needs: queer youth and queer elders. Quirk-e: The Queer Imaging & Riting Kollective for Elders is an arts collective working on Commercial Drive. Y4C: Youth for a Change is a queer youth advocacy group from Surrey.

Readings
Week 4) June 1st and June 6th
Queer Resistance: Speaking OUT in Public Spaces

In Session One of this week, we will consider how queer resistance has often been spatially located, as activists have taken over public spaces with such demonstrations as Act Up rallies on the streets of New York during the AIDS epidemic, the Stonewall ‘riot,’ and Gay Pride marches. We will also hear presentations of fieldwork, and begin to discuss proposals for the research papers.

In Session Two, we will continue our investigation of queer spaces with a panel of local speakers: Janine Fuller, manager of Little Sisters Books and Emporium and author of Restricted entry: censorship on trial; Ellen Woodsworth, founder and chair of Women Transforming Cities; Pat Hogan, founder of Josephine’s Café and BOLDFest; Drew Dennis, co-chair of Vancouver’s trans and gender-variant inclusion working group; and Jamie Lee Hamilton, advocate for aboriginals and sex trade workers.

Readings

Week 5) June 8th and June 13th
Global Citizenship

In Session 1 we will consider global aspects of geography and gender, bearing in mind that criticisms of early and current research into the geographies of sexuality have identified failures to address intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender. While educating ourselves about some of the struggles that LGBTQ2S individuals face in other countries, we will avoid the essentializing notion that ‘alternative lifestyles’ are a Western invention.

In Session 2 we will continue our discussion of the ways in which race, class, and gender intersect with the geographies of sexuality. We will be helped here by a panel of
speakers to include Dr. Sunera Thobani (UBC), who has an interest in critical race and migration, Chris Morrissey, founder of Rainbow Refugees, and two queer immigrants she assisted in relocating to Canada in order to escape persecution in their country of origin.

Readings

Week 6) June 15th and June 20th
Conclusions, complications, and limitations.

We will end by considering possible changes, limitations, and challenges in the field.

In *Session 1*, we’ll ask whether queer spaces might have served their function now we are supposedly ‘post gay?’ Even if we agree that queer spaces still have a role to play in our society, we’ll question their effectiveness in serving the needs of the entire community as the alphabet soup of LGBTQ2S expands. How well do they serve the young, the old, people of colour, the disabled, and the trans*?


In *Session 2*, we conclude with questions that will include the following:

- Are there limits to ‘sexual citizenship’, or do we exclude those whose sexual practices are ‘unacceptable’?
- If current queer theory challenges the very idea of the preconstituted sexual subject, how much sense does it make to talk about queer geography or to define it in opposition to heterosexuality?
- How is the relationship between sexuality and queer space affected by social changes such as same sex marriage legislation and gentrification?
Readings
