

**QUEERNESS AT THE POTLUCK**



**STORYTELLING, RELIGION,  
& HISTORY**

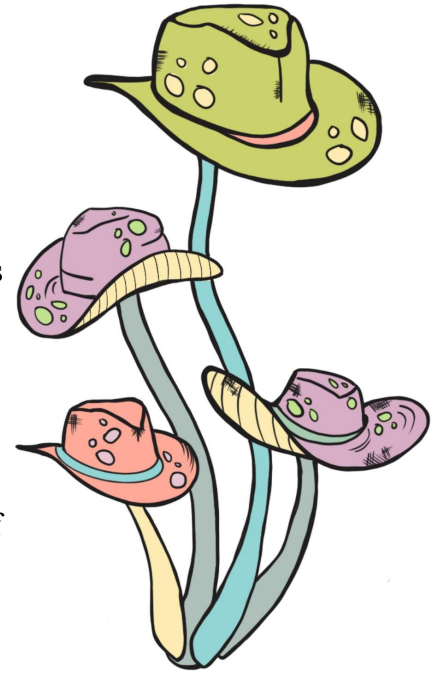
INSTRUCTED BY:

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## Course Description:

This course on 2slgbtq+ storytelling, religion, and history in the American South begins with *you* as the point of departure. Our relationships are literally the basis from which our ideas and projects grow. Therefore, we practice and teach collaboration throughout this course: from co-conceptualizing projects in potluck activities to co-producing works of analysis and art that reimagine archival methods for religious studies in which 2slgbtq+ identity, history, and experience thrive. Throughout the semester, you will immerse yourself in various forms of media, written work, dialogue with one another, and your personal experiences in learning and practicing theories of 2slgbtq+ scholars, artists, activists, and writers. We will learn together how to build intentional relationships while navigating new concepts, ideas, and questions from varied social locations. Aligning ourselves with the essential concepts and beliefs of Southerners on New Ground (SONG)<sup>1</sup>, this course uplifts the experiences and histories of 2slgbtq+ people and their spiritual practices, theories, and worldviews. We will build relationships in our small groups through drawing connections between personal experience, 2slgbtq+ histories and theories, and religious studies methods in conversation with one another, through practical, written, and otherwise creative formats (such as zines, playlists, and archival work). Oscillating between small- and large-group settings for knowledge production inherently deconstructs the traditional modes of instruction and learning: we understand that our interpersonal relationships are one vital source of change. Starting with *us*, we can make larger connections between current and past attacks on 2slgbtq+ autonomy and material access with racism, classism, xenophobia, and ableism, while also understanding our positionality/place/what we *do*.



In discussing the grand historical narrative of the South, we will sketch its religious history with accountability to the region's specific threads of conservative, Christian, cis-heterosexual patriarchal sexual and gender norms. As we move together through new and challenging methods for reading religion, we will collaboratively construct our own questions for the study of religion grounded in 2slgbtq+ praxis to engage various forms of intellectual labor, personal experience, and communal desire. Working in small and large groups, you will experiment with digital and material archival resources, conventional and unconventional *scholarly* sources, creative writing styles, and mapping soundscapes to interact with numerous themes, topics, figures, and objects of 2slgbtq+ religious history in the American South. Our semester-long co-thinking is guided by the questions: **What does southern 2slgbtq+ storytelling tell us about religion? What does it tell us about the South?**

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<sup>1</sup> [Southerners on New Ground \(SONG\)](#) “work to build and maintain a Southern LGBTQ infrastructure for organizers strong enough to combat the Southern-specific strategy of the Right to divide and conquer Southern oppressed communities using the tools of rural isolation, Right-wing Christian infrastructure, racism, environmental degradation, and economic oppression.”

## Course Objectives

- **Identify** the various foundational principles, peoples, practices, and theories of religious studies and 2slgbtq+ studies.
- **Learn** to locate, access, and engage with relevant primary and secondary sources. We will focus on unconventional sources or those source materials relegated to the margins of what is typically deemed “scholarly,” such as zines, films, graphic novels, lyrics and beats, oral histories, etc.
- **Form** accountable relationships in building material and theoretical connections through collaborative, creative praxis of the methodologies, theories, and otherwise strategies of *doing* the work of religious and 2slgbtq+ studies that we will explore together this semester.
- **Understand** how religious identity operates in relation to other identity markers such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc., and identify your own positionality (and responsibilities, histories, communities, etc.) within such relations.
- **Learn** how to produce knowledge in small and large groups to utilize collaborative methods for engaging with our sources, communicating our findings, and practically employing relevant takeaways in community with others.

