

English 6810-002 Special Topics

Professor Kathryn Bond Stockton
3515 LNCO
801-815-9012 (cell)
Office hours: Tu 12:10-1:10pm
Th 3:45-4:45pm

TuTh 10:45am-12:05pm
3870 LNCO

To Read (Required Texts)

Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray
Jean Genet, Querelle
Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess (via pdf on Canvas)
James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room
Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility
Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
Charlotte Bronte, Villette
Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs (in Masochism)
Gilles Deleuze, Coldness and Cruelty (in Masochism)
Djuna Barnes, Nightwood
Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita
Toni Morrison, Sula

You can find these books via Bookshelf on our Canvas—arranged through the U's Campus Bookstore.

Many other essays and articles will surround these texts.

Enigmas and Trajectories (Course Description)

"The strong magnetism of genius drew my heart out of its wonted orbit; the sunflower turned from the south to a fierce light, not solar—a rushing, red, cometary light—hot on vision and to sensation."—Charlotte Bronte, Villette

Narratives, by nature, lead us astray. They corrupt expectations, while forcing certain contracts with the letters of their law. Reading, however, is itself perverse. Drawing words inside us, we lead the text beside itself, ensuring that in readings it is never self-same. Leading canonical texts astray (taking their lead?), we will unfold their views of perversion.

Wilde's pedagogy will school us in the thought that art is not about us, even as The Picture of Dorian Gray trades on the dangerous wonders of an influence. Genet (with Bataille) will present another view of novel narration as fabrication: the divine humiliation of devotion to . . . fabric. Changing tone and context, Baldwin will carve new takes on debasement and "immaculate manhood." Austen and Bronte next will focus us on autoeroticism, forged by a love of looking on loss. Then, in a masterful turn of the screw, Sacher-Masoch's Venus in Furs, alongside

nineteenth-century case studies, will shed new light on masochistic devotions. Nabokov, though he turns directly to the pedophile, will track the motions and motives of a child, by wedding what is “animal” to the “mechanical.” With a hint of animal, Barnes will interrogate whether a desire to be a mother triggers a sudden desire to sleep with one. Lesbian lovers as mother and child will become, in the hands of Djuna Barnes, an intricate metaphorical skein, one unraveled by a dog, after all, and by relations around “bowing down.” Finally, Toni Morrison will bring us to the bottom through Black labor history, with views of historical cruelty and tenderness.

Wending our way back and forth along a chain of concepts yoked through narrative pressures and reconfigured by historical change, we will encounter fictions written from 1811 to 1999. All contexts will be treated heuristically—that is, as occasions for asking questions—and have been chosen to provide a balanced inquiry into historical, literary, and theoretical dimensions of our fictions. This is where all balance will end.

Clear Objectives (Learning Outcomes—passionately pursued)

- 1) to ask about perversities of the novel form, in the broadest sense: how are the writing and reading of novels acts of perversion?
- 2) to scout what counts as perversion in fiction: how do you know a perversion when you see one?
- 3) to learn which canonical texts have been tagged as obscene or perverse—how and why?

Pervert vt. [ME *perverten* OFr *pervertir* L *pervertere* , to overturn, corrupt, *vertere* , to turn: see VERSE]

to cause to turn from what is considered morally right; corrupt: “*We forbid bad men to pervert society.*” (John Stuart Mill)

to bring to a worse condition; debase; vitiate: “*Luxury . . . while she polishes perverts the taste.*” (Cowper)

to employ wrongly or incorrectly; misuse

to interpret incorrectly; misconstrue

Pervert n.

one who practices sexual perversion

How We’ll Engage (Course Policies)

Written work:

Written short assignments on selected problems for every class, *due by start of class, uploaded on Canvas*. (Late short assignments will receive half credit.) One short paper (7 pages long) due by Saturday, March 7th or Saturday, March 15th, high noon. (This essay will receive extensive feedback but will be ungraded.) One long paper (15 pages maximum), which may build upon your shorter essay, due during finals. Two of these requirements—short exercises, long paper—will comprise roughly one half of your grade. I will allow you to keep revising the long paper for a possible grade change beyond this course.

Feedback:

I’ll choose a subset of your short exercises to respond to—and I’ll work with you (via comments on your essay and an in-person conference) to plan your long paper.

