

HIST5193/4: Approaches to Queer and Trans Histories

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Course description

How have historians sought to understand sexual and gender diversity in the past? What methods might we use to interpret sources that contain evidence of gender and sexual diversity? What can the study of minority or non-normative genders and sexualities tell us about how gender and sexuality structure politics, society and culture across time and place? This course introduces PGT students to key questions in queer history and trans history, situates historical scholarship in relation to the distinct but related theoretical and methodological traditions of queer studies and trans studies, and prepares students to do their own research in these and related fields.

In the first half of the course, we will learn how the fields of queer history and trans history have taken shape over the last fifty years: reading key theoretical and methodological texts in lesbian and gay social history, sexuality studies, queer theory, and trans studies. In the second half, we will explore some of the different themes, methodologies and primary source bases used by queer and trans historians working today.

Course schedule

Part 1: Field Foundations

Week 1: Lesbian and Gay Social History

Scholars and activists have studied the queer past in many times and places, including times and places very different from our own. But in the 1970s, the politics of gay liberation and the movement for 'history from below' impelled a new generation of historians to focus on the coalescence of recognisably 'modern' lesbian and gay identities, communities, and social movements. Some of these scholars were able for the first time to integrate lesbian and gay history into the history that was being taught and researched in universities. We will begin this course here: considering lesbian and gay historians' approaches to recovering a 'hidden' past, key methodological debates, and how these intersected with the politics of the 1970s–90s, especially in the United States, Britain and France.

- Why did scholars use the language 'lesbian and gay' to characterise their academic field in the 1970s and 1980s?
- What questions were lesbian and gay historians seeking to answer? What methods did they use?
- How did historians grapple with how categories for sexual behaviour and identity have changed over time?

- Was lesbian and gay history new in the 1970s and 1980s? How did scholars in this period build on and/or depart from earlier approaches?

Core reading

- Gayle Rubin, 'Geologies of Queer Studies: It's Déjà Vu All Over Again', in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 347–356
- Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1981), Introduction (pp. 15–20)
 - Optional: Lillian Faderman, 'Surpassing the Love of Men Revisited', *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1999)
- John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 467–476

Selected further reading

- Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977)
- John Boswell, 'Revolutions, Universals and Sexual Categories', *Salmagundi* 58/59 (Fall 1982–Winter 1983): 89–113
- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- David Halperin, 'One Hundred Years of Homosexuality', in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 15–40
- Michel Foucault (trans. Robert Hurley), *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1979)
- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America', *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1–29.
- Martha Vicinus, 'The History of Lesbian History', *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 566–96
- Jeffrey Weeks, 'Queer(y)ing the "Modern Homosexual"', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 523–39
- George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1994)
- Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)

Week 2: The Challenge of Queer Theory

From the late 1980s—amid the historical context of the HIV/AIDS crisis—scholars in philosophy and literary studies, based primarily in the US, developed new methodologies for examining questions of power, sexuality, and identity that sought to challenge earlier scholars' more materialist approaches and to destabilise traditional paradigms for thinking

about categories such as 'identity' and 'experience'. Focused largely on examining *language* and *discourse*, queer theory generated new ways of thinking about the queer past that sometimes departed from more strictly historicist methodologies. It also generated important critiques, especially from scholars critical of its Eurocentrism and its lack of attention to questions of race and empire.

- In what ways did queer theory depart from lesbian and gay history?
- What challenges did queer of colour critique offer to queer theory?
- Do 'queer temporalities' offer ways of thinking about the queer past that historians might want to adopt?
- Is there a 'discipline problem' dividing theory from history?

Core reading

- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Queer and Now', in *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 1–20
- Lisa Duggan, 'The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Lesbian and Gay History', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 3 (June 1995): 179–91
- José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 1–34

Recommended:

- Kadji Amin, 'Genealogies of Queer Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, ed. Siobhan B. Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 17–29

Selected further reading

- Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993)
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)
- Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- Samuel Delaney, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999)
- José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009)
- Leo Bersani, 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', *October* 43 (1987): 197–222
- Martin F. Manalansan, 'In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 4 (October 1995): 425–438
- Cathy J. Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (May 1997): 437–65

- Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)
- Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)
- Jasbir K. Puar, 'Mapping US Homonormativities', *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, no. 1 (2006): 67–88
- Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)
- Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Robyn Weigman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, 'Antinormativity's Queer Conventions', *differences* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1–25
- Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999)
- Carolyn Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2 (May 2007): 177–95
- Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004)
- Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007)
- Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017)

Week 3: Queer Critical Histories

From the turn of the twenty-first century, some historians began to draw on the methodological innovations of queer theory to take 'queer' approaches to the past. These historians often focused on *subjectivity* and *discourse*, and on how ways of making sense of non-normative sexualities might be shifting, unstable, and historically contingent. While many early interventions in queer history—like those in queer theory—had a Eurocentric focus, historians also increasingly used queer approaches to highlight how non-western histories of gender and sexuality could not be assimilated to western paradigms of normative and non-normative sexuality, and how European colonisation shaped the global history of gender and sexuality. Like queer theory, queer history sometimes widened its remit to consider anything non-normative, regardless of whether it was directly related to same-sex sexuality or to sexuality at all. Queer approaches to the past sometimes found their way unevenly into museums, public history, community history, and LGBTQ+ activism and politics, as they entwined and sometimes conflicted with the enduring popularity of lesbian and gay history approaches.

- What does it mean to take a 'queer' approach to the past?
- Is queer history the history of queer people?
- How have global history and the history of race and empire challenged and reshaped the paradigms of queer history?

- How did queer approaches to the past shape both public history and contemporary LGBTQ+ politics?
- What possibilities has queer history opened up? Are there possibilities that it has foreclosed?

Core reading

- Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Ch. 2 (pp. 58–93)
- James Vernon, "'For Some Queer Reason': The Trials and Tribulations of Colonel Barker's Masquerade in Interwar Britain', *Signs* 26, no. 1 (2000): 37–62
- Regina Kunzel, 'The Power of Queer History', *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018): 1560–82

Selected further reading

- Anna Clark, 'Twilight Moments', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1 (2005): 139–60
- Judith M. Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms", *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1–2 (Jan–Apr 2000): 1–24
- Anjali Arondekar, 'Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1–2 (Jan–Apr 2005): 10–27
- Chris Waters, 'Distance and Desire in the New British Queer History', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 1 (December 2007): 139–55
- Rachel Corbman, 'Does Queer Studies Have an Anti-Empiricism Problem?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2019): 57–62
- Matt Cook, 'Squatting in History: Queer Pasts and the Cultural Turn', in Sasha Rosener and Stephen Frosh, eds., *Social Research after the Cultural Turn* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 93–109
- Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)
- Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)
- Jonathan Ned Katz, 'The Invention of Heterosexuality', *Socialist Review*, no. 20 (1990): 6–30
- Nadia Ellis, 'Black Migrants, White Queers and the Archive of Inclusion in Postwar London', *Interventions* 17, no. 6 (November 2015): 893–915
- Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017)
- Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895–1957* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)
- Jennifer V. Evans, 'Seeing Subjectivity: Erotic Photography and the Optics of Desire', *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (2013): 430–62

- Matt Cook, 'Domestic Passions: Unpacking the Homes of Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012): 618–40
- George Chauncey, '"What Gay Studies Taught the Court": The Historians' Amicus Brief in *Lawrence v. Texas*', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 3 (June 2004): 509–38
- Alison Oram, 'Going on an outing: the historic house and queer public history', *Rethinking History* 15, no. 2 (2011): 189–207
- Laura Doan, 'Queer History/Queer Memory: The Case of Alan Turing', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2017): 113–36
- Laura Gowing, 'LGBT Histories and the Politics of Identity', in *History, Memory and Public Life* (Routledge, 2018)

Week 4: Trans Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin?

In the early 2000s, as trans communities were becoming more visible in the United States and in other national contexts, some scholars began to observe that queer studies did little to incorporate both trans people themselves as members of the academic community; and approaches that assumed gender, and experiences of gendered embodiment, to be as important as same-sex or non-normative sexuality. Trans studies scholars not only argued for placing gender at the top of the scholarly agenda. They criticised what they saw as queer studies' excessive abstraction. They argued for a return to *materiality* and the *body* as objects of analysis, drawing on insights from fields such as science and technology studies and medical humanities alongside queer studies' traditional intersections with literature, media, and philosophy. Trans studies is currently a lively and fast-moving field, with practitioners continuing to debate its future direction: both in traditional academic spaces such as journals, and in community spaces and social media.

