

FMST 393
AIDS FILM & VIDEO
Winter 2016
Fridays 13h15-17h15
Location VA 114

Instructor: Ryan Conrad
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Course Description:

Avram Finklestein, an original member of one of the first AIDS activist art collectives called the Silence = Death project and later Gran Fury, observes that we are now witnessing the solidification of the history of AIDS in reference to the recent canonization of specific AIDS histories through art retrospectives like the “Gran Fury: Read My Lips” exhibition at New York University in 2012 and Harvard’s 2009 “ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993” exhibition. Finklestein is also referencing the solidifying of certain AIDS histories through recently released documentary films like *We Were Here* (2011), *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* (2012), and *Fire in the Blood* (2013). In addition to this corpus of AIDS documentaries, recent films about AIDS in the genre of historical fiction have gained critical acclaim, including: *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), *Test* (2013), and *The Normal Heart* (2014). While these new works are vital for a historical understanding of the ongoing AIDS epidemic, this course will focus more broadly on AIDS film and video from the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the early 1980s through the present moment.

This course exposes students to a wide variety of AIDS film and video from European and American directors. The selection of films accompanying this course varies not just in content, but form, genre and each raises unique questions about desire, the body, trauma, loss, and survival. This selection of film and video ranges from the nearly forgotten no-budget/low-budget activist documentary videos of the early 1980s to sleek multi-million dollar award winning Hollywood features. It is necessary to focus on this diverse range of AIDS films and videos from the beginning of the epidemic through present day in order to learn how formal strategies, aesthetic choices, intended audiences, affective structures, and visual representations of people living with AIDS have changed along with the epidemic over the last thirty years of film and video production. Critically engaging with this corpus illuminates how contemporary societies have, and continue to witness, frame, and make meaning of the ongoing epidemic through film and video.

Course Objectives:

- Through in-depth reading of assigned material and by regularly attending both screenings and lectures, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the various formal and aesthetic strategies deployed by film and video makers creating work about HIV/AIDS.
- Through in-class discussions students will learn to engage with scholarly and

activist writing that accompanies this corpus of HIV/AIDS films and videos in a critical fashion, formulating their thoughts, questions, and criticisms and sharing them with the instructor and fellow students.

- Through an in-class midterm exam students will demonstrate their mastery of the course materials and general knowledge of how HIV/AIDS has been represented in a diverse range of films and videos and to what end.
- Through work on individual research papers, students will be able to apply the intellectual skills they acquired in class to a research topic of their interest and will learn to express their ideas in well-organized written form. Course Prerequisites: In order to enroll in this course students must have already taken either:

Course Prerequisites

- FMST 392 Representation and Sexuality: Queer Cinema I **or**
- INTE 270 / FFAR 290 HIV/AIDS: Cultural, Social, and Scientific Aspects of the Pandemic

Course Policies:

Attendance

Attending each class is crucial to understanding the course material. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each class which you are responsible to sign. You are allowed no more than two absences. ***If you miss three or more classes you will automatically fail the course.*** If you must leave for any reason during the class, be sure to let the instructor know before class starts, and take care not to disturb your classmates as you exit.

Late submissions

To receive an extension, you will have to discuss your situation with the instructor in person at least one week before the deadline. ***No extensions are granted by email.*** If you miss class or an assignment deadline because of illness, a doctor's note must be provided, otherwise ***no late assignments will be accepted.***

Classroom environment

Because this course deals with a topic that remains controversial in our culture, it is essential to maintain a respectful and supportive classroom environment. While considering questions of human sexuality and HIV/AIDS, it is important to treat differences in personal values, feelings, and opinions as opportunities for learning

about and from others. All viewpoints, whether based on feminist analysis or traditional morality, are open to critical examination. You are not expected to conform to any set of sexual values, but encouraged to ask questions and share your own views during classroom discussions. Disagreeing with the instructor or fellow students is absolutely fine as long as you remain respectful and patient. If tensions or disagreements arise, remember to keep channels of listening and exchanging open, and to maintain the focus on learning.

