

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE  
SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

Key Informations

**WSDB 383 - LESBIAN ISSUES AND REALITIES**

**Session:** Winter 2022

**Lecturer:** Dr. Jade Almeida (pronouns elle – she - her)

**Times:** Tuesday 5:45 PM - 8:15 PM

**Logistics (the tricky part people!):** The first week class will be held online, so on ZOOM. The rest is supposed to be in person but as we all know, Corona will decide. So for now let's check our emails and wait for additional instructions.

**Room:** MB 2.285 SGW (for when we are allowed to meet)

**Email:** [jade.almeida@ymail.com](mailto:jade.almeida@ymail.com) (Please note that my email address is Ymail and not Gmail. Many people tend to correct it. I assure you that **Ymail is the correct one.**)

**Office hours:** I don't technically have an office for the moment, but we can still meet on campus or chat via zoom. I'm available every Tuesday morning 9 AM – 12 PM. You can also email me to find a time that works best for you.

**Land acknowledgement:** The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather for this semester. Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. Addressing the issues that affect people who identify as lesbian in such a context cannot be done without addressing the impact of colonialism but also questioning the inequality and power dynamics related to gender, racialization and sexuality issues.

In this class (and beyond), It is necessary to express our solidarity with local and global indigenous communities who are struggling for their right to power, land, resources and security. We honor the 11 indigenous nations that have resisted and are still resisting locally: the Abenaki people, the Algonquin people, the Attikamek people, the Cree people, the Huron people, the Inuit people, the Malecites people, the Micmacs people, the Kanien'kehá:ka people, the Innu people, the Naskapi people.

Moreover, this course is rooted in critical feminist race studies, many of whose major figures, as we will see, identified as lesbians of colour. They helped understanding heteronormativity as a system of oppression interrelated with multiple systems of domination. This body of writing has challenged universalist and Western-centered knowledge and demonstrates that all scientific production is shaped by our social experiences. Considering this, they cannot be read as entirely neutral. From this situated and assumed point of view (which we will have the opportunity to analyze in class), it is appropriate and necessary to recall our silent complicity with the different colonial systems and to put into action a total, global and horizontal solidarity with these different indigenous populations. This solidarity will be concretely expressed in this course through a personal educational assignment (details will be outlined in the section on evaluation methods).

**Please be advised** that this teaching may involve heavy and difficult topics to navigate, especially for the gender and sexuality minority and racialized students who will be attending. As a Black, queer woman, and immigrant lecturer in Canada, I cannot tolerate bullying and verbal abuse from anyone, especially toward the most marginalized in our society. **Therefore, it is strongly advised to be careful about the words used and avoid any offensive words (such as the N-word).** Considering the power relations that are at play in the use of this type of words is an important learning step. It is entirely possible to learn about the history of discrimination and to analyze the violence of a system without voluntarily participating in the repetition of this violence.

**Course description:** This course introduces the field of lesbian studies and examines lesbian existence from a political and empirical perspective. The course engages diverse

feminist perspectives on gender, nation, race, class, culture, ability and sexual identity in the lives and political consciousness of lesbians. Attention is paid to Canadian and Quebec contexts.

**At the end of the course students should be able to:**

- recognize and critically understand how lesbian (as any other identity conceptualization) is not an unproblematic, essential or reifying category,
- understand how sexual identities intersect with race, class, gender and other social positions,
- develop a broader knowledge and understanding of the lesbian studies field, but also a critical approach of its evolution, limits and problematic in relation to queer studies, critical race theory, Black and feminist studies among other fields,
- develop an interdisciplinary approach of the subject and the abilities to engage critically with the reading material,
- critically analyse contemporary representations of sexual minorities in popular culture.

**Class format:** Our time will be divided between lectures, screenings, analysis of different media and class discussions. Time will be allotted to work on your assignment at mid-session. **As you will see, no grade is given for oral participation as we are not all equal in our ability and facility to speak publicly.** You are still encouraged to participate in class, at least so that I don't have to constantly hear myself speak. Furthermore, our learning space will only be more relevant if we all participate in building it. We are not a big group so let's take this as an opportunity to have a meaningful exchange on the subjects.