- What criticisms of queer studies did early trans studies scholars offer? How did they see their work as responding to queer studies' problems or limitations?
- Do you think it makes sense now to think of queer studies and trans studies as two distinct fields? What are their similarities and differences?
- Are we now 'after trans studies'? If so, what comes next?
- Who is practicing trans studies outside the academy? Do their approaches differ from academic approaches?

Core reading

- Susan Stryker, '(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 1–17
- Sandy Stone, 'The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 375–401
- Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Dreger, 'After Trans Studies', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (Feb 2019): 103–116

- Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke, eds., *Transgender Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), 1–32

Selected further reading

- Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York: World View Forum, 1992)
- Susan Stryker, 'Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 212–15
- Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006)
 - See especially chapters by Haraway, Feinberg, Stryker, Prosser, Devor and Matte, G. Rubin
- Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (London: Routledge, 2013)
- Susan Stryker and Dylan McCarthy Blackston, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader Remix* (London: Routledge, 2022)
- Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993)
- Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998)
- Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (London: Seal Press, 2007)
- Emma Heaney, *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017)
- C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017)
- Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortorici, 'Trans, Time, and History', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (November 2018): 518–39
 - See also other contributions to this special issue, esp. the roundtable by Bychowski et al.
- Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (London: Verso, 2019)
- Susan Stryker, ed., 'Trans* Studies Now', special issue, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (August 2020)
 - See all contributions to this special issue, esp. Stryker's introduction and article by Keegan
- Eric Ramsay, 'From "Born in the Wrong Body" to "A Kaleidoscope That I Spin and Spin and Spin": Reflections on Historical Differences in Trans Autobiography Informed by American Discourses', *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 41, no. 1 (July 2022): 3–26
- Hil Malatino, *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022)
- Eric A. Stanley, *Atmospheres of Violence: Structuring Antagonism and the Trans/Queer Ungovernable* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022)
- Jo Aurelio Giardini, 'Trans Life and the Critique of Political Economy', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (February 2023): 48–53
- Nat Raha and Mijke van der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures: Abolitionist Ethics for Transfeminist Worlds* (London: Pluto Press, 2024)

Week 5: Trans History Now

As in the case of lesbian and gay history, foundational work in trans history in the 1990s and early 2000s often emphasised the life stories of famous individuals, activist histories from the late-twentieth-century West, and (distinctively for trans history) biomedical narratives. Today, the field is a lively and diverse one, spanning the history of all times and places, with premodern and non-western trans histories especially active sites of research. Like 'queer', 'trans' has become a more flexible analytic that can allow historians to consider gender diversity and gender crossing in contexts when individuals would not have identified themselves as transgender, and that recognises that ideas about gender are historically specific and change over time. Trans approaches have led to the reevaluation of many case studies that historians had previously considered only narrowly within a lesbian and gay or queer lens. Yet trans history has also maintained trans studies' distinctive focus on materiality and embodiment, and its links to present-day trans communities and trans politics outside the academy. 'Mainstream' gender history is slowly beginning to integrate trans perspectives, pointing to a more expansive and flexible future for how historians might treat gender as 'a useful category of historical analysis'.

- How has the field of trans history developed over the last thirty years?
- What are some of the key themes, questions, and debates in trans history today?
- How have commitments to *materiality* and *embodiment* shaped the field of trans history?
- How might a trans perspective contribute to the wider field of gender history?
- What is the relationship between more academic and more activist or community forms of trans history?

Core reading

- Jules Gill-Peterson, *A Short History of Trans Misogyny* (London: Verso, 2024)
 - read as much as you can, but esp. pp. 1–27
- Howard Chiang, 'Trans Without Borders: Resisting the Telos of Transgender Knowledge', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 32, no. 1 (January 2023): 56–65
- Mo Moulton, "'Both Your Sexes': A Non-Binary Approach to Gender History, Trans Studies and the Making of the Self in Modern Britain", *History Workshop Journal* 95 (Spring 2023): 75–100

Further reading

- Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (New York: Beacon Press, 1997)
- Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd edition (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008)
- Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)

- Chris Mowat, Joanna de Groot, and Maroula Perisanidi, 'Historicising Trans Pasts: An Introduction', *Gender & History* 36, no. 1 (2024): 3–13
- Kathryn Wichelns, 'From "The Scarlet Letter" to Stonewall: Reading the 1629 Thomas(ine) Hall Case, 1978–2009', *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 500–523
- Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2017)
- Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018)
- Kadji Amin, 'Glands, Eugenics, and Rejuvenation in *Man into Woman*: A Biopolitical Genealogy of Transsexuality', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (November 2018): 589–605
- Howard Chiang, *After Eunuchs: Science, Medicine, and the Transformation of Sex in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)
- Simon Joyce, 'Two Women Walk into a Theatre Bathroom: The Fanny and Stella Trial as Trans Narrative', *Victorian Review*, 44:1 (Spring 2018), pp. 83–98
- Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020)
- Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021)
- Kit Heyam, *Before We Were Trans: A New History of Gender* (London: Basic Books, 2022)
- Emily Cousens, 'Virginia Prince, Robert Stoller and the Trans Feminist Intellectual History of the Sex/Gender Distinction', *History Workshop Journal* 99 (2025): 73–97
- Morgan M. Page, *One From the Vaults* (2015–2022), trans history podcast
- Chase Joynt (dir.), *Framing Agnes* (2022), trans history documentary <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/framingagnesfilm>
- The Museum of Transology, <https://www.museumoftransology.com/>
- Digital Transgender Archive, <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>

Week 6: Reading Week

Part 2: New Directions

Week 7: Premodern Trans Histories

As trans history has flourished in recent years, premodern trans history has emerged as an especially active site of new research. Premodern trans historians have challenged the idea that it is only possible to write trans histories of the period after the advent of technologies of medical transition, instead thinking more expansively about what it meant for people to live lives in genders different to those they were assigned at birth in very distant times and places. Often, this work has involved revisiting and reinterpreting canonical case studies, speculating

sensitively about how these cases might resonate within a trans framework and for trans audiences today.

- How might trans approaches to the premodern past differ conceptually or methodologically from modern trans histories?
- How do premodern trans historians grapple with the challenges of limited or incomplete evidence bases?
- Have previous approaches to premodern gender and sexuality denied or obscured trans histories?
- Do historical actors need to have understood themselves as trans for historians to analyse them within a trans framework?

Core reading

- Tess Wingard, 'The Trans Middle Ages: Incorporating Transgender and Intersex Studies into the History of Medieval Sexuality', *English Historical Review* 138, no. 593 (2023): 933–951
- Gabrielle M.W. Bychowski, 'The Transgender Turn: Eleanor Rykener Speaks Back', in Greta LaFleur, Masha Raskolnikov, and Anna Klosowska, eds., *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality before the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 95–113
- Abdulhamit Arvas, 'Early Modern Eunuchs and the Transing of Gender and Race', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, no. 4 (2019): 116–136

Selected further reading

- 'Beyond the Binaries: Critical Approaches to Sex and Gender in Early America', special issue, *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2014), see esp. articles by Wichelns and Smithers
- Todd W. Reeser, 'How to Do Early Modern Queer History', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 26, no. 1 (January 2020): 183–96
- Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021)
- Greta LaFleur, Masha Raskolnikov, and Anna Klosowska, eds., *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality before the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021)
- Avery Rose Everhart, 'Bones without Flesh and (Trans)Gender without Bodies: Querying Desires for Trans Historicity', *Hypatia* 37, no. 4 (November 2022): 601–18
- Hannah Skoda, 'St Wilgefortis and Her/Their Beard: The Devotions of Unhappy Wives and Non-Binary People', *History Workshop Journal* 95 (April 2023): 51–74
- Onni Gust, 'Of Mermaids and Monsters: Transgender History and the Boundaries of the Human in Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender & History* 36, no. 1 (2024): 112–29
- Jamey Jespersen, 'Trans Misogyny in the Colonial Archive: Re-Membering Trans Feminine Life and Death in New Spain, 1604–1821', *Gender & History* 36, no. 1 (March 2024): 91–111
- Ilya Maude and Maroula Perisanidi, 'Transmisogyny, Ableism and Compulsory Cisness: Case Studies from Byzantium', *Past & Present*, 20 September 2024

