

Queer Literary Studies

ENGL 184

Spring 2026 Section 80 Fully Online 4 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 02/06/2026

Contact Information

Instructor(s):	Daniel Lanza Rivers
Office Location:	Clark 420C
Email:	Daniel.rivers@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	MW 2-2:30 on Zoom (Link on Canvas home page)
Class Days/Time:	Tues/Thurs: 3 - 4:15 PM
Prerequisites:	Upper Division Standing

Course Description and Requisites

Examination of queerness in literature, history, and culture. Explores queerness as it exists across historical contexts, tracing its manifestations in various literary genres and in other cultural artifacts such as film and television, including the ways gender and sexuality intersect with race, class, and ability, as they relate to identity formation and structures of power.

Prerequisite(s): Upper division standing.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Late Work & Make Up Work Policy:

Every student is allowed to use a two-day extension on a written assignments once per term with prior notice. All late work (including late makeup work) will have its final grade reduced by ½ point for every three days it is late, and 1 point for every week that it is late. This penalty may be waived or reduced if you reach out to Dr. Rivers and start a conversation about any documented extenuating circumstances.

AI and Assistive Technology Policy:

This literature course is designed to cultivate your expertise in critical thinking, textual analysis, and critical reflection. The majority of the work in this class is text based, and the assignments ask you to evaluate and reflect on novels, poems, etc., with an emphasis on historical varieties of experience and expression, including works laced with ethical ambiguities and problems that don't have easy answers. Though AI is a useful tool for summarizing ideas and rehearsing perspectives from works LLMs have harvested, it is not an appropriate tool for our critical analysis and reflection assignments, which are designed to help you think through the complex and interconnected challenges facing our past, present, and future societies.

With this in mind, please note that no AI generated content will be accepted for credit. This includes work that has been "smoothed," including work that has been rewritten or revised using **Grammarly (and Grammarly Pro)** or the "smoothing" feature on digital translation platforms like **Google Translate**.

Per SJSU's Academic Integrity Policy on plagiarism, writings based on other students' work (or adapted from external summaries, etc.) will not be accepted for credit.

As a member of our learning community, your success will be based on *your own* ability to take focused notes, analyze challenging texts, work through difficult concepts, and work through your own thoughts in writing.

If you're struggling with an assignment or a text, please reach out to me (and/or the campus writing center) for help and support. Please, don't risk your grade, diminish your integrity, and frustrate your own opportunities to learn by passing someone (or something) else's work off as your own.

Assignments that contain AI-generated content (including work that is "smoothed" or revised using Google Translate or Grammarly) will receive 0 credit in this course. Submitters will be asked to meet with me before to discuss the assignment in question, as well as the next steps in SJSU's academic integrity process.

Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English

reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

Required Texts/Readings to Purchase or Rent:

Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home: a family tragicomic*, ISBN: 978-0618871711

R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the Rs*, ISBN: 978-1885030511

Ryka Aoki, *The Light from Uncommon Stars*, ISBN: 978-1250789082

Billy-Ray Belcourt, *A Minor Chorus*, ISBN: 978-1324021421

Course Requirements and Assignments

Classroom Participation (25%):

Students in this course are expected to log onto Zoom by the start of class time, with their videos on and their microphone functional, and with the day's assigned text ready for discussion, along with their reading notes. Participation activities cannot be made up in the case of absence. All students are expected to participate in classroom discussions in a curious and respectful manner. In addition to in-class assignments, your participation grade will also include a qualitative, end of term evaluation of your contributions across the term. Expectations for professional participation in a university-level class include: focused attention, appropriate use of technology, respectful communication, and treating our texts and topics with the seriousness they require.

In-Class Activities (Included in Participation Grade)

In-class response activities start at the beginning of the class day and last around 10 minutes. These informal reading responses will ask you to develop and/or reflect on a question related to the day's reading. Some of these assignments will be reflective, while others will ask you to respond to questions about the book, and develop material to share in small-group discussion.

Media Activities (Included in Participation Grade):

During many days of class, we will shift gears to engage a piece of media (a podcast, documentary, narrative film, animated movie, etc.). Viewing and listening guides for these media will be available on Canvas. Along with taking notes, these guides will ask you to compose reflection and/or connection questions that will support our class discussion of these art forms.

