ENGL 429-01: Sexualities in History, 1200-1600: 
Sex Before Sexuality?
(CRN 18564) Cross-listed with WSTD 493-03 (CRN 17791)
This course is limited to Research Intensive English students.

Syllabus

Class website: http://engl429sexualitiesinhistory1200to1600.wordpress.com/

Class Meetings: MW 11-12.15, Room Adorjan 341

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Instructor: Dr. Ruth Evans</th>
<th>Office Hours: Mon and Wed 12.45 - 2 pm or by appointment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office: Adorjan #231</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:revans19@slu.edu">revans19@slu.edu</a></td>
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<td>T: 314-977-3007</td>
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“If we identify contrasts between contemporary views on sexuality and medieval ones, it is logical to ask when the break occurred. Is the change an effect of modernity?” (Ruth Mazo Karras 2005, 24)

Course Description

As the French cultural historian Michael Foucault argues, because our modern terms for sexualities – including “sexuality” itself – were first established in the late nineteenth century they carry with them the import of their origins in specific historical discourses: medicine, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, demographics, criminology. How adequate are these modern terms for describing premodern sexualities? What is the evidence for sexual behaviors and sexual identities in Britain during the period 1200-1600? How do we read this evidence? Why did changes in attitudes towards sexuality over the period occur? What connections can we make today with people in history and why might it be valuable to make such connections?

Drawing on a range of European (and some Arabic) literary texts and visual evidence (but with a focus on texts in English), including medieval romances, saints’ lives, and fabliaux, works by Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Marlowe, and medieval and early modern “erotica,” we will consider a number of sexual categories: “heterosexuality” (by no means a transparent term), the spectral
“homosexual,” the invisible “lesbian,” virginity (which is a sexuality), “cross-dressing,” “exhibitionism,” “masochism,” and hermaphrodites, to name only a few so-called “deviant” sexualities from the period. We will study the construction and regulation of sex and desire in law, religion, medicine, anatomy, and popular culture. We will also touch on the issue of queer atemporality, which thinks not only about queers in history but about the queerness of history itself.

Students will be encouraged to use a variety of conceptual models, including Foucauldian social constructivism and psychoanalysis, to explore the literary and visual representation of sexualities in the period, and to consider what we can learn from the past about sexualities today and why that matters.

**Course Goals and Outcomes**

This 400-level advanced literature course aims to build upon the knowledge of literary texts and literary history, and critical theory and methods presented in lower-division English courses and to strengthen students’ ability to conduct independent research. It ranges beyond literary texts to consider the cultural history of sexuality and visual evidence. By the end of the course, you should know about the varied presentation of experiences of sexuality in a range of literary and historical texts from the late middle ages to the early modern period, and you should know how to discuss these presentations knowledgably and conceptually. You should have a sharper sense of how imaginative fictions from the period 1200-1600 engage issues of sexuality.

If you feel uncomfortable with any of the material we read or any of the class discussion, please talk to me.

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**Required Texts**


Recommended Texts
Menon, Madhavi, ed. Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare (2011) (in Bookshop)

I’ll recommend many more texts in the course of the semester. Additional primary texts and critical readings will be available on the class website.

Assignments
There is no final exam and no mid-term.
1. The major assignment is a final research paper of 20-25 pages (including Works Cited), on a topic of your own choosing in consultation with me. I will provide suggestions for topics. I will also provide comments on drafts.
2. You will also deliver a class presentation of 15 minutes + time for questions on the same topic as your final research paper.
3. You will write regular 500-word min-essays/postings throughout the semester on the class blog. 6 are required, but you are free to write more than 6.
   Instructions below.

Please present your work in MLA style. If you need advice about this, please ask me.

Email me your assignments electronically, as a Word doc or docx attachment. If you send a PDF it’s harder for me to annotate, but I can still handle a PDF.

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<tr>
<th>Weighting of Assignments</th>
<th>College of Arts and Sciences Grading Scale</th>
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<td>Class Blog</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Research Paper:</td>
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Class Blog: Instructions
I will first require you to be authors on the course website. You will need to respond to my invitation emails. If you do not wish your name to be public, then choose a name that is different from your SLU one.
You won’t start posting until Week 4 (Adam Cruz begins).
I’ll comment on, and grade your postings, as you complete them.

You will each take turns at the launch role. I’ll assign these in the first week. If you are not the launchposter in a particular week, you will have a free choice about whether you want to take up a query, extension or connection role – or whether you want to post a separate launchpost. One of the things that we will learn from this is which topics thrive and which don’t. You will make complex decisions about what to write and how to insert yourselves into the conversation.