Discussion:

To ensure communal learning, I will employ devious (make that delightful) methods for enabling discussion. It's my responsibility to invite all voices to the table each class. To this end, I'll use a judicious mix of calling on volunteers and calling on those who haven't yet spoken. You will never be called on to answer any question that you haven't been asked to write on as preparation for speaking. Class participation sometimes raises or lowers your final grade by one-half letter grade.

Names and pronouns:

I look forward to calling you by the name you go by—and the pronouns you use.

Attendance:

Since discussion is critical to this course, you are **required to attend nearly every class this semester**. I consider more than three absences over the course of this class unacceptable; going beyond this stated limit will likely negatively affect your grade.

Conferences:

I will meet with each of you at least once to discuss your progress in this course. If at any time you have any problems concerning your work, please see me. Don't suffer in silence.

Annoyances:

Speaking of silence and *my* suffering: no emailing or Internet surfing from laptops during class. (iPads, Kindles, or other e-readers most welcome.) No phones may be on. And texting? Don't even think about it. Also, no eating.

Recommended readings:

There is always *more* reading you can do! Readings that are not required but recommended are called "specters" on our syllabus. Think of them as friendly ghosts to the main texts we are reading.

Contact:

I will use email through the Canvas system to contact you during the semester. Please either check your Umail account on a regular basis or set it up to forward to the email system you regularly use.

Canvas:

Consult it. The syllabus is there. The readings and daily assignments are there. You will always know what you need to be writing by going there.

Ostentatious Generosity (My Teaching Philosophy)

Teaching is where our research takes a curve—toward live student bodies.

You, the students, are the real enticement of scholarly jobs. I want ideas, more than anything else, to form my warm engagements with you. As a thinker, I work at the seam where issues of race and sexuality cross each other *asymmetrically*. What can we learn together about these tense but exciting angles of connection? Creating a trusted space for you is a major goal—always with the aim of crafting ostentatious generosity toward each other. What might that look like, intellectually, interpersonally? What might happen if we seriously believed that someone else's heart-mind vitality broadens our own intellectual reach? I wish for you the most challenging, most open experience you can seek.

I'm ready to begin this wild adventure.

Syllabus

From the British 1890s through the French 1940s to the US 1950s

Campy Aristocrats and Perverse Influence

- T 1/7 Introduction: What is Camp?
- H 1/9 Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'" (1964) **(16p)**
 Thomas A. King, "Performing 'Akimbo'" (1994) **(23p)**
 Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890-1):
 Preface and Chapter One **(16p)**
- Specter: Jules Gill-Peterson, "Camp and the Millionth Age of Gay Panic" (2022)
- T 1/14 Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890-1):
 Chapter Two through Chapter Twelve **(150p)**
- Specter: Wilde (dir. Brian Gilbert, 1998)
- H 1/16 Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890-1):
 Chapter Thirteen through Chapter Twenty **(70p)**
 Ed Cohen, "Typing Wilde" (1993) **(46p)**
- Specter: Moe Meyer, "Under the Sign of Wilde" (1994) **(25p)**

Who's for Debasement?

- T 1/21 Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess (1927-39):
 "Introduction" (by Allan Stoekl) **(14p)**
 "The Solar Anus" **(5P)**
 "The Language of Flowers" **(5P)**
 "The Big Toe" **(4p)**
 "Rotten Sun" **(2P)**
 "Mouth" **(2P)**
 "Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh" **(10p)**
- H 1/23 Fight Club (dir. David Fincher, 1999)
 Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess (1927-39):
 "Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh"
 "The Notion of Expenditure" **(14p)**

Divine Humiliation

- T 1/28 Jean Genet, Querelle (1947; 1974) **(57p)**
 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" (1933) **(23p)**

Malcolm Gladwell, "Listening to Khakis" (1997) **(10p)**

Specter: Edmund White, from Genet: A Biography (1993) **(80p)**

H 1/30 Jean Genet, Querelle (1947; 1974) **(121p)**

T 2/4 Jean Genet, Querelle (1947; 1974) **(98p)**

Specter: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic" (1990) **(63p)**

Stopped Homosexuals?