Week 8: Queer and Trans Histories of State and Empire

While an earlier wave of queer and trans history examined questions of interiority, identity, and subjectivity, current scholarship is increasingly putting individuals' intimate lives and relationships into conversation with political systems and structures of power, in both national and transnational contexts. Historians are currently asking what the state tells us about gender and sexuality, but also what gender and sexuality tell us about the state. Key sites of inquiry include European settler colonialism and the violence that it wrought upon Indigenous cultures of gender and sexuality; the Nazi regime's 'heterogeneous persecution' of gender and sexuality diversity and its legacies; and the messy relationship between federal, state, and local government structures in the context of United States political and legal history.

- What kinds of institutions and structures make up 'the state'? How do they (and do they not) shape the conditions of queer and trans life?
- How have (and have not) historical actors resisted state regulation of gender and sexuality?
- What research strategies do historians use to examine the relationship between state structures and intimate life?
- What does a focus on colonialism add to our understanding of queer and trans histories of the state?

Core reading

- Jamey Jespersen, 'Trans Misogyny in the Colonial Archive: Re-Membering Trans Feminine Life and Death in New Spain, 1604–1821', *Gender & History* 36, no. 1 (March 2024): 91–111
- Xavier Nunn, 'Trans Liminality and the Nazi State', *Past & Present* 260, no. 1 (August 2023): 123–57

Selected further reading

- Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015)
- Laurie Marhoefer, 'Lesbianism, Transvestitism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939–1943', *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (October 2016): 1167–95
- Orna Alyagon Darr, 'Narratives of "Sodomy" and "Unnatural Offenses" in the Courts of Mandate Palestine (1918–48)', *Law and History Review* 35, no. 1 (February 2017): 235–60
- Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017)
- Jessica Hinchy, *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c. 1850–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

- Christopher Chitty, *Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020)
- Margot Canaday, Nancy F. Cott, and Robert O. Self, eds., *Intimate States: Gender, Sexuality, and Governance in Modern US History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021)
- Anna Lvovsky, *Vice Patrol: Cops, Courts, and the Struggle over Urban Gay Life before Stonewall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021)
- Samuel Clowes Huneke, 'Heterogeneous Persecution: Lesbianism and the Nazi State', *Central European History* 54, no. 2 (June 2021): 297–325
- Paisley Currah, *Sex Is As Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2022)
- Samuel Clowes Huneke, *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022)
- Hugh Ryan, *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2022)
- Gregory Smithers, *Reclaiming Two-Spirits: Sexuality, Spiritual Renewal and Sovereignty in Native America* (New York: Beacon Books, 2023)
- Samuel Clowes Huneke, *A Queer Theory of the State* (New York: Floating Opera Press, 2023)
- Jules Gill-Peterson, 'The Trans Woman of Color's History of Sexuality', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 32, no. 1 (2023): 93–98
- Adrian Kane-Galbraith, 'Male Breadwinners of "Doubtful Sex": Trans Men and the Welfare State, 1954-1970', in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Britain: A History for the Present*, ed. Matt Houlbrook, Katie Jones, and Ben Mechen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), 49–66

Week 9: Bad Gays? Critical Histories of White Male Homosexuality

For early academic gay historians such as John d'Emilio and early queer theorists such as Michel Foucault and Eve Sedgwick, the emergence of the category of male homosexuality in the late-nineteenth-century West was the key topic that scholars of sexuality should seek to understand. Though queer history and the history of sexuality quickly diversified substantially, historians have recently brought renewed critical attention to the category of middle-class, white, male homosexuality, showing that male homosexuality could collaborate with norms and structures of power as much as challenge them. Recent scholarship has examined how the construction of middle-class white gay masculinity has been entangled with racism, imperialism, and capitalism; age difference and 'pederasty'; and transmisogyny. At the same time, another emerging strand of research is beginning to consider gay trans men, identifying modern western gay male culture as a site of trans possibility. These histories have circulated widely beyond the academy, becoming popular sites of discussion and debate.

- How was the category of 'male homosexuality' that emerged in the late-nineteenth-century West racialised?

- What do trans perspectives add to our understanding of male homosexuality as a category of historical analysis?
- How have public queer and trans histories tried (or not tried) to grapple with more critical approaches to male homosexuality?
- What should historians do with 'bad gays'?