Students writing launch posts are responsible for selecting a relevant and productive aspect of the current or previous week’s reading that you deem is likely to generate a response. Students adding query, extension, and connection posts have to read the developing discussion and make strategic choices about where to play their role. You may write more than 500 words each week, if you wish. There must be a research component to your posting (a reference to at least one critical book/essay/chapter, in addition to the primary text), and you should add a Works Cited at the end of your post. In fact, you are encouraged to read widely outside the class materials. The more you read, the better your grasp of the field and the better your ability to make connections, assess arguments, and construct your own arguments.

Your responsibility in the launch role is to initiate conversation through a post that focuses attention on particularly fruitful aspects of the reading or readings of the previous or upcoming week. Launches are followed by query posts, which provide questions and qualifications on the original post; extension posts attempt to broaden a discussion; and connection posts work to “connect” a thread to a discussion or debate inside or outside of our classes. Through these roles, you will challenge and expand one another’s ideas by asking for clarification or qualification. The idea is that in this digital space you will develop a perspective on the course texts by writing with, and anticipating responses from, your fellow students.

For the first few rounds, I’ll help you, if you want, by providing prompts to help you draw connections between readings.

The complete description of each role is provided here:

Launch Posts
This is the post that gets it all going. You are responsible for selecting a relevant and productive aspect of the reading likely to generate a response. Working with a specific text, and even, perhaps, a specific passage, you will start the discussion by either summarizing a reading or highlighting an important aspect of a reading, and arguing for its importance in our understanding of sexualities in history (e.g., Foucault’s argument that sexual identities are constructed through discourses – medical, legal, psychoanalytic – that produce specific knowledges about a person’s sexuality and provide that person with an identity has widespread
ramifications for our understanding of premodern sexual identities, etc. Or you might provide a reading of a specific passage in *Twelfth Night* that focuses the course’s concerns, just as I have done on the website with the passage from *Lanval*).

**Query Posts**
You will respond directly to the launch post, asking questions of either its summary/ies (and thus, its interpretations), qualifying its argument in some way, or even disagreeing with the importance of the reading in our understanding of premodern sexuality (i.e., I find Foucault’s views about the construction of sexual identity to be problematic. [quote + analysis]. While they provide some useful insights about modern sexual identities, they may be less helpful for understanding the sexual identities of premodern subjects, etc.)

**Extension Posts**
Students creating extension posts will extend the conversations developed through the launch and query posts. You can add your own views on the subject in relation to previous posts, or you can moderate opposing views on the meaning or relevance of a reading, or you can continue a line of thinking started in a previous post (i.e., So we disagree about Foucault’s influence on our understanding of premodern sexuality, but that might be because, etc.. Following the lead of the query post, we might look at the ways in which Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* plays with cross-dressing but is interested less in the question of “queer” identity than in reinforcing so-called heterosexual norms, etc.).

**Connection Posts**
This might be, by far, one of the more challenging roles. You will need to monitor the posts throughout the week to see how the argument is developing, rather than waiting until the end of the week to survey all that has been said. Students creating connection posts are therefore encouraged to post on Thursday or Friday. You can connect different posts within one thread or connect the discussion thread from one week to a previous week’s discussion. You are also encouraged to make connections to outside sources (class discussions, current events, etc.) or to make connections to a reading from earlier in the semester.

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<td><strong>1st round</strong></td>
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<td>1. Launch person</td>
<td>Adam Cruz</td>
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<td><strong>2nd round</strong></td>
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<td>2. Launch person</td>
<td>Marisa Lastres</td>
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<td><strong>3rd round</strong></td>
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<td>3. Launch person</td>
<td>Bridget Bergin</td>
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<td><strong>4th round</strong></td>
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<td>4. Launch person</td>
<td>Eleanor Humphrey</td>
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<td><strong>5th round</strong></td>
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<td>5. Launch person</td>
<td>Chester Yap</td>
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<td><strong>6th round</strong></td>
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<td>6. Launch person</td>
<td>Bob Kopfenseiner</td>
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Participation
Always come to class having read the material for discussion in advance. Be prepared to contribute to each discussion. Always bring the text(s) to class. I’m a stickler for close reading, and for that you need to refer closely to the text.

