

**GWST 2700-1: Topics in Gender & Women's Studies**  
TR 2:00 – 3:50 p.m., Sturm Hall 133  
Office Hours: MW 2-4 pm, T 12-2 pm, R 10 am – 2 pm

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# The Queer Frontier

## The Class

**W**hat's queer about the North American frontier? As the miners dancing together in this image might suggest, quite a bit. In this course, we will explore four but distinct issues related to sexuality, gender, race, and desire in the North American West in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. We will start by surveying some of the most important historical and theoretical writing on queerness and this region. We will then focus on the mining camps of the California Gold Rush as a robust site of male homoeroticism (with a brief excursion into the pristine mountain vistas of *Brokeback Mountain*.)



The feminist writing of Charlotte Perkins Gilman will then allow us to explore the importance of place within her representations of region and same-sex desire. Finally, we will read poetry and prose from lesbian Chicana writers Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga to open up a new intimate geography of *la frontera*. Ultimately, we will explore a range of queer desires, identities, and communities that emerged in the North American West and grapple with how the genders and sexualities produced within it impact our understanding of queer history.

## Goals

I've designed this course with you, Gender & Women's Studies students, in mind, but I don't presume that you'll all be familiar with the theories and histories of gender and sexuality that we will explore. To foster your own skills as a feminist and/or queer scholar, we will read a range of material and write frequently (both formally and informally) to help you articulate your own analyses of the issues we will study. By the end of the course, you'll:

- Demonstrate an understanding of feminist and queer theories and histories of gender and sexuality in relation to the North American West;
- Demonstrate an understanding of role that race has played in the historical construction of gender and sexuality in the United States;
- Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical conventions within GWST by close reading primary texts and effectively presenting feminist or queer readings of them in your writing; and
- Demonstrate practical knowledge of GWST research traditions by completing your own research project.

## Assignments

### 📖 Course Blog

Two or three times a week you'll post to our course blog, where as a class, we will elaborate on the connections between our readings, class discussions, and your writing.

### 📖 Analyzing the Queer Frontier (3-4 pages)

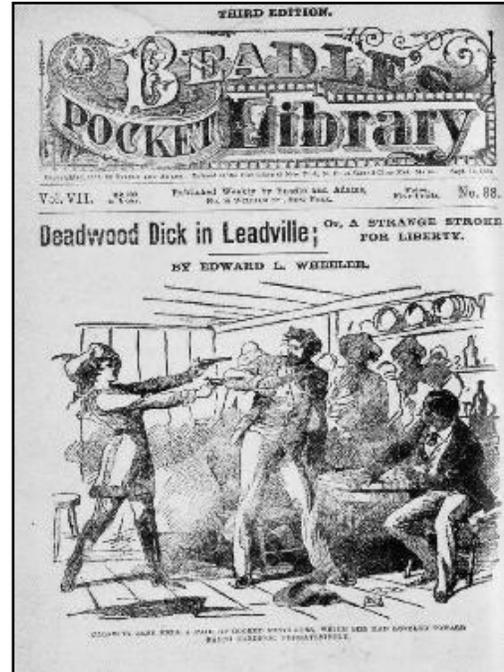
In this essay you will analyze one of the theoretical/historical essays that we read in the first few weeks of the course, analyzing its argument and its limitations, as well as explaining how it helps define and describe the queer frontier.

### 🔗 Queering a Frontier Text (3-4 pages)

In this essay, you will select a primary text—a short story, a film, or a novel—that we have read in class and write an essay in which you explicate it—i.e., perform a close reading—and make an argument about how it represents gender, sexuality, or desire in the context of the North American West.

### 🔗 Inquiry into the Queer Frontier (8-10 pages)

In your final assignment, you will propose your own research question in relation to the queer frontier and write a research paper that draws on 2-3 primary texts and 4-5 secondary sources to support your analysis.



## Texts

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland, The Yellow Wall-Paper and Selected Writings*, Penguin Classics, 1999 (available in the bookstore).
- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mesiza*, Third Edition, Aunt Lute Books, 2007, ISBN-10: 1879960745, ISBN-13: 978-1879960749.
- Texts on Blackboard: Go to <http://blackboard.du.edu/> and click on “Login.” Use your DU id and password to access the site. Under “My Courses,” click on GWST 2700-1, and on the left hand side of the page, find “Course Documents” and look for the assigned reading.