Reading Notes (20%):

On weeks when a Reading Response submission isn't due, students will be asked to upload their handwritten notes on a class text. These notes should be taken as you read, and should identify and respond to key concepts, quotes, moments, and insights from the week's reading. More details on this assignment are available on Canvas.

Canvas Reading Responses (25%):

Canvas Reading Response are synthesis activities that ask you to reflect across a whole book, or a series of texts. They will take roughly 1-1.5 hours to compose, and will be your chance to demonstrate that you have completed and analyzed the reading with focus, care, and self-direction. Your finished Canvas post should be between 1-3 paragraphs depending on the day, and they should respond to the prompt by analyzing key

insights, motifs, plot structures, and passages from the given text. *Once per semester, you may submit reading notes instead of submitting a reading response. When you do this, please use the comment feature to note that you are using your "Reading Notes Freebie."*

Classroom Facilitation (10%):

Each student will work in a pair to help facilitate discussion of one text during the term. Students will select their date at the beginning of the term, and should work in pairs to consult at least 1 external source (each) to develop a brief presentation on the text (and/or its contexts) on the given class day.

Facilitators are encouraged to bring in elements of author biography, cultural context, media, literary/queer/trans theory, and/or current events that enrich our discussions of this text. The presentation material should be between 8-11 minutes (with an allowance for 2 minutes of media, which does not count toward your presentation time). Student groups/pairs should submit a short overview of their presentation at least 24 hours before the class they are scheduled to facilitate.

When you are facilitating, I will ask both you and your partner to extend the Reading Response connected to your facilitation text by 1 page and respond to the following prompt:

What external source/s did you consult for your facilitation? Please identify the argument or significant insight that arose across your supplemental readings for this week, and select 2-3 quotes that capture this insight and its nuances. Then spend a long paragraph discussing how this text contributes to your understanding of the text, its contexts, and its connections to other topics or readings from the course. You will also be asked to discuss the breakdown of work among your team/pair.

Connections Project (10%)

At the end of the first unit, you will be asked to complete a connections project that either a) explores one of our texts in greater depth or b) analyzes a theme or connection across multiple texts. More details on this assignment will become available as we approach the end of unit one.

Final Project: Queer Literary Cultures (10%)

This final project asks you to undertake a critical, creative, or archival engagement with queer literary cultures. You will identify your own topic and develop your project across the final unit of the course. As you do so, I'll ask you to submit a proposal and research summary. Your final project can take the form of a) traditional interpretive analysis paper or b) a creative project. More details will be made available on Canvas at the start of April.

Grading Information

Grading Breakdown:

Category	Percentage of Total Grade
Classroom Participation	25%
Canvas Reading Responses	25%
Reading Notes	20%
Classroom Facilitation	10%
Connections Project	10%
Queer Literary Studies Project	10%

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Class Schedule

Please Note: This schedule is subject to change in response to external circumstances (such as campus closure, etc.), and/or classroom dynamics.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		UNIT 1: Queer Histories, Queer Coming of Age

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Thurs 1/22	In-Class Activity: Review syllabus and discuss expectations
2	Tues 1/27	Reading Due: Allison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> , to the end of Chapter 3 In-Class Activity: Choose Facilitation Days Assignments Due: Complete Name Coach Entry
2	Thurs 1/29	Reading Due: Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> to the end of Chapter 4 Assignment Due: Reading Notes 1: <i>Fun Home</i> (Due to Canvas by 2PM)
3	Tues 2/3	Reading Due: Finish Allison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> Class Facilitation: _____
3	Thurs 2/5	Reading Due: N/A In-Class Activity: Discuss Fun Home & TBD Assignment Due: Reading Response 1: <i>Fun Home</i> (Due to Canvas by 2PM)

