**WR 120 B6: Queer American Literature and Culture**

**Fall 2020 MWF 9:05-9:55 AM Eastern Time**

[**https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/2175152365**](https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/2175152365)

[**https://wr120queeramlit.slack.com**](https://wr120queeramlit.slack.com)

Instructor: Kristin Lacey

Office: https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/2175152365

Student Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00pm, Wednesday 1:00-2:00pm; and by appointment (Schedule on [calendly.com/kristinlacey](https://calendly.com/kristinlacey))

Contact Info: [klacey@bu.edu](mailto:klacey@bu.edu); (209) 617-1331 (texts fine)

Course Dates: 9/2/2020-12/19/20

Credits: 4 credits + 1 BU Hub Unit (Writing)

**Course Description**

The First-Year Writing Seminar will help you cultivate skills and habits of mind essential to your academic success and to your future personal, professional, and civic life. Writing is a way not only to express what you have to say but also to discover and evaluate it. You will write a great deal at BU and beyond, and each occasion will present you with a range of questions:  Who ismy audience, and what kind of writing does the occasion call for? How should I structure my writing to engage, inform, persuade, and perhaps even entertain my audience?  How can Ijudge sources wisely and use them effectively and responsibly? How can I clearly express my ideas? In this class we will review general principles about how to address such questions, and we will put those principles into practice as we read, talk, and write about our topic, Queer American Literature and Culture.

In this course, we will explore how American LGBTQ+ creators from the 1950s to the present incorporate queer identity into their art. Does the collective nature of queer movements clash with American individualism? How have queer and trans artists reconciled the pain, joy, shame, and pride of being queer in the United States? What does it mean to be “queer,” and how has that understanding shifted, from “queer” as homophobic slur to reclaimed term? Key texts include Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, along with episodes of *POSE* and *The L Word*.

**Course Objectives**

You will develop your abilities to:

* read a range of genres with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment;
* express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas;
* craft responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments;
* produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate;
* plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work;
* reflect on your own reading, writing, and editing practices.

**Books and Other Course Materials**

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.*

Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams*. Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010. (I will not require readings from this book, but if you’ve already purchased it, know that you will use it in WR 150.)

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple.* Any edition.

**Courseware**

Our course will use **Zoom to conduct classroom discussions**. You can log into our course Zoom page at: <https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/2175152365>

Outside of regular class time, we will use **Slack (a chat platform available in browser or by downloading the app)**. I will also use Slack to post our course content and you will send your written assignments to me there. Slack will replace Blackboard for our course.

**Join our Slack page here:** [**https://wr120queeramlit.slack.com**](https://wr120queeramlit.slack.com)

**The Pandemic Clause**

As you may have noticed, we are in the midst of an uncontrolled pandemic. None of us is really okay. If you tell me you’re having trouble, I’m not going to judge or think less of you. I hope you’ll extend me the same grace.

Some ground rules:

1. You *never* owe me personal information about your health (physical or mental) or anything else.
2. You are always welcome to talk to me about things you’re going through, though. Please keep in mind that I am a [mandated reporter](https://www.bu.edu/safety/protecting-minors/reporting/).
3. If I can’t help you, I usually know someone who can.
4. If you need extra help, or need to miss class, or if you need more time on an assignment, just ask. I promise to work with you.
5. Though I will often be available to answer questions via email, Slack, or text, please allow for 24-hour response time.

**Classroom (Zoom and Slack) Expectations**

**Zoom:**

1. You won’t be penalized for Internet problems, having your camera off, background noise, or any other hiccups that come with remote classes.
2. Feel free to use Zoom’s digital backgrounds, but ensure they are appropriate for class. Please change your default Zoom picture (the one that shows up when your camera is off) to a photo of you or a photo that represents you.
3. Keep in mind that the Zoom host (the instructor) can see private messages sent during the Zoom call when downloading the chat at the end.
4. Pets are invited—nay, encouraged—to attend class.
5. Eat if you’re hungry and drink if you’re thirsty!
6. Listen when others are speaking; please mute your audio unless you are speaking.
7. Feel free to use the chat to ask questions or to make short contributions to discussion, if that’s easier for you. I’ll do my best to keep an eye on the chat.
8. I will not be recording any of our class discussions. I may record my short lectures on writing, but I will always let you know first.