H 2/6 James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room (1956) **(89p)**

T 2/11 James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room (1956) **(125p)**
Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice (1968) **(30p)**

Specter: I Am Not Your Negro (dir. Raoul Peck, 2016)

From the British 1810s through Germanic 1880s to the US 1970s

Perverse Sisters, Attractive Homes

H 2/13 Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (1811)
Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (1958; 1964):
"House and Universe" **(35p)**

Specter: Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer **(28p)**

T 2/18 Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (1811)
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" (1991) **(21p)**

Specter: Tony Tanner, "Secrecy and Sickness" (1986) **(15p)**

H 2/20 Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (1811)

She Loves Christ

T 2/25 Charlotte Bronte, Villette (1853)
Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism (1904)

H 2/27 Charlotte Bronte, Villette (1853)

T 3/4 Charlotte Bronte, Villette (1853)

Specters: Luce Irigaray, "La Mystérique" (1974; 1985) **(12p)**

Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One" (1977; 1985) **(11p)**

H 3/6 Charlotte Bronte, Villette (1853)

T 3/11 Spring Break

H 3/13 Spring Break

Why Seek Punishment?

T 3/18 Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs (1870)

H 3/20 Gilles Deleuze, Coldness and Cruelty (1971)
R. von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis (1893), selections

Lesbian Lovers and Lateral Growth

T 3/25 Djuna Barnes, Nightwood (1936)

Specters: Radclyffe Hall, The Well of Loneliness (1928), selections
Cheryl J. Plumb, "Introduction" to Original Version (19p)
Phillip Herring, Djuna (1995), selections

H 3/27 Djuna Barnes, Nightwood (1936)

Specters: Jane Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus," (1984)
Sigmund Freud, "Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality
in a Woman" (1920) (25p)

What's Queer about Children?

T 4/1 Kathryn Bond Stockton, from The Queer Child (2009) (57p)
Capturing the Friedmans (dir. Andrew Jarecki, 2002)

Specters: Tomboy (dir. Céline Sciamma, 2011);
Ma vie en Rose (dir. Alain Berliner, 1997)
Jules Gill-Peterson, Histories of the Transgender Child (2016) (36p)

H 4/3 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955), Chapters 1-18 (76p)

T 4/8 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955), through Part Two's Chapter 15 (120p)

Specter: Lolita (Stanley Kubrick, 1961)
Lolita (dir. Adrian Lyne, 1997)

H 4/10 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955), through to end (109p)

Up in the Bottom

- T 4/15 Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" (1987) **(25p)**
- Specters: Griffin Hansbury, "The Masculine Vaginal" (2017) **(22p)**
Ann Cvetkovich, "... Documenting Act Up's Lesbians" (2003) **(20p)**
- H 4/17 Toni Morrison, Sula (1973), Part One **(82p)**
- T 4/22 Toni Morrison, Sula (1973), Part Two **(85p)**

Note: *This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please know that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements. For the student guide to Canvas, see: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>. If you encounter technical problems, please: click the Help button found on the left bar of the Canvas page; email Teaching and Learning Technologies at classhelp@utah.edu; phone Teaching and Learning Technologies at (801) 581-6112.*

English Department Statement

Literature allows us to imagine the lives of others and broaden our perspectives. How we talk about it together, in the physical and virtual classroom, is part of that process. Our diverse identities and experiences will inform and enhance those discussions. As we approach sometimes difficult topics, each member of the class is expected to foster a respectful, generous, and supportive classroom environment that makes room for productive difference and reasoned debate.

I Stand ...

in support of compassion, fair treatment, belonging, and justice for all individuals regardless of color, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, socioeconomic status, ability, gender, gender identity or expression, immigration status, or any type of marginalization. I stand in support of making our society fairer and more compassionate for all individuals. I stand against discrimination in all its forms.

University Policies

Academic Honesty and Use of AI. It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages

in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>.

The Americans with Disabilities Act. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

Given the nature of this course, attendance is required and adjustments will only be permitted as required by Policy 6-100(III)(O). If you need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this attendance policy due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability and Access (CDA). CDA will work with us to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should not be made publicly available. In addition, recordings should be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>.

University Safety Statement. The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit <https://safeu.utah.edu>.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 383 South University Street, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS). If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence. To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact: Center for Student Wellness, 801-581-7776, wellness.utah.edu, 328 Student Services Building, 201 S. 1460 E.

Drop/Withdrawal Policies. Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A “W” grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade “W” is not used in calculating the student’s GPA. For deadlines to withdraw from full-term, first, and second session classes, see the U's Academic Calendar.

Supports for Students. If you feel like you need extra support in academics, overcoming personal difficulties, or finding community, please refer to the [Student Support Services page for the U](#) for updated information.