Finally: this syllabus is a compass for our semester. That means it will help guide us along the way but is not cast in concrete. In other words, as we go through the semester, our syllabus may change. To be best prepared for our sessions, please check the Moodle website, as It will be updated as needed.

## Readings

### Week 1 –January 11 - Introduction

No readings this week. Please review the syllabus closely.

### Week 2 - January 18 – What’s in a name?

Stephenson, M. (2020) Why is ‘lesbian’ still a dirty word?  
*Varsity* <https://www.varsity.co.uk/lifestyle/19492>

Farquhar, C. (2000). "Lesbian" in a Post-Lesbian World? Policing Identity, Sex and Image. *Sexualities*, 3(2), 219–236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346000003002007>

Calixte, S.(2005). "Things Which Aren't To Be Given Names: Afro-Caribbean and Diasporic Negotiations of Same Gender Desire and Sexual Relations", *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme*, Vol. 24, No 2, 3.

Bonus :

Gloria Wekker PhD (1996) Mati-ism and Black Lesbianism, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 1:1, 11-24, DOI: [10.1300/J155v01n01\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J155v01n01_03)

### Week 3 - January 25 – The Nexus of systemic oppressions

Acosta, K. L. (2008). Lesbianas in the Borderlands: Shifting Identities and Imagined Communities. *Gender & Society*, 22(5), 639–659. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208321169>

Ahmed, S. (2015). Living a lesbian life. *Feministkilljoys*  
<https://feministkilljoys.com/2015/02/26/living-a-lesbian-life/>

King S. (2009). Homonormativity and the politics of race: reading Sheryl Swoopes. *Journal of lesbian studies*, 13(3), 272–290.

Bonus :

Bowleg, L. (2008) When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research. *Sex Roles* 59, 312–325. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9400-z>

### Week 4 –February 1 – Lost in the archives

Nestle, J. (1990). The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York. *Feminist Review*, 34, 86–94. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1395308>

Linda Garber (2015) Claiming Lesbian History: The Romance Between Fact and Fiction, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 19:1, 129-149, DOI: 10.1080/10894160.2015.974381

Week 5 - February 8 – Making space, taking space, changing space.

Bell, D. and Valentine, G. (1995) 'The sexed self: strategies of performance, sites of resistance', in S. Pile and N. Thrift (eds), *Mapping the Subject*.

Chamberland, L. (1993). Remembering lesbian bars: Montreal, 1955-1975. *Journal of homosexuality*, 25 3, 231-69.

Browne, K. (2021). Geographies of sexuality I: Making room for lesbianism. *Progress in Human Geography*, 45(2), 362–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132520944494>

Week 6 - February 15 – Don't judge a book...

The history of lesbian fashion  
<https://youtu.be/zvKCMYLvtiE>

Butch Women Talk About What It Means to Be Butch  
<https://youtu.be/2Vo9C98Xt7Q>

Clarke, V., & Turner, K. (2007). V. Clothes Maketh the Queer? Dress, Appearance and the Construction of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identities. *Feminism & Psychology*, 17(2), 267–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507076561>

[The butches and studs who've defied the male gaze](#) - NyTimes

Bonus :

Moore, Mignon R., (2006). “Lipstick or Timberlands? Meanings of Gender Presentation in Black Lesbian Communities.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 32.1, 113–139.

Week 7 – 22 february - Trigger warning - violence, domestic abuse, sexual violence

Corteen, K. (2002). Lesbian Safety Talk: Problematizing Definitions and Experiences of Violence, Sexuality and Space. *Sexualities*, 5(3), 259–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460702005003001>

Doug M. (2015). Introduction, Violence Against Queer People: Race, Class, Gender, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBT Discrimination. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Shwayder, M. (2013). A Same-Sex Domestic Violence Epidemic Is Silent - *The Atlantic*  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/11/a-same-sex-domestic-violence-epidemic-is-silent/281131/>