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
4	Tues 2/10	<p>Reading Due: Audre Lorde, "Man Child: a Black Lesbian Feminist Response" & "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" from <i>Sister Outsider</i></p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 2: Audre Lorde (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
4	Thurs 2/12	<p>Reading Due: Audre Lorde, "Coal," "Litany for Survival," & "Poetry is Not a Luxury" & José Esteban Muñoz, "Queerness" from <i>Cruising Utopia</i></p>
5	Tues 2/17	<p>Reading Due: Gloria Anzaldúa, "<i>movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traccionan</i>"</p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>[Last Day to Drop Without a "W"]</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Response 2: <i>Audre Lorde & Gloria Anzaldua</i> (Due to Canvas by 11:59PM)</p>
5	Thurs 2/19	<p>Reading Due: R. Zamora Linmark, <i>Rolling the Rs</i></p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
6	Tues 2/24	<p>Reading Due: R. Zamora Linmark, <i>Rolling the Rs</i></p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 3: <i>Rolling the Rs</i>. (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
6	Thurs 2/26	<p>Reading Due: Finish <i>Rolling the Rs</i>.</p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Introduce Connections Project & Watch <i>Sort Of</i></p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Response 3: <i>Rolling the Rs</i> (Due to Canvas by 11:59PM on Friday 2/27)</p>
7	Tues 3/3	<p>No Class Meeting: Watch <i>Paris is Burning</i> on Kanopy and complete Media Response</p> <p>Homework: Work on your connections project, due Friday</p>
7	Thurs 3/5	<p>No Reading Due:</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Paris is Burning</i> & Connections Projects Check Ins</p> <p>Class Facilitation (<i>Paris is Burning</i>): _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Connections Project Due by 11:59PM on Friday 3/6</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		UNIT 2: Queer and Trans Presents and Futures
8	Tues 3/10	<p>Reading Due: "Asya," from <i>Hijab Butch Blues</i> by Lamya H.</p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 4: <i>Hijab Butch Blues</i> (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
8	Thurs 3/12	<p>No Reading Due: Get a head start on Ryka Aoki, <i>The Light from Uncommon Stars</i></p> <p>In-Class Activity: TBD</p>
9	Tues 3/17	<p>Reading Due: Ryka Aoki, <i>The Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, Read until you reach the end of Chapter 14 (you'll see the heading "April," pg. 137 in print)</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 5: <i>Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, Through Chapter 14 (Due to Canvas by 2PM on Tuesday 3/17 or Thursday 3/19; Notes should be current with chosen submission date)</p>
9	Thurs 3/19	<p>Reading Due: Ryka Aoki, <i>The Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, read until the end of chapter 17 (You'll see the heading "Matía & Sons" at the start of the next chapter, p. 167 in print)).</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 5: <i>Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, through Chapter 17 (Due to Canvas by 2PM on Tuesday 3/17 or Thursday 3/19; Notes should be current with chosen submission date)</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
10	Tues 3/24	<p>Reading Due: Aoki, <i>Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, read until the end of Chapter 30 (you'll see the heading "November", p287 in print)</p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Notes 6: <i>Light from Uncommon Stars</i> through Chapter 30, (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
10	Thurs 3/26	No Class Meeting
		Spring Break! No Class Meetings
11	Tues 4/7	<p>Reading Due: Finish Ryka Aoki, <i>The Light from Uncommon Stars</i> (p. 369 in print)</p> <p>Class Facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignment Due: Reading Response 4: <i>Light from Uncommon Stars</i>, (Due to Canvas by 11:59PM on Wed 4/9)</p>
11	Thurs 4/9	<p>No reading due</p> <p>In-Class Activity: TBD</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
12	Tues 4/14	<p>Reading Due: Billy-Ray Belcourt, <i>A Minor Chorus</i> (to p. 108)</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Reading Quiz & Discuss Final Project</p>
12	Thurs 4/16	<p>Reading Due: Finish <i>A Minor Chorus</i></p> <p>Class facilitation: _____</p> <p>Assignments Due: Reading Response 5: <i>A Minor Chorus</i> (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
13	Tues 4/21	<p>Reading Due: KB Brookins, <i>Freedom House</i></p> <p>Class facilitation: _____</p>
13	Thurs 4/23	<p>Reading Due: Finish Brookins, <i>Freedom House</i></p> <p>Assignments Due: Reading Response 6: <i>Freedom House</i> (Due to Canvas by 2PM)</p>
14	Tues 4/28	<p>No Reading Due</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Semester Reflection Discussion</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
14	Thurs 4/30	No Class Meeting: Work on Final Projects
15	Tues 5/5	In-Class Activity: Watch and Discuss Film: TBD Assignment Due: All Late Work Due to Canvas by 11:59PM on Tues 5/5
15	Thurs 5/7	In-Class Activity: Watch and Discuss Film: TBD
17	Finals Period	Final Project Due by 11:59PM on Wed 5/13