**Slack:** Please write formally (in complete sentences, using proper grammar) in the Discussion Posts in the channels divided into weeks. These are assignments and will be graded according to our Grading Contract. In other channels, you can speak more informally.

**Regardless of the location of your participation, show respect toward your instructor and classmates**. Here are some basic guidelines for making our class a safe environment in which to take intellectual risks and learn together:

1. Differentiate between opinion—which everyone has—and informed knowledge, which comes from sustained experience, study, and practice.
2. Recognize how your own social positionality (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, citizenship) informs your perspectives and reactions to others and to the texts you study. Use “I” statements when talking about your experiences to avoid generalization or assumptions.
3. Differentiate between safety and comfort. Accept discomfort as necessary for growth and learning.
4. Think of class discussion not as a place to “win” by having the most clever comment, but as a place to build on each others’ ideas to develop a deeper understanding of the text than we could reach alone.
5. Our class’s success depends on building trust. While I encourage you all to apply what you learn outside our class, please do not share or quote any personal information shared during discussions. Discussions related to our course topic can be deeply personal and vulnerable, and we do not want to ‘out’ someone or betray their trust. I trust you to use your discretion in keeping things confidential when appropriate.

**Assignments and Grading Criteria**

You will be given a range of assignments in this course, including a self-assessment, various reading and writing exercises, three major assignments, short oral presentation, and a final reflection essay. Much of this work will not be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate actively, and take the homework exercises and drafts seriously learn more and produce better work than those who do not. **Please send all written assignments to Kristin Lacey through direct message on Slack as a Word document (.doc or .docx). If you have any difficulty with Word, please reach out sooner rather than later.** You can [download Microsoft Office](https://www.bu.edu/tech/services/cccs/desktop/distribution/microsoft/studentoffice/) (Word, Excel, Powerpoint) for free as BU students.

**Grading and Evaluation**

**In this class, we will be using contract grading**. As long as you fulfill the requirements of our Grading Contract, you will receive at least a B+ in the course. Work that exceeds those requirements may receive a higher final grade; work that does not meet those requirements may receive a lower final grade. We will discuss those requirements in detail at the beginning of the semester. **The Grading Contract can be found at the end of this syllabus. Your final grade will be calculated as follows if you do not meet the Grading Contract:**

* Academic Paper 1 15%
* Academic Paper 2 25%
* Alternative Genre Project 30%
* Oral Presentation 10%
* Discussion Posts & Responses 10%
* Final Reflection Essay 10%

**Participation and Attendance**

Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates’ learning. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class (3 sessions) may lower your final grade. Missing more than two weeks of class (6 sessions) may lead to failing the course. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss classes (e.g., religious observances, family obligations), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. If there are extraordinary circumstances that cause you to miss more than the allowed number of classes, please contact me so we can discuss how to get you back on track.

I understand that we are in the midst of an unprecedented and ongoing crisis, so if circumstances affect your attendance, please reach out to me sooner rather than later, and we can work together to ensure your success.

**Late and Missed Assignments**

Late assignments will not receive written feedback but will require a feedback conversation during office hours. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

**CAS Writing Center**

The CAS Writing Center offers one-on-one consultations with well-trained writing consultants for students to discuss their work for WR courses. Consultants will work with you at any stage in the drafting or revision process, and on any type of assignment for a WR course, including presentations and multimedia projects. However, they will not edit or correct your work for you; rather, they will work with you to help you do your own best work. The Writing Center is a resource for all WR students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

For the Fall 2020 semester, the CAS Writing Center will offer online appointments via WCOnline, our online scheduling platform. Two types of appointments will be available:

**Synchronous appointments**

* You can speak with a consultant directly about your work via video and chat functions built into WCOnline.
* You can view your work at the same time and make adjustments together.
* These appointments are especially beneficial for brainstorming ideas, clarifying claims, or working on specific sections of a draft.
* These appointments are automatically recorded in WCOnline so that you can play them back at a later time. These recordings will not be used for any other purpose.
* All appointments are scheduled in Eastern Time (the same time zone as Boston University’s physical campus).