## Required Texts

All readings will be posted as pdfs to Canvas and/or will be available through the FSU library website as an ebook. You are expected to read all assigned readings before the class for which the reading is assigned. You will find the schedule of readings linked at the end of this syllabus.

## Course Requirements<sup>2</sup>

### **50% Participation: Potluck Activities<sup>3</sup>**

Over the course of this semester, you will meet in potlucks (small groups) each week to discuss readings and assignments, complete activities, and collaborate together. We will assign potlucks during the first week of class and you will cultivate community agreements for how you will interact and communicate with one another and interact with the works you engage with. While not expecting all potluck members to become best friends, it is our hope that throughout this semester, your potlucks will grow into accountable spaces of support, resources, and care. We will practice various strategies for growing our skills in care with short, 5-minute check-in

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<sup>2</sup> We will use the university’s official grading scale on Canvas for final grades. However, we are also committed to providing comprehensive written and verbal feedback throughout the semester on activities, potluck participation, and group discussion. You will always receive feedback on Canvas within 2 weeks of submission unless otherwise communicated with an instructor. If you prefer face-to-face feedback you may arrange a time with an instructor to speak. We encourage you to bring your questions and concerns to office hours, potluck work, and via email/Canvas.

<sup>3</sup> Many identify the South by way of culturally significant dishes—like grits, fried catfish, or chicken and waffles. So, while potlucks may not be distinctly southern, the culture around food and the types of food we make in the South definitely are and in this course, we will learn how these narratives are racialized and gendered. Potlucks are also a prominent fixture of community making and sustaining in queer, working-class, religious, and rural communities. Read more [here](#) and [here](#) on the queer histories of potlucks.

activities grounded in a question, quote, or piece of media from an artist, scholar, author, and/or actor. These materials are ones that we will not directly engage with together this semester but will be of great supplement, challenge, and companion to texts we take time to carefully and collectively read. You may check out a few examples of what these check-in activities are like [here](#).

The grade portion of Potluck Work comes from the Potluck Activities. You are required to submit responses to a total of **three** potluck activities. To receive full credit for the activity, you must carefully follow the activity instructions, complete the activity, and submit your answers to the reflection questions for each of the three activities you choose. There will be six chances to complete this requirement which gives you the opportunity to choose which activities and reflection questions will best help you understand the course material and construct your Collected Works Zine final project. You will participate in every activity you are present for, but **you have to submit responses to three activities**.

To submit your completed Potluck Activity you will:

1. Answer the reflection questions for the activity in the corresponding Canvas discussion board. The activity name will match the discussion board title (ex. The reflection questions you complete for the Lil Nas X Activity should be submitted in the Lil Nas X Activity Discussion forum on Canvas).
2. If the activity requires you to create a product (such as a zine, a playlist, etc.), you will submit your completed activity by the beginning of the next class session (ex. if you complete a playlist in class Tuesday, it is due at the start of the class session Thursday).
  - a. If you create a digital product, you will submit this product by emailing it to us before the beginning of class following the day we complete the activity in class. If you create a tangible object then it is due to us when you arrive in class.

### **20% Community Glossary**

We will hold our community glossary close throughout the semester as a material accountability source for our class discussions and other collective interactions. You may find the community glossary guidelines and formatted document [here](#) and in the semester schedule below. The grade portion of the community glossary is divided into two parts:

>> 10% beginning of semester glossary term definition + glossary in-class activity, and potluck and large group participation

>> 10% end of semester glossary term reflection + glossary use(s) in-class activity, potluck and large group participation

### **30% Collected Works Zine**

Your final project for this course will be a Collected Works Zine. We will learn about zines—their production, history, and un/common utilities—but you may also want to think of

this project as something like a collected resource scrapbook or portfolio from our work together this semester. Much of the work you complete in class will go into your final Collected Works Zine in whatever medium/aesthetic/style you desire, however, you must organize your zine around answering two of our course questions: ***What does southern 2slgbtq+ storytelling tell us about religion? What does it tell us about the South?***