On-time/Late Assignments
- Assignments are due on the dates assigned in the class schedule (below).
- Email me your assignments electronically as a Word doc or docx attachment.
- Provided I have acknowledged that I have received your Word assignment, there is no need to provide it in hard copy.
- If you cannot complete an assignment or do the class reading by the due date and time, please e-mail me in advance of the time they are due (revans19@slu.edu). I only grant extensions for a true emergency.
- An assignment turned in after the due date without an extension will be marked down one letter grade for each weekday after the due date.

Library
The English Liaison Librarian is Jamie Emery: 314-977-3591 jemery2@slu.edu. She is a great resource for anything you need from the Library and for advice on your individual research projects. I may from time to time put books on 3-hour reserve for you.

Student Learning, Disability Statement
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-3484 or email disability_services@slu.edu or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or
receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the policy on academic honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences’ policy on Academic Honesty (http://www.slu.edu/x16363.xml).

**Attendance**
Lack of attendance, without good reason, will adversely affect your semester grade. You are allowed up to 4 unexplained or unexcused absences. If you have more than this, your grade for the semester will be reduced. If you are able to do so, please let me know in advance of a class if you expect to miss it. If you have been ill, please provide a doctor’s note.

**Ground Rules for This Class**
Please arrive promptly for class. Do not be late – or leave early – unless you have told me in advance.
You may bring your laptops into class if you want to take notes on them. No social networking in class, please.
You are responsible for asking a classmate for the notes when you miss class and for keeping up with the reading.
I am always happy to meet and talk with students. My office is on the second floor of Adorjan Hall, Room 231. Please feel free to drop in during my office hours, or to ask for a meeting at other times (contact me via email) if you need to discuss any academic or personal concerns.
You can email me at any time. I’ll get back to you as soon as I can, although it might not always be immediately.

**Help With Your Writing**
Saint Louis University supports three undergraduate writing services centers:

- Student Success Center, Busch Student Center, Suite 331
- Pius XII Library, Room 320-8
- Student Success Center-Medical Center, Nursing Building, Room 114

The Program Manager for Writing Services is Alex Wulff: wulffam@slu.edu. He is based in the Busch Student Center, Suite 331.
Please bring your copy of the texts to class with you because I rely on close reading of specific passages for class discussion. Readings for specific days refer to what we will discuss in class on that day. So that reading needs to be done in advance. I may occasionally require you to read some additional primary and/or secondary texts.

I have included on the schedule details of the Department of English Textual Revolution series, to which you are warmly invited (I mean that!), and details of the creative writing events for this academic year (2013-4), to which you are also warmly invited (full details here).

**Week 1**
- **Mon Aug 26**  Introduction: overview of the field; choice of texts
- **Wed Aug 28**  Introduction to the social construction of sexuality. Discussion of Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol 1, Part One and Part Two (pp. 3-49, but focus especially on the last chapter in Part Two, “The Perverse Implantation”).

**Week 2**
- **Mon Sept 2**  Labor Day: no class.

**Before Heterosexuality**

**Week 3**
- **Mon Sept 9**  Lanval’s “sexual orientation”
  - Read the section in the Norton “Renaissance Love and Desire” (pp. 1000-23)
  - Ann Rosalind Jones, “Heterosexuality: A Beast with Many Backs.” (2011) [read this fairly quickly]
- **Tues Sept 10**  4-5 pm *Textual Revolution: Department of English Faculty Research Colloquium. Adorjan 142.*
- **Wed Sept 11**  William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

**Week 4**
This week you’ll begin to blog on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost from the designated launcher Adam Cruz on Monday, followed by 5 other posts, one from each of you. All responses to be posted by Friday at the latest. Instructions are above, on p. 4 of this Syllabus.

- **Mon Sept 16**  William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

Tues Sept 17  **Sheila Nolan Whalen Reading Series: readings by creative writers.**  Sinquefield Stateroom, DuBourg 409. 4-5 pm.  Jennifer Moxley: poet, essayist, and translator.  [http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/moxley/](http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/moxley/)

Wed Sept 18  **William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night***

**Week 5**

2\(^{nd}\) round of blogging on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost on Monday from **Marisa Lastres**, followed by 5 posts. All responses to be posted by Friday.

Mon Sept 23  **Discussion of the 1394 case of John/Eleanor Rykener**

Read carefully: Ruth Mazo Karras and David Lorenzo Boyd (1996), “*Ut cum muliere*: A Male Transvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth-Century London.” [I’ll supply a copy]


Tues Sept 24  **4-5 pm Department of English Annual Research Intensive English Lecture Series. Adorjan 142.**

Carolyn Dinshaw (Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis, NYU), “It’s Not Easy Being Green.”

