(If there are no academic Departments of Heterosexual Studies, even in more liberal universities, that is not only because all branches of the human sciences are already, to a greater or lesser degree, departments of heterosexual studies but also because heterosexuality has thus far largely escaped becoming a problem that needs to be studied and understood.) By constituting homosexuality as an object of knowledge, heterosexuality also constitutes itself as a privileged stance of subjectivity—as the very condition of knowing—and thereby avoids becoming an object of knowledge itself, the target of a possible critique.

David Halperin in Saint Foucault, 47.

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Vol. 1
COURSE DESCRIPTION

That the key terms of this course title, “Queerness” and “American,” are in and of themselves—and even more so in conjunction—so fraught is evidence of the newness of this scholarship and the heat it still generates. This course historicizes that mode of difference which today is commonly called lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered and/or queer, but which in other historical periods could have been called Uranian, inverted, sodomitical, Sapphic, Wildean, homosexual, homophile and a host of other terms. More often than not, as Foucault suggests above, it was simply not called anything at all. Given the peculiar and particular array of pressures—political, religious, juridical among others—governing the social manifestation of queerness, its visualization in works of art might seem a rare survival. On the contrary, we’ll discover that same sex sexuality is everywhere present in American art and the lists of artists covered in this course is more or less the same as would be covered in any course on American art of this period, from Winslow Homer through to the modern period.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

The organization is largely chronological and interdisciplinary. We will shift our attention fluidly between paintings, poems, literature, film and video, and music towards an art historical consideration of queer representations and their significance. Throughout the course, in every respect, we will be attentive to the ways race, gender and social class crosscut the story of sexuality and its representations.

REQUIREMENTS

You are required to write a short (3-4 page) paper describing and analyzing a single work of art. You will also write a long research paper of about 12 pages addressing the career of an artist as a whole. Note that you will be asked to submit an initial topic proposal and bibliography well in advance of the due date.

READINGS AND IMAGES

All required readings for each lecture are listed below. I have added a few optional pieces—if you feel so inclined—which are by no means mandatory to read. In addition, for books on related topics see the attached bibliography.
WEEK 1 | INTRODUCTION—GRADING AND THEORETICAL PRINCIPLE

“Adhesiveness,” Whitman, Homer and the Problem of Naming
Handouts: Tobias Smollett, Roderick Random (1763)
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (1855)

WEEK 2 | MASCULINITY: EAKINS, SARGENT, BELLOWS, LEYENDECKER

READING

OPTIONAL
Doyle, Jennifer, “Sex, Scandal, and Thomas Eakins’s The Gross Clinic,”

WEEK 3 | EXPATRIATE PARIS: STEIN, BROOKS, BEATON, ABBOTT

SHORT PAPER AND ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT

READING
Stein, Gertrude. “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” in Geography and Play (1922), 17-23.

OPTIONAL
Lubar, Robert, “Unmasking Pablo’s Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture”

WEEK 4 | THE NEW YORK SCENE/HARLEM RENAISSANCE: BLUES, HARTLEY, DEMUTH, STETTHEIMER, VAN VECHTEN

READING
WEEK 5

BETWEEN THE WARS: O’KEEFFE, CADMUS, WOODS, TCHELTEW, AND LYNES

READING

WEEK 6

ANTI-ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM: WHITE, TOBAY, GRAVES, PARK, JESS, RIVERS

READING
O’Hara, Frank, Art Chronicles, 1954-64.

WEEK 7

PROTOPOSTMODERNISM: CAGE, CUNNINGHAM, RAUSCHENBERG, TWOMBLY, JOHNS

READING

OPTIONAL

WEEK 8

GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION: MARTIN, KELLY, INDIANA, NEVELSON

READING
Chave, Anna, “Agnes Martin: Humility, the Beautiful Daughter,” in Agnes Martin, ed. Barbara Haskell, 131-153.
**WEEK 9**

**CAMP: WARHOL, HOCKNEY AND RAY JOHNSON**

**READING**

**WEEK 10**

**UNDERGROUND FILM: SMITH, WARHOL AND ANGER**

**READING**

**WEEK 11**

**STONEWALL: GAY AND LESBIAN ART**

**READING**

**WEEK 12**

**AIDS AND ART**

**READING**
- Reed, Christopher, “Postmodernism and the Art of Identity,” in *Concepts of Modern Art*, 271-293.
- Wojnarowicz, David, “Postcards from America,” *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*.

**WEEK 13**

**ACTIVIST ART**

**READING**
- Katz, Jonathan, “’The Senators were Revolted:’ Homophobia and the Culture Wars.” *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, ed. Amelia Jones.
SELECTED GENERAL REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY


