

QUEER NIGHTLIFE

a graduate seminar



(still from *Hit The Wall* by Ike Holter, Barrow Street Theatre (NYC) production)

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University of Texas at Austin. Fall 2015. Thursdays 12:30 – 3:15pm. Burdine 214.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Nightclubs allow for queer intimacies and erotic enactments that breach respectable scripts of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Drugs, alcohol, music, and dance facilitate some sensory escape from regimes of heteronormativity, or in the very least, a necessary break from the drone of work. But for many—sex workers, bartenders, bouncers, drag queens—the night is also work time. Additionally, if we track geographies of the dancefloor, exhibitions of style, or bar décor and entertainment, we will find particular hierarchies of class, race, and gender functioning in these spaces that we imagine as utopic and inclusive. This course offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of nightlife, asking how sexual and gender dissidence is nurtured, affirmed, disciplined, and policed, in bars, discos, house parties, cabarets, bathhouses, cinema halls, and on the street.

Class readings will ground us in a political economy of queer nightlife, and help us identify a variety of subjects and practices associated with this subculture. We will also work as a class to build an archive of Austin's queer nightlife: interviews with bar owners and performers; walking tours; ethnography and documentation of dance, music, style, décor; and material and digital archives. Through these workshops, we will persistently ask where transgender people, people of color, women, working class folk, HIV positive people, and immigrant subjects fit into our conception of queer nightlife.

The course will culminate in a collaborative multimedia production, held in a nightclub space, where we will share with the university and Austin communities the archives of queer nightlife we have built as a class.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Delaney, Samuel. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.

All other readings are uploaded to Canvas. Note that there are required *and* optional readings. Please do consult the optional readings as you will have to produce a handout about one of them.

ASSIGNMENTS

Lipsynch for your life! (once in the semester)

Each week of the syllabus is associated with a song. Two or three of you will engage in a lipsynch battle prepared to that song, and you will be judged by a panel of your peers (the previous week's performers). This exercise draws not only from the cultures we will be studying, but also asks us to stake our body in research, theory, and pedagogy.

Club ethnography (September 5th, write-up due September 13th)

We will, as a class, go to Oil Can Harry's on Sunday September 5th from 10pm to 2am. Each student will be assigned a different aspect to observe for the night: choreography, sartorial style, architecture, commercial transactions, drag show, DJ sets, etc. We will talk about how to do ethnography in class, and we will debrief on this activity on September 17th. You will submit your field notes (between 3 and 4 pages double spaced, and observations/reflections,) to share with the class on the 13th.

Interview project (due online September 27th)

You will conduct a recorded interview (at least 30 minutes) with someone who works in the nightlife industry: drag artists, pageant producers, bar owners, party organizer, managers, bartenders, bouncers, promoters, barbacks, photographers, go go dancers. You should engage them in questions about how they got into the industry; a typical day on the job; the ways they negotiate their work; opinions about nightlife, clientele, money; and more lengthy life histories. You will select 5 minutes of the interview to upload online (continuous or spliced together) along with a 100-word intro. We will listen to these before class and respond as a group.

Handout (once in the semester)

You will choose one of the optional readings on the syllabus and prepare a 1-page double-sided handout that covers: a) the research question, b) the social/cultural/political stakes, c) the object(s) of analysis, d) the method of research, e) the process of analysis and theories applied, f) the author's conclusions, g) a review of the author's bibliography (if available) and h) further questions or lines of inquiry.

Sissy That Talk (Friday Dec 5)

On Friday December 5th, we will present the products of our research to an open audience through performance, soundscapes, infographics, videos, cartoons, etc.

COURSE SCHEDULE

AUGUST 27 -- Happy Hour: introductions and preparations

- 1) Román, David. "Dance Liberation." *Theatre Journal* 55.3 (2003): vii-xxiv.
- 2) Cohen, Cathy. "Punk, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Henderson, E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. 22-51.
- 3) Morris, Mitchell. *The Persistence of Sentiment: Display and Feeling in the Popular Music of the 1970s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
Chapter 5: The Voice of Karen Carpenter (pages 129-135 only!)

SEPTEMBER 3 -- "The Way We Were" by Barbara Streisand: remembering queer nights past

2:45 – 3:15: Prepare for club ethnography exercise

- 1) Holter, Ike. *Hit The Wall*. 2012.
- 2) Vogel, Shane. "Where Are We Now? Queer World Making and Cabaret Performance." *GLQ* 6.1 (2000): 29-60.
- 3) Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.
Chapter 11: "Pansies on Parade": Prohibition and the Spectacle of the Pansy
Chapter 12: The Exclusion of Homosexuality from the Public Sphere in the 1930s
- 4) Newton, Esther. *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
Part I: How the Grove Became Gay
Part IV: The Lesbian Minority 1936-1980
- 5) Echols, Alice. *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.
Chapter 1: I Hear a Symphony: Black Masculinity and the Disco Turn
Chapter 3: Ladies' Night: Women and Disco
- 6) Lawrence, Tim. *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
Chapter 1: Beginnings: House Parties and Discotheques
Chapter 2: Consolidation: Party Pariahs and the Path to Permanent Revolution

Optional

- Limelight*. Dir. Billy Corben, 2011.
- Screaming Queens: The Riots at Compton's Cafeteria*. Dir. Susan Stryker & Victor Silverman, 2005.
- Kennedy, Elizabeth and Medline Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
Chapter 2: Lesbian bar culture in the 1930s and 1940s.
Chapter 4: Race and class in the lesbian community of the 1950s.

SEPTEMBER 6 -- Meet at Oil Can Harry at 10pm; \$5 cover

SEPTEMBER 10 -- "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton: political economies & the night

2:45 – 3:15: Discussion of Interview project

- 1) Rivera-Servera, Ramón H. *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.
Chapter 5: Dancing Reggaetón with Cowboy Boots: Frictive Encounters in Queer Latinidad
- 2) Wilson, Ara. *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
Chapter 2: The Economies of Intimacy in the Go-Go Bar
- 3) Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998): 547-66.
- 4) Grazian, David. *On the Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
Chapter 2: Dynamic Imagineering: The Staging of Urban Nightlife
Chapter 3: Spin Control: Public Relations and Reality Marketing

Optional

- Lawrence, Tim. "Big Business, Real Estate Determinism, and Dance Culture in New York, 1980-88." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23.3 (2011): 288-306.
- Griffin, Hollis. "Your Favorite Stars, Live on Our Screens: Media Culture, Queer Publics, and Commercial Space." *The Velvet Light Trap* 62.1 (2008): 15-28.
- Seymour, Craig. *All I Could Bare: My Life in the Strip Clubs of Gay Washington, D.C.* New York: Atria Books, 2008.
- Gutierrez, Laura G. *Performing Mexicanidad: Vendedoras Y Cabareteras on the Transnational Stage.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Chapter 3 Fue En Un Cabaret: Nation, Melodrama, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Mexican Performance

SEPTEMBER 13: Ethnography write-up due online

SEPTEMBER 17

- 12:30 – 1:15: Debrief on Oil Can Harry
1:30 – 3:15: Como La Dancefloor: artist talk by AB Soto

SEPTEMBER 24 -- "We Found Love in a Hopeless Place" by Rihanna: politics of space and place

- 1) Hanhardt, Christina. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
Chapter 5: Canaries of the Creative Age: Queer Critiques of Real Estate in the Twenty-First Century
- 2) Johnson, E. Patrick. "Feeling the Spirit in the Dark: Expanding Notions of the Sacred in the African-American Gay Community." *Callaloo* 21.2 (1998): 399-416.
- 3) Livermon, Xavier. "Soweto Nights: Making Black Queer Space in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 21.508-525 (2013).
- 4) Tongson, Karen. *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries*. Sexual Cultures. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
Chapter 6: Love Among the Ruins: Contact, Creativity, and Klub Fantasy

Optional

- McCune, Jeffrey Q. "'Out' in the Club: The Down Low, Hip-Hop, and the Architecture of Black Masculinity." *Text & Performance Quarterly* 28.3 (2008): 298-314.
- Heap, Chad C. *Slumming : Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*. Historical Studies of Urban America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
Chapter 6: The Pansy and Lesbian Craze in White and Black
Small Town Gay Bar. Dir. Malcolm Ingram, 2006.
- King, Katie. "Audre Lorde's Lacquered Layerings: The Lesbian Bar as a Site of Literary Production." *Cultural Studies* 2.3 (1988): 321-42.
- Manalansan, Martin F. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
Chapter 3: "Out There": The topography of race and desire in the global city
- Wilson, James F. *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies : Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. Triangulations: Lesbian/Gay/Queer Theater/Drama/Performance. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
Chapter 1: "Gimme a Pigfoot and Bottle of Beer": Parties, Performances, and Privacy in the "Other" Harlem Renaissance(s)

SEPTEMBER 27 -- interview projects due online

OCTOBER 1 -- "Time After Time" by Cyndi Lauper: queer temporalities

- 12:30 – 1:45pm: Discussion
2 – 3:15pm: Debrief on interview projects

- 1) Vogel, Shane. *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
Chapter 3: Closing Time: Langston Hughes and the Queer Poetics of Harlem Nightlife
- 2) Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. Sexual Cultures. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
Chapter 7: What's that smell? queer temporalities and subcultural lives
- 3) Muñoz, José Esteban. "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts." *Women & Performance* 8.2 (1996): 5-16.
- 4) Vargas, Deborah R. "Punk's Afterlife in Cantina Time." *Social Text* 31.3 (2013): 57-73.

Optional

Allen, Jafari. "For 'the Children', Dancing the Beloved Community." *Souls* 11.3 (2009): 311-26

OCTOBER 8

1 – 3pm: Everything Is Austin: panel with Austin nightlife workers

OCTOBER 15 -- "Last night a DJ saved my life" by Indeep: sounding queer

12:30 – 1:15: Discussion

1:30 – 3:15pm: Salaam E Ishq: artist talk by DJ Rekha

- 1) Parédez, Deborah. *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
Chapter 5: "Como La Flor" reprised: queering Selenidad
- 2) Amico, Stephen. "'I Want Muscles: House Music, Homosexuality, and Masculine Signification.'" *Popular Music* 20 (2001): 359-78.
- 3) Roque Ramirez, Horacio N. "'Mira, Yo Soy Boricua Y Estoy Aquí': Rafa Negrón's Pan Dulce and the Queer Sonic Latinaje of San Francisco." *CENTRO Journal* xix.1 (2007): 275-313.
- 4) Royster, Francesca T. *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-Soul Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.
Chapter 5: "Feeling like a woman, looking like a man, sounding like a no-no": Grace Jones and the performance of "strange" in the post-soul moment

Optional

Gamson, Joshua. *The Fabulous Sylvester : The Legend, the Music, the Seventies in San Francisco*. 1st ed. New York: H. Holt, 2005.

Chapter 8: I Feel Real

Chapter 9: Flame (on the dancefloor)

Dyer, Richard. "In Defence of Disco." *Gay Left* Summer 1979: 20-23.

Lawrence, Tim. "In Defence of Disco (Again)." *New Formations* 58.Summer (2006): 128-46.

Nyong'o, Tavia. "I Feel Love: Disco and Its Discontents." *Criticism* 50.1 (2008): 101(12)

OCTOBER 22 -- No class, various options offered throughout the week; attendance at one is required

Walking tour of Austin's East Side

Tour of bathhouse

Tour of gay bar

OCTOBER 29 -- "Private Dancer" by Tina Turner: get on the dancefloor

- 1) Buckland, Fiona. *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.
Chapter 4: The order of play: choreographing queer politics
- 2) Lawrence, Tim. "Disco and the Queering of the Dance Floor." *Cultural Studies* 25.2 (2011): 230-43.
- 3) Muñoz, José Esteban. "Gesture, Ephemera, and Queer Feeling: Approaching Kevin Aviance." *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and Off the Stage*. Ed. Desmond, Jane. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. 423-44.
- 4) Cvetkovich, Ann. "White Boots and Combat Boots: My Life as a Lesbian Go-Go Dancer." *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and Off the Stage*. Ed. Desmond, Jane. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. 315-48.

Optional

Rivera-Servera, Ramón H. *Performing Queer Latinidad : Dance, Sexuality, Politics*. Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Chapter 4: Quotidian Utopias: Latino/a Queer Choreographies

Blanco Borelli, Melissa. "'¿Y Ahora Qué Vas a Hacer, Mulata?': Hip Choreographies in the Mexican Cabaretera Film *Mulata* (1954)." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 18.3 (2008): 215-33.

Dudrah, Rajinder. "Queer as Desis: Secret Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Bollywood Films in Diasporic Urban Ethnoscapes." *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*. Ed. Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 288-307

Peterson, Grant Tyler. "Clubbing Masculinities: Gender Shifts in Gay Men's Dance Floor Choreographies." *Journal of Homosexuality* 58.5 (2011): 608-25.

Tewksbury, Richard. "A Dramaturgical Analysis of Male Strippers." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 2.4 (1994).

NOVEMBER 5

Check in, catch up, prepare for final symposium.

NOVEMBER 12 -- "I will survive" by Gloria Gaynor: health, safety, community

- 1) Thorpe, Rochella. "'A House Where Queers Go': African-American Lesbian Nightlife in Detroit, 1940-1975." *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*. Ed. Ellen Lewin. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. 40-61.
- 2) Valentine, David. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Introduction.
- 3) Bailey, Marlon M. *Butch Queens up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013. Chapter 5: "They want us sick": Ballroom culture and the politics of HIV/AIDS
- 4) Merabet, Sofian. "Disavowed Homosexualities in Beirut." *Middle East Report*. 230 (2004): 30-33.
- 5) Ballard, Finn Jackson. "Wu Tsang's *Wildness* and the Quest for Queer Utopia." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1.3 (2014): 461-65.

Optional:

Carrillo, Héctor. "Sexual Migration, Cross-Cultural Sexual Encounters, and Sexual Health." *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1.3 (2004): 58-70.

Buckland, Fiona. *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. Chapter 7: Mr. Mesa's Ticket: Memory and Dance at the Body Positive T-Dance

Hunter, Marcus Anthony. "The Nightly Round: Space, Social Capital, and Urban Black Nightlife." *City and Community* 9.2 (2010): 165-86.

NOVEMBER 19 -- "Dirrrty" by Christina Aguilera: Sex cultures

1) Delaney, Samuel. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.

2) Stryker, Susan. "Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transexual Sadomasochism." *Parallax* 14.1 (2008): 36-47.

Optional

Farrer, James. "Disco 'Super-Culture': Consuming Foreign Sex in the Chinese Disco." *Sexualities* 2.2 (1999): 147-66.

Levine, Martin P., and Michael S. Kimmel. *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Chapter 4: "(You Make Me Feel) Mighty Real": Hypermasculine Sexuality and Gender Confirmation

NOVEMBER 26 -- Settler Colonialism Break

DECEMBER 3 -- Wrap up + Prep for final symposium

DECEMBER 4 -- Sissy That Talk