Together in class we will discuss, brainstorm, and practice various strategies, pathways, and methods for beginning to answer these questions. The engagement materials and supplemental materials for each unit and potluck activity will also operate as primary resources that you may (probably should) choose to include in your zine. You may also want to include work by the scholars, artists, activists, and authors we engage as brief check-in activities. Whatever you decide to include and however you choose to present your work and findings, you must abide by the following instructions on the next page:

**Instructions:**

1. Your complete zine must work towards answering the broad questions: what does southern 2slgbtq+ storytelling tell us about religion? What does it tell us about the South?
2. Your zine must be 10-12 zine pages or 900-1100 words.
  - For this project, the size of a single zine page is 4x6 inches (or the size of a typical photograph print). We will discuss in class and on a project-to-project basis the equivalent of this content requirement for those of you who choose to present your zines in different formats and mediums.
3. At least two of the resources you engage through potluck activities must be featured in your zine.
  - One of the primary utilities of zines is to disseminate resources (and how to access those resources) to communities in need. Think of your zine as having this utility—include resources you engaged throughout the semester that helped you learn more and/or something new about 2slgbtq+ religious studies for the purpose of guiding someone who may engage your zine in how they may access and learn from these resources as well.
4. YOU must fill your zine!
  - The *How do YOU know?* portion of this project is as significant as the leading course question of *what does southern 2slgbtq+ storytelling tell us about religion? What does it tell us about the South?* You may want to think back to the beginning of the semester and return to your senses and religion mood board—What is your relationship to the material we have engaged this semester given your own social location? What are the reasons one must be aware of their own positionality? How may one learn to do so?
5. You must cite ALL of your sources.

- Throughout the semester we will discuss strategies for growing research communities which include questions of citation practices and ethics. How you choose to cite your sources may vary depending on the format you present your zine. We will brainstorm our community best practices re: citations together in-class and each of you will choose how to cite the sources you include in your Collected Works Zine in conversation with your potlucks, other peers, and us.

### **Course Protocols**

During the first week of class we will collaborate together on setting the guidelines, standards, expectations, and accountability measures for the following course aspects:

- Office Hours: when/how would you like to communicate with us?
- Late/missed work expectations
- Communication preferences: with us, as a class, in potlucks, etc.
- Accountability measures: for discussions, conflicts, imbalances, etc.

It is our hope that we may imagine together aspects of this course that will make way for forming new relationships where we are intentional about the ethics and politics of how we interact with one another, ourselves, the texts and wisdom we will engage, the land, and the divine. In the first week of class, we will hold space for thinking through the lines of accountability, communication, and care that we want to forge in the context of our course throughout the semester. We offer this quote to help you think of your active + sustained role in the making of this syllabus (and the many aspects, details, intentions, etc., within it):

*whatever your notion of syllabus, it should be a living and elastic thing, responsive to shifting material conditions, flexible enough to survive critique & willing to self-destruct if it has outlived its usefulness as a tool of knowledge. -@jasminprix*

**A Note on Care:** As learned and adapted from our mentor Dr. Laura McTighe, it is important to recognize and name the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, academic, or political. At no time has this been truer than now as we continue to live amid layered pandemics. In tandem with our class-created discussion guidelines, we will enter each discussion with care and our prepared support resources to assist you in times of need as we move through potentially sensitive and alarming material. Throughout the time we are in this course together, please make yourself—your own health and wellness—a priority, and extend that same care to your classmates and fellow community members. Resources exist to support you, and our movements for justice are deeply and widely felt. We encourage you to make use of all the tools and resources you can, and please reach out if you need help finding or accessing materials you may need during (and after!) our time together this semester. We will learn about and share many strategies for surviving and thriving and

experiment with various practices of collective and self-care throughout the semester together with this [thread](#) by Dr. McTighe as one of our guiding principles as well as the offering from [The Nap Ministry](#) below:

*Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. -@thenapministry*

**Weekly Schedule:** This schedule roughly outlines what a typical week in the semester will consist of. As with the semester schedule, this agenda is subject to change (and probably will change) to account for shared interests, moments of pause and reflection, and conflict as we move through the semester together.