#### Week 8 - March 8 - Families, ties, kinship, entanglement

Moore, M. R. (2008). Gendered Power Relations Among Women: A Study of Household Decision Making in Black, Lesbian Stepfamilies. *American Sociological Review*, 73(2), 335–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300208>

Preser, R. (2018). The lesbian complaint: On kinship, genre and being public. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(2), 259–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549416656857>

Foster D. (2005). The formation and continuance of lesbian families in Canada. *Canadian bulletin of medical history = Bulletin canadien d'histoire de la medecine*, 22(2), 281–297. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cbmh.22.2.281>

#### Week 9 - March 15 - Intimacy, sex and desire

Chapter 5 \_ Susan Holland-Muter: Lesbian erotic world making, sexual pleasure and practices

Vance, C. S., et Scholar and the Feminist Conference. (1984). *Pleasure and danger: Exploring female sexuality*. Boston: Routledge et K. Paul.

Bonus :

Aron, N. R. (2017). This was the first pornography magazine for lesbians by lesbians—and it was a vital feminist voice. *Timeline*. <https://timeline.com/on-our-backs-lesbian-9e1422a140b9>

#### Week 10 – March 22 – BDSM, kink, desires

Tiffany Kagure Mugo. "“Rope makes me fuzzy inside:” Exploring the Sexual Freedom of African Queer Women and Gender Non-Conforming Persons Through Bondage and Kink". *Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2017): pp. 145-151. <https://kohljournal.press/rope-makes-me-fuzzy>

Lady Gya, Rita Liavali Coquet. "Reclaiming "Crazy:" An Interview on Mental Health, Kink, and Lesbianism". *Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2017): pp. 152-162. <https://kohljournal.press/reclaiming-crazy>

Being Kinky Doesn't Make You Queer BY RYAN YATES  
<https://www.autostraddle.com/kink-is-not-queer-374216/>

Video youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYGopajxLuY>

#### Week 11 - March 29 - Making a spectacle

Erin B. Waggoner (2018) Bury Your Gays and Social Media Fan Response: Television, LGBTQ Representation, and Communitarian Ethics, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65:13, 1877-1891, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2017.1391015

Halberstam, J. (2007). Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy. *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11, 51-58. doi:10.1353/wam.2007.0028.

#### Week 12 - April 5 – Meet me online

Andrea P. Herrera (2018) Theorizing the lesbian hashtag: Identity, community, and the technological imperative to name the sexual self, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 22:3, 313-328, DOI: [10.1080/10894160.2018.1384263](https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2018.1384263)

Ferris, L., & Duguay, S. (2020). Tinder's lesbian digital imaginary: Investigating (im)permeable boundaries of sexual identity on a popular dating app. *New Media & Society*, 22(3), 489–506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819864903>

#### Bonus :

[For Lesbians, TikTok Is 'the Next Tinder'](#)

#### Week 13 - April 12 - Come as you are ... or not?

The latest form of transphobia: Saying lesbians are going extinct

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-latest-form-of-transphobia-saying-lesbians-are-going-extinct/2021/03/18/072a95fc-8786-11eb-82bc-e58213caa38e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-latest-form-of-transphobia-saying-lesbians-are-going-extinct/2021/03/18/072a95fc-8786-11eb-82bc-e58213caa38e_story.html)

Welzer-Lang, D (2008) Speaking out loud about bisexuality: Biphobia in the gay and lesbian community. *Journal of Bisexuality* 8(1): 81–95.

Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Halliwell, E. (2014). Bisexual women's understandings of social marginalisation: 'The heterosexuals don't understand us but nor do the lesbians.' *Feminism & Psychology*, 24(3), 352–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353514539651>

## Evaluation

1. Intellectual Journal: 30% (each part 15%)
  2. Media analysis 40%
  3. Texts discussions: 30%
- Total: 100%

## General grading criteria:

1. Comprehension, coherence and clarity of statements
2. Ability to synthesize
3. Critical and intellectual rigor of personal reflection
4. Integration of theoretical content: ability to make connections with course concepts (course notes, texts from the syllabus or other relevant writings)

**Intellectual Journal:** in two parts (15%+15%). The first part will be due mid-term. The second part on the last day. This exercise aims to assess your introspection and reflection skills by producing throughout the seminar an intellectual journal that will take the form of an autoethnography, based on the student's own experiences. This journal should highlight the personal-intellectual way in which each student appropriates the notions studied during the course and should make connections with current events, course readings, discussions, films, or documentaries viewed, podcasts listened to, or artistic practices, etc. In addition to this material, the student is also required to conduct a research paper (200 words) on the resistance practices of non-indigenous women and people from the population listed in the course outline.