No student is required to relate personal information of any kind in coursework or group discussions. You are, however, expected to keep any information garnered from those who do strictly confidential. Additionally, do not assume the sexual identity, gender identity, or the serostatus of your peers or the teaching team.

Course requirements:

You final grade will be calculated on the basis of the following five criteria:

- **ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION, 10%, weekly.**

You are expected to attend class each week fully prepared to participate in class discussions about readings, in-class viewing, and lectures.

- **ONE IN CLASS MIDTERM, 20%, in class February 19.**

For this assignment, you will complete an in class written exam where you will have the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned based on course readings, lectures, and screenings. This exam will focus on core concepts from the preceding thematic units that will be discussed at length during in-class lectures and discussions. The exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short written answers.

- **FILM REVIEW, worth 15%, due on Moodle anytime before April 1.**

For this assignment, you will write a 400-500 word review of a film or video from a list of possible films provided by the professor. After viewing the film on your own time outside of class, you will not simply offer your personal opinion on the film, but describe the context in which the film was made, the historical significance of the film, and what the film contributes to the corpus of AIDS film and video. All the film reviews will be compiled together in a 'zine and distributed to all students during last day of class. Because this course is only 13 weeks and there are many HIV/AIDS film and video works to learn about, this 'zine will provide an opportunity to share knowledge amongst students. You will sign up for a film to review the second week of class.

- **RESEARCH PROPOSAL, worth 10%, due in class March 11.**
- **RESEARCH PAPER, worth 40%, due April 22.**

For this assignment, you will carry out a simple research project exploring any aspect of HIV/AIDS film and video. Papers should be about *3,000 words* (8-10 pages). For your research, you will consult at least *four outside sources* that are not assigned in the class, at least *two of which should be academic* (peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or book chapters). In your paper, you will (1) outline your topic, connect it to the issues discussed in class, and formulate your research question(s); (2) describe, evaluate, and compare your sources; and (3) attempt to answer your research questions by analyzing the sources and proving an overview of the leading critical opinions on the topic.

To better organize your work on the research paper, you will be required to submit a proposal that will include (1) a paragraph describing your topic, (2) corpus (the film or films you will be discussing), (3) tentative outline, and (4) and an annotated bibliography. The proposal is due at the beginning of class during week 8.

The research paper is to be submitted to ***the assignment box of the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, FB-319 by April 22, 17h***. If you would like to receive your paper back with the instructor's feedback, please include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your submission.

Submit all assignments in hard copy, double-spaced, 12pt font, with your name and course number on the first page. No plastic folders or binders and ***absolutely no email submissions of research papers***.

- **RESEARCH CREATION IN LIEU OF RESEARCH PAPER, worth 40%, due April 22.**

Working alone or with collaborators, write and produce a short film or video (documentary, satirical, narrative, experimental, agitprop, mash up, etc.) or performance piece on some dimension of HIV/AIDS covered in this course. Post video or video documentation of a performance online to Youtube or Vimeo. Include a 500 word artist statement in the video's summary box that cites at least three other artists and three scholars relevant to your specific topic. ***A research proposal is still required March 11 and a hardcopy of your artist statement with a link to your video must be submitted to the assignment box of the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, FB-319 by April 22, 17h***

- **SUGGESTED SYLLABUS REVISION, worth 5%, due on Moodle anytime before April 13.**

Because this semester marks the world-premier of this course, students have a unique opportunity to enhance the format and content of the course, both for this

term and all subsequent offerings. To encourage innovation and reflection in this regard, a portion of your overall evaluation will be dedicated (on a pass/fail basis) to your constructive suggestion(s) for revising the syllabus. These substantive suggestions, explicated in writing, may be delivered in hardcopy at any point in the semester.

Plagiarism

At Concordia University, there are very strict policies regarding plagiarism (presenting the text you have obtained elsewhere, for example from another student or the Internet, as your own work) and other forms of academic misconduct. As an instructor I am required to report all such activity to the Deans. Make sure to familiarize yourself with them by consulting Concordia University Academic Integrity website at: concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html.