Core reading

- Laurie Marhoefer, 'Was the Homosexual Made White? Race, Empire, and Analogy in Gay and Trans Thought in Twentieth-Century Germany', *Gender & History* 31, no. 1 (2019): 91–114
- Kate Fisher and Jana Funke, 'The Age of Attraction: Age, Gender and the History of Modern Male Homosexuality', *Gender & History* 31, no. 2 (2019): 266–83
- Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller, *Bad Gays: A Homosexual History* (London: Verso, 2022), 1–18

Selected further reading

- Samuel Rutherford, 'Impossible Love and Victorian Values: J. A. Symonds and the Intellectual History of Homosexuality', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 4 (2014): 605–27
- Nadia Ellis, 'Black Migrants, White Queers and the Archive of Inclusion in Postwar London', *Interventions* 17, no. 6 (November 2015): 893–915
- Todd Shepard, *Sex, France, and Arab Men, 1962–1979* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017)
- Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Emma Heaney, *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), esp. Ch. 1.
- Christopher Chitty, *Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020)
- Rachel Hope Cleves, 'The Problem of Modern Pederasty in Queer History: A Case Study of Norman Douglas', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 46, no. 1 (March 2020): 47–61
- Rachel Hope Cleves, *Unspeakable: A Life Beyond Sexual Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020)
- Lou Sullivan, *Youngman: Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan* (London: Vintage, 2021)
- Laurie Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of Gay Rights: A Sexologist, His Student, and the Empire of Queer Love* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022)
- Simon Joyce, *LGBT Victorians: Sexuality and Gender in the Nineteenth-Century Archives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Introduction and Ch. 3.
- Samuel Rutherford, 'Symonds's Facts, Our Future', *Public Books*, 5 July 2023, <https://www.publicbooks.org/symondss-facts-our-future/>
- Christopher Ewing, *The Color of Desire: The Queer Politics of Race in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2024)

- Javier Semper Vendrell et al., 'After Weimar; Beyond Hirschfeld? Nostalgia, Hagiography and What Comes Next', *German History*, July 2025

Week 10: Community and/against Identity

While popular narratives about queer and trans life often treat gender and sexual identity as an innate truth about oneself that the individual must discover, an important strand of recent historical and theoretical work has examined how modes of understanding gender and sexuality are made in *community*. This has allowed historians to consider how gender and sexuality paradigms change over time, but also vary across lines such as class, race, and region. Recent scholarship has examined themes such as queer intimacies, chosen family, and the role of communication technologies such as magazines and the Internet in creating the conditions for queer and trans community life. Present-day concerns about coalition-building, the utility of the 'LGBT' acronym, and 'TERF wars' have informed research on topics such as bisexuality in the gay liberation movement and trans women in the women's liberation movement. Some historians and theorists have explicitly rejected 'identity' as a useful category of analysis for doing queer and trans history.

- What role do community and relationality play in shaping the ways people in the past have thought about gender and sexuality?
- Is there such a thing as a transhistorical queer and/or trans community?
- Ought queer and trans history to offer a useful basis for queer and trans politics in the present? What do we do with histories that disappoint on this front?
- Are individualist models of 'identity' useful for doing queer and trans history?

Core reading

- Jennifer Evans, *The Queer Art of History: Queer Kinship After Fascism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), Introduction & Ch. 4
- Martha Robinson Rhodes, 'Bisexuality, Multiple-Gender-Attraction, and Gay Liberation Politics in the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 32, no. 1 (March 2021): 119–42

Selected further reading

- Stephen Vider, *The Queerness of Home: Gender, Sexuality and the Politics of Domesticity after World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021)
- Simon Joyce, *LGBT Victorians: Sexuality and Gender in the Nineteenth-Century Archives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Introduction & Ch. 6
- Dan Royles, "'Fuck the Gay Movement": Dissemblance and desire in a Black AIDS activist oral history', in Clare Summerskill, Amy Tooth Murphy, and Emma Vickers, eds., *New Directions in Queer Oral History: Archives of Disruption* (London: Routledge, 2022), 99–100
- Avery Dame-Griff, *The Two Revolutions: A History of the Transgender Internet* (New York: NYU Press, 2023)