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	engage with assigned materials and come prepared with questions, comments, appreciations, connections to other works, etc. on the relevant material/topics	prepare any assigned materials needed to complete the day's potluck activity and participate in large(r) group discussions.
[during class]	(15-20 minutes) potluck check-in, question prep (40 minutes) small/large group discussion (10 minutes) individual reflection/prep for the upcoming activity	(5-10 minutes) potluck check-in, activity instructions (30-40 minutes) complete activity or listen to primary/guest speaker (15-20 minutes) small/large group discussion (5-10 minutes) individual reflection/prep for upcoming readings



## Semester Schedule

week 1: [intro] ...*spent my days on a mountain, baby...*<sup>4</sup>

**Who are you, and how do you know? Who are we? And how will we learn together?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]		explore the following <a href="#">SONG, God Is Change video 2020</a> & <a href="#">Emergent Strategy Principles, adrienne maree brown</a> & listen to <a href="#">Kalahari Down by Orville Peck</a>
[during class]	introductions & review the syllabus	create community guidelines & potluck and glossary assignments

week 2: [unit 1] ...*i'm always down for hangin' around...*

**What is religion? the South? Where and how is 2slgbtq+history made? located?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	prepare glossary definitions & read "Front Porch Revolution: Resilience Space, Demonic Grounds, and the Horizons of a Black Feminist Otherwise" by Laura McTighe & Deon Haywood	take 20-30 minutes to explore the <a href="#">Union Queer Faith Project</a> & prepare glossary definitions
[during class]	<a href="#">community glossary</a> part 1	<a href="#">community glossary</a> part 2 & group discussion

week 3: **What and Where is the American South? Who/what is southern? How do we remember and envision the South?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read <a href="#">Reed, "The South: Where is it? What is it?"</a> & <a href="#">Eaves, "Black Geographic Possibilities - On a Queer Black South"</a>	read <a href="#">Blackwood, "We are Everywhere": How rural queer communities connect through storytelling</a> & listen to an episode of <a href="#">"Country Queers"</a>
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">group discussion</a>

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<sup>4</sup> Learn more about Orville Peck's song about young queer love [here](#).



**week 4: Who are 2slgbtq+ people? Who are queer people of faith? What do stories of 2slgbtq+ identity and religion teach us about history and community?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	watch <a href="#">Ma-Nee Chacaby talks about Two Spirit identities</a> & <a href="#">Explore publications of “The Queer Muslim”</a> & <a href="#">@queersikhnetwork on IG</a>	read <a href="#">Faith in Full Color Volume 1</a> & <a href="#">Faith in Full Color Volume 2</a>
[during class]	group discussion	group discussion & <a href="#">mini zine activity</a>

**week 5: What is history/ a historical narrative? What about historical myths? What are the ways these narratives are formed and sustained?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read James T. Sears, <i>Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South</i> , “Awakenings and Departures” (p. 150-164), “Communities of Memory” (p. 312-323) (pdf on Canvas)	read “Queering the South”, Donna Jo Smith (p. 370-385), <i>Carryin’ On in the Lesbian and Gay South</i> , ed. John Howard (pdf on Canvas)
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">group discussion</a>

**week 6: Who writes history? Who collects (and therefore discards) history? Who benefits from this? Who doesn’t? What choices must be made?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read <a href="#">Queer and Trans History in the Stacks</a> , Gino Romero & FSU Special Collections & Watch <a href="#">Reina Gossett: Historical Erasure as Violence</a>	read Emily Drabinski, <a href="#">“Queering the Catalogue: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction”</a>
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">PRIDE Metadata Review Presentation slides</a> to accompany lecture by Sam Davis

**week 7 [unit 2]: ...maybe, next time i'll take you with me...**

**What are otherwise methods of telling history? What is storytelling? How have marginalized communities preserved/recorded their own histories?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	watch <a href="#">Empathy and Storytelling, Toni Morrison</a> & read <a href="#">History and Empathy, Jorge Rodriguez</a>	read "Writing with Crooked Lines" by Laura Pérez & "Queeranderismo" by Berenice Dimas from <i>Fleshing the Spirit</i> , ed. Elisa Facio and Irene Lara (pdf on Canvas) & engage* with <a href="#">Divinely Protected by Coyote Park</a>
[during class]	a guided exploration of the "Transgender Spirituality Resources" collected by <a href="#">Kamyryn Wolf</a> (link on Canvas)	free-write & storytelling activity