Citation guides

To learn how to present bibliographic and in-text citations to books, journal articles, web-sites, and other materials using the correct format, consult Citation and Style Guides at Concordia Libraries website (<http://library.concordia.ca/help/citing>). Choose the style appropriate for your field of study and write your citations accordingly. There is no required citation style for this course, but you must use the style you chose correctly and consistently.

The table below will be used to calculate your final letter grade. Grading rubrics for your research-based assignments will be provided in class.

90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F, FNS

Required Texts:

- Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Knabe, Susan, and Wendy Gay Pearson. *Zero Patience*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011.

These two books are available at the **Concordia Co-op Bookstore** located at 2150 Bishop Street (www.co-opbookstore.ca). They are **not** available at the Concordia University bookstore. Additional readings will be available as electronic reserves through the Concordia Library.

Weekly Screening and Reading Schedule:

1. Talking Heads - 8 Jan 2016

Screening:

- *Bright Eyes*, Stuart Marshall, 1986, UK, 79min
- *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien*, Marlon Riggs, 1992, USA, 37:50min
- *Fighting Chance*, Richard Fung, 1990, Canada, 31min

Reading:

- Hallas, Roger. "Historical Trauma and the Performance of Talking Heads." In *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*, 35-76. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

2. Direct Action Video - 15 Jan 2016

Screening:

- *Voices from the Front*, Testing the Limits Collective, 1992, USA, 90min
- *ACTing Up for Prisoners*, Eric Slade & Mic Sweeney, 1992, USA, 27min
- *SnowJob: The Media Hysteria of AIDS*, Barbara Hammer, USA, 1986, 9min

Reading:

- Hallas, Roger. "The Embodied Immediacy of Direct Action: Space and Movement in AIDS Video Activism." In *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*, 77-112. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

3. Resisting the Confessional - 22 Jan 2016

Screening:

- *Silverlake Life: The View From Here*, Peter Friedman & Tom Joslin, 1993, USA, 99min
- *Fast Trip Long Drop*, Gregg Bordowitz, 1994, USA, 54min

Reading:

- Hallas, Roger. "Related Bodies: Resisting Confession in Autobiographical AIDS Video." In *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*, 113-50. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

4. Hollywood Does HIV/AIDS - 29 January 2016

Screening:

- *Philadelphia*, Jonathan Demme, 1993, USA, 125min

Reading:

- Sendziuk, Paul. "AIDS on Film and Video: *Philadelphia* or Death." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 443-449.
- Waugh, Thomas. "Erotic Self-Images in the Gay Male AIDS Melodrama." In *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema*, 218-34. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

5. AIDS in New Queer Cinema - 5 Feb 2016

Screening:

- *Totally Fucked Up*, Gregg Araki, 1993, USA, 78min

Reading:

- Arroyo, José. "Death, Desire and Identity: The Political Unconscious of New Queer Cinema" in Joseph Wilson and Angelia R. Wilson eds. *Activating Theory* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 70-96.
- Pearl, Monica B. "AIDS and New Queer Cinema" in Michele Aaron ed, *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004)

6. AIDS Musicals & Music Videos - 12 Feb 2016

Screening:

- *Zero Patience*, John Greyson, 1993, Canada, 97min
- *ADS epidemic*, John Greyson, 1987, Canada, 5min
- *Tainted Love*, Coil, 1988, UK, 6:34min
- *My Boyfriend's Back*, The Flirtations, US, 2:24min

Reading:

- Knabe, Susan, and Wendy Gay Pearson. *Zero Patience*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011.