**Media analysis:** Each student will be asked to write an analytical critique of a media outlet, either a film or a television series, in which one or more lesbian characters appear. Students are free to choose the media they wish to work with, however, to have



something to analyze, it is preferable to choose a series or a movie where the lesbian character(s) is (are) at the center of the story. It's strongly advised to watch again or listen another time to the media you chose, even if you have already seen it in the past. This is important because you will have to take notes on how lesbianism is represented, especially as it intersects with race, class or other facets of identity. You should also take notes on how your movie or tv-show deals (or not) with contemporary issues that will be covered in class. You will have to use dialogue excerpts or describe scenes to support your argument, and use the readings provided in class. This assignment is not about simply telling or describing the chosen media. The first paragraph should summarize the story and the rest of the essay should offer an informed analysis. Your paper should be between 6-8 pages long (10 pages is THE maximum allowed) and it's due any time before the end of the semester.

**Texts analysis and discussion:** Readings are scheduled for each week. Students will be required to choose one text from the list of required or bonus readings and offer a critical analysis of the text that will then be discussed in class. This assignment is due before the session in which the text will be discussed. For example, if a student wishes to work on a text scheduled for March 15, they should send me their analysis any time before midnight on the 14th for it to count. The student should be able to highlight the problematic, summarize the author's arguments, offer a discussion of these arguments, and make a link with other readings from the course or personal readings on the subject (a bibliography is expected). The paper should be 2-4 pages long maximum. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate that the student is able to read, understand, synthesize and offer an informed opinion on the readings. The student has complete control over the texts they wishes to work on.

**Assignment Submission Guidelines:** Please submit all assignments in WORD format (.doc or .docx). Remember to put your name and student's information on the first page. Choose a citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago...) for your paper and stick to it until the end. All in-text citations must include author name and page numbers. Please understand that you'll be graded on your ability to argue, to use what you've learned, to

engage with the readings and to convince. You'll have to articulate your thoughts and positions and show that you can explain them clearly to an audience.

If you encounter any difficulties during the semester, please let me know so that I can help you. If for personal reasons you are unable to turn in the assignment on time, please also let me know so that we can work something out.

**Plagiarism:** The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement”. This includes material copied word for word from books, journals, Internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It refers to material that is paraphrased and closely resembles the original source. It also includes for example the work of a fellow student, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased from any source. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone – it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into any other language and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism.

**In Simple Words: do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it.**

(Source: The Academic Integrity website:

<https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity/plagiarism.html>)

## LIST OF STUDENT SERVICES AND RESSOURCES

1. [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#)
2. [Student Success Centre](#)
3. [Counselling and Psychological Services](#)
4. [Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides](#)
5. [Health Services](#)

6. [Financial Aid and Awards](#)
7. [Academic Integrity](#)
8. [Dean of Students Ofce](#)
9. [International Students Ofce](#)
10. [Student Hub](#)
11. [Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#)
12. As a Concordia student, you are a member of the Concordia Student Union and have many resources available to you including:
  - a. [HOJO \(Of Campus Housing and Job Bank\)](#)
  - b. [CSU Advocacy Centre](#)
13. [Otsenhákta Student Centre](#)
14. [Birks Student Service Centre](#)

Additional resources:

Student Transition Centre <http://stc.concordia.ca/>

The Center for Gender Advocacy <https://genderadvocacy.org/resources/>

Resources for Trans people: <https://genderadvocacy.org/trans-health-advocacy/>

Head and Hands <http://headandhands.ca/>

Project 10 <http://www.algi.qc.ca/asso/p10/>

Quebec Native Women <https://www.faq-qnw.org/>