## Policies

### • Attendance

Because interaction with your classmates and me is a vital part of learning, I expect you to attend every class meeting and participate actively in discussions and in-class activities. Any absence will affect your performance in this class, and multiple absences (except those affiliated with official university events) are likely to have a dramatic negative effect on your grade. You are allowed two absences, no questions asked. If you miss more than two class meetings, your final grade will be lowered a third of a grade (e.g., from a B+ to a B, or a B to a B-) for every day you miss. If you miss more than four class meetings, I will recommend that you drop the course; if I determine that excessive absences—more than four—have compromised your ability to meet the goals of the course, you may fail the course. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from classmates or from Blackboard.

### • Student Engagement & Participation

I expect you to be an active and engaged learner in this class, committed to the material, your own writing, and your peers. Your engagement will be visible through your participation in classroom discussions, in-class writing, informal group work, and general efforts to improve not only your own learning but the learning of the entire class. I will evaluate your engagement and participation according to these guidelines:

“**Superior**” engagement means that you are always prepared, often adding additional insights to a class or online discussion. You demonstrate active learning via consistently perceptive and energetic engagement with the material, your peers, and me.

“**Average**” engagement means that you seem prepared, although you sometimes need to be prompted to participate. Generally, your participation in discussion seems to encourage and support others in the class. Your presence is productive.

**“Weak”** engagement means that you come to class, but you do not seem to be prepared or your presence detracts from the quality of the class experience for others. Your participation is listless, lackluster, or only intermittent.

- **Late Work**

Assignments are due when they are due. I will accept late work only if you have cleared the lateness with me in advance, and then only under the most extenuating circumstances. An assignment that is turned in late without advance clearance will be graded down a third of letter (e.g., from a B+ to a B, or a B to a B-) for each day it’s late.



### **Civility and Tolerance in the Classroom**

As a professor, I support DU’s “Code of Student Conduct,” which in part “expects students to recognize the strength of personal differences while respecting institutional values.” Because our course will rely heavily on interactions between all members of the class, we must all act in a manner respectful of different positions and perspectives. A student who behaves in an uncivil or intolerant manner will be asked to stop and/or formally reprimanded and/or subject to action by the Office of Citizenship and Community.

Becoming educated requires encountering new ideas and information, some of which may conflict with an individual’s existing knowledge or perspectives. I expect students to engage such materials thoughtfully, in ways that reflect the values and mission of the University of Denver.

Finally, I expect you to respect the classroom environment. In class, all cell phones and electronic devices shall be turned off; you are not allowed to text, send email, or instant message; and engaging in other activities (reading non-course materials, engaging in private conversations and so on) that disrespect the classroom environment

and learning conditions for others is strictly prohibited. A student who fails to show such respect will receive a lowered grade and may fail the course.

- **Plagiarism and the Honor Code**

I adhere to the Council of Writing Program Administrators definition of plagiarism, which states, “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Go to <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9> for further discussion.

DU’s Honor Code also maintains that all members of the University must use the work of others in good faith. Students who have plagiarized an assignment will receive an F on that assignment, and the instructor will inform the Director of Writing and the office of Community and Citizenship Standards. As a result of these communications, further action may be taken. Any subsequent documented acts of plagiarism may be subject to more severe actions, including suspension or dismissal from the university. (For more information, go to <http://www.du.edu/ccs/honorcode.html>.)

- **University Writing Center**

As a DU student, you are able to visit the University Writing Center to consult one-on-one with a trained staff member on any writing assignment, at any stage of the project. To schedule an appointment, log in to “My Web” at <http://myweb.du.edu>, select “Student and Financial Aid” tab, and click on the “Writing and Research Center” menu. You can also call (303) 871-7456.



- **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability that will impact your performance in this class, please inform me during the first two weeks of the course and provide documentation from DU's Disability Services Program. I will make every reasonable accommodation for you so that you are able to succeed in this course. For more information, go to <http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp/index.htm>.

## Grades

Grade Calculation	
Engagement & Participation	10%
Course Blog	15%
Analyzing the Queer Frontier	15%
Queering a Frontier Text	25%
Inquiry into the Queer Frontier	35%

☞ **A Excellent**

Your writing lucidly responds to the rhetorical situation in a sophisticated and original way; is exceptionally well organized with clear and logical transitions; maintains coherent focus throughout; if appropriate, seamlessly integrates judicious use of other sources or textual evidence and analysis; and achieves stylistic elegance and grace. Overall, it leaves a dazzling impression—the writing is fabulous and has either vividly narrated an experience, rigorously analyzed a text, or persuasively presented an intriguing idea.