Wed Sept 25  **Guest Critic Carolyn Dinshaw will visit the class: come to class prepared to discuss with her the case of John/Eleanor Rykener.**

**Week 6**

Mon Sept 30  **Love Poems by Marbod of Rennes, Hilary the Englishman, and Anon (“A Perverse Custom” and “Ganymede”) in Boswell’s Appendix 2, pp. 370-374, and 389 and 401**

Read carefully; St John Chrysostom, “Commentary on Romans” and John the Faster, “Penitential” (Boswell 1980, 359-62 and 363-65).


Tues Oct 1  **4-5 pm Textual Revolution: Department of English Faculty Research Colloquium. Adorjan 142.**


**Early Modern Queer Desire**

**Week 7**
3\(^{rd}\) round of blogging on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost on Monday from Bridget Bergin, followed by 5 posts. All responses to be posted by Friday.


Tues Oct 8  **Sheila Nolan Whalen Reading Series: readings by creative writers. Sinquefield Stateroom, DuBourg 409. 4-5 pm.**

Read carefully James Bromley, “‘Let it suffise’: Sexual Acts and Narrative Structure in *Hero and Leander.*” (2009)

**Week 8**
**Mid-Term Exam Week** [but no mid-term exam]
Mon Oct 14  Naama Goldstein, short story writer, will visit the class.
Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander* and/or Shakespeare’s Sonnets

Tues Oct 15  **Sheila Nolan Whalen Reading Series: readings by creative writers: craft talk. Sinquefield Stateroom, DuBourg 409. 4-5 pm.**


**The Doubly Invisible Premodern Lesbian**

**Week 9**
Mon Oct 21  No class: Fall Break

Wed Oct 23  John Gower’s tale of Iphis and Ianthe [I’ll supply a copy, together with some excellent analysis by Diane Watt]
Read fairly quickly: Jacqueline Murray, “Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages” (1996)

**Week 10**
4\(^{th}\) round of blogging on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost on Monday from Eleanor Humphrey, followed by 5 posts. All responses to be posted by Friday.

**Premodern Sexual Variations: 2 Case Studies**

Social Class, Desire, and Female Sexuality

Week 11
Mon Nov 4  John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi* (Norton)
Read the section in the Norton “Gender Relations: Conflict and Counsel” (Norton, 1648-1661)

Tues Nov 5 4-5 pm *Textual Revolution: Department of English Faculty Research Colloquium. Adorjan 142.*
Ellen Crowell, “Oscar Wilde’s Tomb: Silence and the Aesthetics of Queer Memorial.”


Week 12
5th round of blogging on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost on Monday from Chester Yap, followed by 5 posts. All responses to be posted by Friday.

Mon Nov 11 Female sexuality:
John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi* (Norton)

Obscenity, Erotica, and Pornography

Wed Nov 13 Selections of medieval *fabliaux* in translation.
Read carefully: E. Jane Burns, “This Prick Which Is Not One; How Women Talk Back in Old French *Fabliaux*” (1993)
Malcolm Jones, “Sex, Popular Beliefs, and Culture.” (2011)

Week 13
Mon Nov 18 RE will show slides. Please bring to class a medieval or early modern erotic image and be prepared to say a few words about it as an erotic or pornographic image.

Wed Nov 20 RE will show slides.

Hermaphrodites

Week 14
6th round of blogging on the class readings. I’ll expect one launchpost on Monday from Bob Kopfensteiner, followed by 5 posts. All responses to be posted by Friday.

Mon Nov 25 Arthur Golding’s translation of the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1567)

Wed Nov 27  No class: **Thanksgiving: Official University Holiday**

**Class Presentations**

**Week 15**  
Mon Dec 2  Class Presentations

Wed Dec 4  Class Presentations

**Week 16**  
Mon Dec 9  Class Presentations

**Tues Dec 10**  
4-5 pm *Textual Revolution: Department of English Faculty Research Colloquium*. Adorjan 142.
Graduate Student Presentations

**Thomas Rowland**, “Games as Texts in the Middle Ages and Today”

**Ina Seethaler**, “Immigrant Women’s Life Writing as Political Rhetoric”

**Final Research Paper due: 5 pm Friday December 13.**

Fall Semester Grades returned to Office by 5 p.m. Thursday December 19

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*De Hermaphroditorum Monstrorumque Partuum Natura*, by Caspar Bauhinus, H. Galler: Oppenheim, 1614.