**Asynchronous appointments**

* You can receive written feedback from a consultant on your work.
* You must upload your assignment/prompt/instructions as well as your draft at least one hour in advance of a designated appointment block on WCOnline. A consultant will read the paper during the appointment block and then upload feedback for you in WCOnline.
* You must provide specific questions or concerns that you would like the consultant to address. Consultants will only be able to address a few questions per draft. They will not correct errors or copyedit your work for you.
* These appointments are especially beneficial for students who are completing their WR courses in time zones that make synchronous appointments challenging.

To ensure that we can help as many students as possible, students can only make one synchronous OR one asynchronous appointment each week. Both types of appointments can be booked online by visiting our website: http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/

We also encourage you to check out the Writing Center on Instagram and Facebook for writing tips, features, updates, and more. Follow us @bucaswriting.

**Academic Integrity**

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online here:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

**Name and Pronouns**

Our course will support students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters provide instructors with students’ legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than that listed in the StudentLink. You are also invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, etc.) you use. Please let me know if your name or pronouns change throughout the semester.

**Office of Disability and Access Services**

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, especially during these challenging times, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will meet your learning needs and the requirements of the course**. Whether or not you have a documented disability, please reach out to let me know how I can help you get the tools and resources you need to succeed in our course.**

Disability Services (<https://www.bu.edu/disability/>) is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

**Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Center (SARP)**

[SARP](https://www.bu.edu/shs/sarp/) provides professional, rapid, confidential, and free-of-charge advocacy and assistance to BU students who have experienced a traumatic incident. Their particular focus is sexual trauma and rape. They also assist survivors of physical assault, interpersonal violence, and other crimes.

**Student Health Services**

For mental or physical health concerns, visit [Student Health Services.](https://www.bu.edu/shs/) They can do referrals to community providers for long-term care, including therapists and psychiatrists. SHS also offers [groups and workshops](https://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/services-we-provide/behavioral-medicine-groups/), including support groups for new BU students, for managing anxiety, and for LGBTQ+ students.

**Course Schedule**

This schedule is subject to change. All readings can be found on our Slack page unless otherwise noted.

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| **Date** | **Class Activities** | **Readings/viewings due** | **Assignments** |
| **Unit 1: COURSE FOUNDATIONS**  As you begin to learn about queer American literature and culture, you will explore how and why others have written about it and write about it yourself. | | | |
| **Week 1** | Defining and Exploring Queerness |  |  |
| W 9/2 | Introductions; Syllabus Review; what does “queer” mean to you? |  | **Assigned: Self-Assessment** |
| F 9/4 |  | -Merriam-Webster Definitions of “Queer”  -Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (2011) p. xvi-xvii | **-Due: Self-Assessment**  **-Assigned: Paper 1 (1000-1200 words)** |
| **Week 2** |  |  |  |
| M 9/7 | **Labor Day—no class** |  |  |
| W 9/9  Canceled | **Last Day to add WR courses** | Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982) p. 1-42 [11-47 in PDF] “I sleep like a baby now” |  |
| F 9/11 | Summarizing a text | *TCP* p. 43-80 [48-80 in PDF] | Bring a one paragraph summary of Wednesday’s reading to class as a Google Doc. |
| **Week 3** |  |  |  |
| M 9/14 | Sign up for Paper 1 Conferences (required)  Close reading | *TCP* p. 81-120 [81-113 in PDF] “Cause she the ony one you ever love, she say, sides me” | Due: Discussion Post #1 (by class time, 9:05am) |
| W 9/16 | Writing a claim | *TCP* p. 121-160 [114-147 in PDF] “That is enough, I think…” | **-Due: Paper 1 Draft 1**  -Paper 1 Conferences (Wed-Fri) |
| F 9/18 | Writing an Introduction | *-TCP* p. 161-199 [148-179 in PDF] “Every time I conjure up a rock, I throw it.”  -*They Say, I Say* p. 194-199 | -Due: Discussion Post #2  -Paper 1 Conferences |
| **Week 4** |  |  |  |
| M 9/21 | Incorporating evidence and analysis | *-TCP* p. 200-244 [180-212 in PDF] “P.S. Your brother Samuel sends his love as well.” | Due: Discussion Responses #2 |
| W 9/23 | Writing a conclusion | *-TCP* p. 244-294 [213-249 in PDF] | -Bring a draft of your conclusion paragraph |
| F 9/25 |  | Korine Powers (film scholar) guest teaching on analyzing film/TV | **Due: Paper 1 Final Draft** |