- Emily Cousens, *Trans Feminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023)
- Jesse Bayker, “‘Some Very Queer Couples’: Gender Migrants and Intimacy in Nineteenth-Century America”, *Gender & History* 35, no. 1 (2023): 103–23
- Rebecca Jennings, *Lesbian Intimacies and Family Life: Desire, Domesticity and Kinship in Britain and Australia, 1945–2000* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023)
- Joanna Wuest, *Born This Way: Science, Citizenship, and Inequality in the American LGBTQ+ Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023)
- Kadji Amin, ‘Taxonomically Queer?: Sexology and New Queer, Trans, and Asexual Identities’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 2023): 91–107
- Jason Okundaye, *Revolutionary Acts: Love and Brotherhood in Black Gay Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 2024)
- Sam Caslin, ‘Trans Feminism and the Women’s Liberation Movement in Britain, c. 1970–1980’, *Gender & History*, 15 January 2024
- Mori Reithmayr, ‘The Invention of Gay Community in San Francisco, 1960–1970’, *Historical Journal*, August 2025

Week 11: Doing Queer and Trans Histories in a Time of Culture War

We live in a time when, in many different national contexts, queer and trans histories have become a political football. Transphobic commentators in particular insistently represent trans life as ‘new’, while efforts to assert in response that ‘we have always been here’ can flatten the rich variety of the gender-diverse past. In an environment in which queer and trans people’s lives are at stake, tensions and conflicts can easily flare up: between activists of different generations, between historians and heritage practitioners working within and outside the academy, between scholars who are queer- and trans-identified and those who are not. Historians and queer and trans studies scholars have sought, from a variety of positionalities, to explore what it means to respond to this state of emergency: whether to use academic expertise to intervene in political debates, or to practice care for oneself and one’s community at a time of existential threat.

- What strategies have historians adopted for making expert interventions into public discussions about queer history and heritage?
- What role, if any, can or should queer and trans history play in contemporary political debates?
- What practical professional challenges do students and scholars who are themselves queer and/or trans face?
- What practices of care and survival might queer and trans scholars owe to themselves and their communities?

Core reading

- Ruth Pearce, ‘A Methodology for the Marginalised: Surviving Oppression and Traumatic Fieldwork in the Neoliberal Academy’, *Sociology* 54, no. 4 (August 2020): 806–24
- **Content warning:** discussion of suicide

- Nic Aaron and Jeanie Sinclair, 'Remembering Jennie Moore', in *New and Decolonial Approaches to Gender Nonconformity: Forging a Home for Ourselves* (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 87–115
 - **Content warning:** discussion of suicide, transphobia, and state violence
- Historians' amicus brief, *US v. Skrmetti* (2024), https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/23/23-477/323955/20240903153746246_23-477tsacAmericanHistoricalAssociation.pdf

Selected further reading

- Nicholas L. Clarkson, 'Teaching Trans Students, Teaching Trans Studies', *Feminist Teacher* 27, no. 2–3 (2017): 233–52
- Hil Malatino, *Trans Care* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019)
- Ruth Pearce, Sonja Erikainen, and Ben Vincent, 'TERF Wars: An Introduction', *The Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (July 2020): 677–98, and other contributions to this special issue
- G. Samantha Rosenthal, *Living Queer History: Remembrance and Belonging in a Southern City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021)
- Serena Bassi and Greta LaFleur, 'Introduction: TERFs, Gender-Critical Movements, and Postfascist Feminisms', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (August 2022): 311–33, and other contributions to this special issue
- Clare Summerskill, Amy Tooth Murphy, and Emma Vickers, eds., *New Directions in Queer Oral History: Archives of Disruption* (London: Routledge, 2022)
- Jules Gill-Peterson, 'The Graduate School of Trans Studies', *TSQ* 10, no. 1 (2023): 1–9
- Laurie Marhoefer, 'Transgender Life and Persecution under the Nazi State: Gutachten on the Vollbrecht Case', *Central European History* 56, no. 4 (December 2023): 595–601
- Judith Butler, *Who's Afraid of Gender?* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2024)
- Kit Heyam and Jonathan Ward, eds., *New and Decolonial Approaches to Gender Nonconformity: Forging a Home for Ourselves* (London: Bloomsbury, 2025)