☞ **B Good**

Your writing clearly and solidly responds to the assignment in an interesting, if not original, way; reflects strong organization and achieves coherence, even if there are momentary lapses in these areas; if appropriate, includes textual evidence and competent analysis; and stylistically, it is clear but may include occasional errors, imprecise phrasing, or unnecessary wordiness. Overall, a solid performance that gets the point across—you're doing interesting work that shows you're engaging productively with the assignment.

☞ **C Acceptable**

Your writing adequately responds to the prompt in a rudimentary fashion. It may implicitly suggest an argument rather than state it explicitly, appear mostly organized but inconsistently use topic, transition, and conclusion sentences and phrases, work for coherence, but may falter occasionally, gesture to the text, but may not use or analyze it as effectively as it might, show a fundamental grasp of style, but may not do so consistently, and contain more than the occasional error. Overall, you fulfill the basic goals of the assignment, but there's room for improvement.

☞ **D Serious Flaws**

Your written response is inadequate or inappropriate given the rhetorical situation. It may lack a thesis, vivid narration, organizational logic, paragraph coherence, and/or textual evidence or analysis. It may also include a number of grammatical or mechanical flaws that impede effective delivery of ideas. Overall, you've written something that completes the assignment, but it misses the mark in a few significant areas.

☞ **F Unacceptable**

Essay does not respond to the assignment and meet its basic requirements, such as purpose, topic, genre, use of text, or page length. Overall, your response makes me think you didn't read the directions, didn't do your own writing, or didn't bother to spend enough time to complete the assignment.

Grading Scale								
		B+	88-89	C+	78-79	D+	68-69	F 0-59
A	93-100	B	83-87	C	73-77	D	63-67	
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62	

## Course Schedule

- T Jan. 5** Introduction to the course and each other. What is the queer frontier?
- R Jan. 7** Read Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Susan Lee Johnson, "The Significance of Gender in the History of the 'American West,'" and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now" (Blackboard).
- T Jan. 12** Read selections from Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, John D'Emilio & Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, and Leila Rupp, *A Desired Past* (Blackboard).
- R Jan. 14** Read Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic" (Blackboard).
- T Jan. 19** Read Will Roscoe, "Was We'Wha a Homosexual?" and Susan Lee Johnson, "My Own Private Life" (Blackboard).
- R Jan. 21** Read Peter Boag, "Go West Young Man, Go East Young Woman," and Clare Sears, "All that Glitters" (Blackboard).
- T Jan. 26** Read Bret Harte, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "Tennessee's Partner," "The Poet of Sierra Flat," and "The Argonauts of '49" (Blackboard). **Analyzing the queer frontier essay due at the beginning of class.**
- R Jan. 28** Read Harte, "Apostle of the Tules," "In the Tules," and "Uncle Jim and Uncle Billy" (Blackboard).
- T Feb. 2** Read Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain" (Blackboard), and view film in class.
- R Feb. 4** Read "Brokeback Mountain Dossier" (Blackboard).
- T Feb. 9** Read Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" & "Dr. Clair's Place."
- R Feb. 11** Read Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Joan's Defender" & "Bee Wise," and Lillian Faderman, "Acting 'Woman' and Thinking 'Man'" (Blackboard).
- T Feb. 16** Gilman, *Herland*, pp. 3-73. **Queering a frontier text essay due at the beginning of class.**
- R Feb. 18** Gilman, *Herland*, pp. 74-143.
- T Feb. 23** Read Gail Bederman, "Not to Sex—But to Race!" (Blackboard). Research workshop.
- R Feb. 25** Read Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Ch. 1-3 (pp. 23-62).
- T Mar. 2** Read Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Ch. 4-7 (pp. 63-113).
- R Mar. 4** Read selections from Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years* (Blackboard).
- T Mar. 9** Read Emma Pérez, "Queering the Borderlands" (Blackboard).
- S Mar. 14** **Inquiry into the queer frontier essay due by 8:00 pm.** Email your essay to Professor Bateman at [gbateman@du.edu](mailto:gbateman@du.edu).