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| **Unit 2: WRITING AN ACADEMIC ESSAY**  In this unit, you will write a longer academic essay that raises a central question and draws on multiple sources to answer it. | | | |
| **Week 5** | TV/Film Depictions of Queerness |  |  |
| M 9/28 |  | *The L Word* Season 1, Episode 1 “Pilot” |  |
| W 9/30 | Incorporating others’ writing | *They Say, I Say* p. 19-28 | **Assigned: Paper 2** |
| F 10/2 |  | *The L Word: Generation Q* Season 1, Episode 1 | Due: Discussion Post #3 |
| **Week 6** | TV/Film Depictions of Trans People |  |  |
| 10/5 | Research + using reputable sources | *POSE* Season 1, Episode 1 “Pilot” | Due: Discussion Responses #3 |
| 10/7 | **Last day to drop courses without a “W”**  Addressing a counterargument | *They Say, I Say* p. 78-90 |  |
| 10/9 |  | *Paris is Burning* | Due: Discussion Post #4 |
| **Week 7** | **Trans Representation + HIV/AIDS Crisis** |  |  |
| M 10/12 | **Indigenous Peoples’ Day—no class** |  |  |
| T 10/13 | **Monday schedule** | *Disclosure* | Due: Discussion Responses #4 |
| W 10/14 |  | -Bronski, *A Queer History*  p. 224-235  - Essex Hemphill, “When My Brother Fell” (1992)  Paul Monette, “No Goodbyes” (1988) |  |
| F 10/16 |  | *POSE* Season 2, Episode 1 “Acting Up” | **Due: Send draft of Paper 2 claim and argument source to Kristin on Slack by 11:59pm.** |
| **Week 8** |  |  |  |
| M 10/19 | -Sign up for Paper 2 Conferences (optional) |  |  |
| W 10/21 | Peer Review Workshop |  | Paper 2 Conferences  Wed.-Fri. (optional) |
| F 10/23 |  |  | **Due: Paper 2 Draft 1**  Paper 2 Conferences Wed.-Fri. (optional) |
| **Week 9** | Queer Life Writing |  |  |
| M 10/26 |  | -Bronski, *A Queer History* p. 176-183  -Cherríe Moraga, “La Güera” (1979) | Paper 2 Conferences (optional) Monday-Tuesday |
| W 10/28 |  | Audre Lorde, “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving” (1978) |  |
| F 10/30 |  | Peer Review Workshop: sentence-level revision |  |

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| **Unit 3: GENRE AND AUDIENCE**  In this unit, you will transition to a new genre for a new audience, highlighting how new contexts call for different kinds of argument, evidence, and/or prose style. | | | |
| **Week 10** | Graphic Memoir + *Fun Home* |  |  |
| M 11/2 |  |  | **Due: Paper 2 Final Draft** |
| W 11/4 |  |  |  |
| F 11/6 | **Last day to drop courses with a “W”** | Alison Bechdel,  *Fun Home* (2006)  Ch 1 + 2 | **Assigned: Alternative Genre Project** |
| **Week 11** |  |  |  |
| M 11/9 |  | *Fun Home* Ch. 3 |  |
| W 11/11 |  | *Fun Home* Ch. 4 |  |
| F 11/13 |  | *Fun Home* Ch. 5 |  |
| **Week 12** |  |  |  |
| M 11/16 | Sign up for Project Conferences | *Fun Home* Ch. 6 | **Due: Comic Storyboard** |
| W 11/18 |  | *Fun Home* Ch. 7 | Project Conferences Wed.-Fri. |
| F 11/20 |  | Musical songs + comic discussion | Project Conferences Wed.-Fri. |
| **Week 13** |  |  |  |
| M 11/23 |  | Peer Review + Brainstorming | **Due: Full Comic Draft** |
| **Thanksgiving Recess 11/25-11/29** | | | |
| **Week 14** |  |  |  |
| M 11/30 |  |  |  |
| W 12/2 |  |  |  |
| F 12/4 |  | Presentations | **Due: Project Final Draft** |
| **Week 15** |  |  |  |
| M 12/7 |  | Course Evaluations + Presentations | **Due: Final Reflection Essay** |
| W 12/9 |  | Course Wrap-up ☹ |  |