Basic Needs Student Support. The [Basic Needs Collective](#) (BNC) is a coordinated resource referral hub. They educate about and connect students to campus and community resources to help them meet their basic needs. As a central location for resource referrals related to food, housing, health insurance, managing finances, legal services, mental health, etc., any student experiencing difficulty with basic needs is encouraged to contact them. Drop into their office located in the Union basement or schedule with them online for an in-person or virtual visit through their webpage: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/>.

Canvas Time Zone Notice. To ensure you are viewing due dates and times correctly, as well as events in the calendar, set your student Canvas time zone to your current location by following this [guide](#). If you do not change your time zone, all due dates and times listed in Canvas will default to Mountain Time (MT). All times written throughout the course (e.g. class meeting times) are in Mountain Time, unless stated otherwise.

Course Material Copyright Notice. The Content* available in this course is made available only for your personal, noncommercial educational, and scholarly use. You may not use the Content for any other purpose, or distribute, post or make the Content available to others unless you obtain any required permission from the copyright holder. Some Content may be provided via streaming or other means that restrict copying; you may not circumvent those restrictions. You may not alter or remove any copyright or other proprietary notices included in the Content. Please see the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), Section III.A.5 regarding the use and distribution of class Content and materials. Section III.A.5 explicitly prohibits: *"Sale or distribution of information representing the work product of a faculty member to a commercial entity for financial gain without the express written permission of the faculty member responsible for the course."*

** Content means original works of authorship that have been fixed in a tangible medium and any works based upon and derived from the original work of authorship.*

Content Warning. Each student here at the U has unique lived experiences that impact their learning and perception of material. As part of this course, you will encounter a variety of topics, some of which may be considered offensive, disturbing, triggering, or emotionally challenging. Advance notice will be provided as needed. For trauma survivors who struggle with these topics, please take the necessary steps to ensure your safety and communicate with your instructor. Consider contacting the [Counseling Center](#) for support if necessary. You are still responsible for the material and any related assessments, as outlined in [Policy 6-100](#),

Section III.Q.1. If you would like to request a content accommodation to modify the reading, writing, viewing, listening, or performance requirements for this unit, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Content Accommodations. All content provided has been carefully selected to guide you toward achievement of the learning objectives established for this course. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your personal knowledge and engagement. With that, there may be some content some students find to be in conflict with their sincerely held core beliefs. If applicable, you may choose to request a content accommodation to modify the reading, writing, viewing, listening, or performance requirements in the course. Be aware that instructors are not required to grant content accommodations. As per Policy 6-100, Section III.Q.3: *"Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. The University recognizes that students' sincerely held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. The University assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major."*

It is your responsibility to determine if the course content is in conflict with your sincerely-held core beliefs. If so, please consider dropping the course. If you choose to drop the course, please be aware of the drop/withdrawal deadlines listed on the Academic Calendar.

Critical Discourse. Our classroom community is an open space for free speech, critical discourse, and the civil exchange of ideas. Throughout this course, you may encounter some difficult discussions about contentious topics. Disagreement can be a valuable learning opportunity for all of us, and discussion of all views is a necessary part of the educational process. All members of our course are asked to do their part in creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity toward others. Disruptive behavior (e.g. harassment, defamatory or obscene speech, threats of violence, etc.) is strictly prohibited. As outlined in Policy 1-007, Section III.E.1: *"...Students have no right to impinge on the freedom of instructors to teach or the right of other students to learn. If a student persists in behaving disruptively in class after the instructor has explained the unacceptability of such conduct, the instructor may dismiss the student from the class and may refer the matter to the Office of the Dean of Students as described in Policy 6-400."* Students dismissed from classes may choose to appeal the dismissal to the Office of the Dean of Students. Learn more about how your First Amendment rights apply to you as a student here at the U.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment. The University of Utah has both historical and contemporary relationships with Indigenous peoples. Given that the Salt Lake Valley has always been a gathering place for Indigenous peoples, we acknowledge that this land, which is named for the Ute Tribe, is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Shoshone, Paiute, Goshute, and Ute Tribes and is a crossroad for Indigenous peoples. The University of Utah recognizes the enduring relationships between many Indigenous peoples and their traditional homelands. We are grateful for the territory upon which we gather today; we respect Utah's Indigenous peoples, the original stewards of this land; and we value the sovereign relationships that exist between tribal governments, state governments, and the federal government. Today,

approximately 60,000 American Indian and Alaska Native peoples live in Utah. As a state institution, the University of Utah is committed to serving Native communities throughout Utah in partnership with Native Nations and our Urban Indian communities through research, education, and community outreach activities.