**week 8: What is oral history? How are oral histories collected and sustained?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read E Patrick Johnson, <i>Sweet Tea: Black gay men of the South, an oral history</i> , E Patrick Johnson, Ch 3: "Church Sissies: Gayness and the Black Church," pp.183-255 (pdf on Canvas)  you may also want to take a look at this <a href="#">Southern Spaces Interview with E Patrick Johnson</a>	explore <a href="#">LGBT Oral History Project of North Florida</a> pt 1
[during class]	visit by Special Collections librarians, Read FSU News, <a href="#">It's a Lot Like Falling In Love: Legacies of Naiad Press and the Tallahassee Lesbian Community</a>	<a href="#">LGBT Oral History Project of North Florida activity</a>

**week 9: How are community archives created? What purposes may community archives serve? How do/can we archive for ourselves?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read <a href="#">Queer Southern History: Building Community Archives to Preserve a Diverse LGBTQ+ Legacy</a>	explore <a href="#">The Invisible Histories Project</a> + Read <a href="#">Archiving From Home</a>
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">Invisible Histories Project checklist &amp; guided questions activity</a> + Listen to snippets of podcast <a href="#">Episode 4: LGBTQ Southern Oral History and Activism</a> to discuss together in potlucks

**week 10: Where are communities made? How are community spaces remembered? What does this mean for 2slgbtq+ visibility? How can community spaces be religious?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read Jerry T. Watkins III, <i>Queering the Redneck Riviera</i> , “Drinkin’ and Carryin’ On in Search of Community” (p. 81-100) (pdf on Canvas)	explore <a href="#">LGBT Oral History Project of North Florida Pt 2</a>
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">making a monument potluck activity</a>

**week 11 [unit 3]: ...you say you're afraid, tell me not to frown...**

**What are the aftereffects of 2slgbtq+ visibility and representation? How do we see this in popular culture today?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read “Representation and its Limits” from <i>Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility</i> , eds. Gosset, Stanley, & Burton, pp.191-200. (pdf on Canvas) + you may also want to watch <i>We're Here</i> , “Farmington, New Mexico” (Season 1, Episode 4)	watch <i>Queer Eye</i> , “God Bless Gay” (Season 2, Episode 2)
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">Queer Eye potluck activity</a>

**week 12: What may archivists learn from trans femme theories of representation, history, and categorizations? How do these theories help us engage with religion through art and popular culture?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read “Cautious Living: Black Trans Women and the Politics of Domination,” Miss Major Griffin-Gracy and Cece Macdonald in conversation with Toshio Meronek from <i>Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility</i> , eds. Gosset, et al. (pdf on Canvas) & watch <a href="#">Transtastic 5 Herstory</a> (you should skip around to get the main ideas)	read <a href="#">NC Drag Culture &amp; The First Drag Queen Was A Former Slave</a> & take a few moments to listen through this <a href="#">Queer Country</a> playlist  + you may also want to check out <a href="#">a southern digital drag performance</a> by Louisiana Purchase
[during class]	group discussion	<a href="#">Lil Nas X potluck activity</a>

**week 13: How does music tell history? How does music convey religion? In what ways do 2slgbtq+ artists re/write and/or resist dominant historical narratives?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read “WEUSIOURU FUTURE PRONOUNS MANIFESTO” from <i>A Dirty South Manifesto: Sexual Resistance and Imagination in the New South</i> (pdf on Canvas)	read <a href="#">Artists Defining Queer Music Scene in Atlanta</a> & Ashon T. Crawley, <i>The Lonely Letters</i> , “shouting” (pdf on Canvas)
[during class]	group discussion	read <a href="#">Dolly Devotionals</a> together & complete <a href="#">community playlist activity</a>

**week 14 [outro]: ...keep an eye on that dusty highway...**

**What do gay bars tell us about religion? What do these otherwise spiritual spaces tell us about visibility, past, and present?**

	[tuesday]	[thursday]
[prior to class]	read Marie Cartier, <i>Baby, You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology before Stonewall</i> , Preface: Myrna’s Story (p. xi-xii) & Chapter 1: It Was the Only Place (p. 1-32) (pdf on Canvas)	work on your final project!
[during class]	watch 1/2 Southern Pride (2017), dir.	watch 1/2 Southern Pride

Malcolm Ingram & group discussion

(2017), dir. Malcolm Ingram &  
group discussion

**week 15: ...*tell my mother i'm nearly done.***

**Where are we now? Who are we now, and how do we know? What methods, resources, and/or questions are you taking from our collective?**

[tuesday]

[thursday]

[prior to class]

work on your final project!

work on your final project!

[during class]

work on your final project!

NO CLASS: COLLECTED  
WORKS ZINE DUE