**Grading Contract**

Because excessive concern about grades can distract us and keep us from taking risks in our research and writing, our course will use a method of evaluation known as contract grading. This approach enables you to focus on what you really want to say and how you want to say it—on learning and improving your writing—rather than on worrying about pleasing the instructor. It also keeps students accountable for completing and handing in assignments on time, and will also provide an atmosphere conducive to growing as writers and citizens. The contract below sets clear expectations to ensure that you earn at least a B+ in this class; it also shows how not meeting these expectations can result in a grade lower than B+.

**You are guaranteed a grade of B+ for this class** if you meet all of the following conditions:

1. You comply with the attendance policy outlined in this syllabus. Much of the work that we will do in class cannot be made up.
2. You are prepared for and fully engaged in each class session. This means completing all writing and reading assignments by the due date so that you can participate in class discussions and other activities, such as peer review. Not having a draft completed will deprive you of the chance to get valuable feedback, and it will deprive your fellow student a chance to practice giving such feedback. Full engagement also requires a constructive attitude toward the class’s work and consistent respect for your peers and the instructor.
3. You submit all assignments on time. You are allowed one exception (absent-mindedness, computer broke, etc.) throughout the semester.
4. You fully complete all assignments. You are encouraged to be innovative and to experiment, but sloppy or incomplete work (including less than 80% of the target word count for drafts) constitutes a breach of contract. If you are unsure whether you are addressing the assignment fully, please ask me. We will go over each assignment sheet as a class to ensure clarity and to address any questions.
5. You demonstrate integrity in all class activities, following the principles set forth in BU’s Academic Conduct Code, which we will review in class. We will learn how to use and cite sources in academic papers and how to avoid accidentally plagiarizing, but you know how to avoid doing it intentionally: do not take someone else’s ideas or language and present them as your own. Doing so constitutes a breach of this contract.

Each assignment must meet the requirements clearly indicated on the assignment sheets. I will provide feedback in the form of comments and questions that aim to help you improve your writing. If your assignment meets all of the requirements, you will receive a ✓ (check). If your work falls short of the requirements, you will receive a ✓- (check minus). You can redo up to two assignments receiving a ✓- (check minus) during the semester in order to maintain this contract. Redos must be received within one week of receiving my feedback. I will remind you of this policy if you receive a ✓- (check minus). I will also note work that clearly demonstrates extra effort and exceptional insight (see below).

I fully believe that if you meet all of the above requirements, you will have improved significantly as a writer, and you will deserve a B+ or higher in our class.

**You will not be eligible for a grade of B+ or higher for this class** if you do not meet the conditions outlined above. The quickest way to slide to a B or B- (or even a C or D) is to miss class or fall behind on assigned reading and writing. If you find yourself in breach of contract—or better, *in danger of* breaching the contract—please be in touch with me so we can strategize about how to get you back on track.

**You may earn a grade of A- or A for this class** if you consistently produce high-quality work. Grades up to B+ reward behaviors (time and effort); grades higher than B+ depend on my judgment about the quality of your writing. We will discuss what counts as high-quality writing throughout this class, but for example, in scholarly argumentation, high-quality writing usually represents systematic, evidence-based, nuanced inquiry in response to real questions. To get an A- or an A, your writing must demonstrate a mind at work: presenting non-trivial, compelling concepts, images, and/or logic; engaging thoughtfully with the conventions of the genre in which you’re writing; deploying high-quality prose that is precise as to meaning and virtually free of mechanical errors.

**My commitment to you:** I agree to abide by the contract and enforce it fairly and equitably. I commit to treat you with respect and to do my best to support you in your learning. My goal is to create a culture of support, where we function as allies rather than adversaries, and where you cooperate with classmates rather than compete with them. I am always available to hear any concerns you have and will consistently ask the class for anonymous feedback, which I will use to shape our in-class activities.