7. Experimental AIDS Video - 19 Feb 2016

****in class midterm exam****

Screening:

- *By Any Means Necessary*, James Wentzy, 1994, USA 4:30min
- *Sea in the Blood*, Richard Fung, 2000, Canada, 26min
- *ITSOFOMO*, David Wojnarowicz, 1991, USA, 11:20min
- *Positiv*, Mike Hoolboom, 1993, Canada, 10min
- *Letter's From Home*, Mike Hoolboom, 1996, Canada, 15min
- *Safe Sex Slut*, Scarlot Harlot, 1987, USA, 2:38min
- *This is Not an AIDS Advertisement*, Isaac Julien, 1987, UK, 14min
- *Save Sex*, Barbara Hammer, 1993, USA, 1min
- *GMHC Safe Sex Shorts Compilation*, Gregg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto, 1989-90, USA, 24min

Reading:

- Hallas, Roger. "Gay Cinephilia and the Cherished Body of Experimental Film." In *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*, 185-216. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

8. The Sound of Witnessing - 4 March 2016

Screening:

- *Blue*, Derek Jarman, 1993, UK, 79min

Reading:

- Hallas, Roger. "Sound, Image, and the Corporeal Implication of Witnessing." In *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*, 217-40. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

9. Indie AIDS - 11 March 2016

Research proposal due at the beginning of class

Screening:

- *Kids*, Larry Clark, 1995, USA, 91min
- *Chocolate Babies*, Stephen Winter, 1997, USA, 83min

Reading:

- Hynes, Eric. "Kids: The Oral History of the Most Controversial Film of the Nineties" *Rolling Stone*. (16 July 2015).
<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/news/kids-the-oral-history-of-the-most-controversial-film-of-the-nineties-20150716>
- Schrader, Paul. "Babes in the Hood." *Artforum International*. Vol 33, No. 05, 1995. 74.

10. Primetime AIDS TV - 18 March 2016

Screening:

- "72 Hours" Season 5, Episode 19, *The Golden Girls*, 1990, USA, 30min
- "Killing All the Right People" Season 2, Episode 4, *Designing Women*, 1987, USA, 30min
- "Bad Blood Part 1" Season 5, Episodes 1, *Degrassi*, 1990, Canada, 30min
- "Together Apart" Season 3, Episode 8, *The Real World: San Francisco*, 1994, USA, 30min

Reading:

- Shamp, Scott A. "Guilty By Association: Homosexuality and AIDS on Prime-Time Television." Edited by Emily C. Netzhammer. In *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*, by R. Jeffrey Ringer, 91-106. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. "Pedro Zamora's Real World of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self." In *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, 143-60. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

11. A New Wave of Documentary Film - 1 April 2016

Screening:

- *Fire in the Blood*, Dylan Mohan Gray, 2013, Canada/India, 81min

Reading:

- Juhasz, Alexandra. "Acts of Signification-Survival." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 55 (Fall 2012).
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc55.2013/JuhaszAidsDocs/index.html>.

12. Hollywood's Reinvestment in the AIDS Drama - 8 April 2016

Screening:

- *Dallas Buyers Club*, Jean-Marc Vallée, 2013, USA, 117min

Reading:

- Matthews, Dylan. "What 'Dallas Buyers Club' got wrong about the AIDS crisis." *The Washington Post*. December 10, 2013.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/12/10/what-dallas-buyers-club-got-wrong-about-the-aids-crisis/>
- "AIDS Activism in the Time of Dallas Buyers Club." Focus Features. November 21, 2013.
http://www.focusfeatures.com/article/aids_activism_in_the_time_of_dallas_buyers_club?film=dallas_buyers_club.

13. Contemporary AIDS Film & Video - 13 April 2016 (WEDNESDAY)

Screening:

- *Positive Women: Exposing Injustice*, Alison Duke, 2012, Canada, 45min
- *Red, Red, Red*, David Oscar Harvey, 2011, USA, 25min
- *things are different now...*, Ryan Conrad, 2012, Canada, 4min
- *So... when did you figure out that you had AIDS?*, Vincent Chevalier, 2010, Canada, 5:36min
- *L'Hiver inconsolable*, Shayo Detchema, 2011, Canada, 3:40min
- *Moon Trail*, Alexandre Gregoire, 2014, Canada, 6:54min
- *When AIDS Was Funny*, Scott Calonico, 2015, Scotland, 7:40min

Reading:

- Fink, Marty, Alexandra Juhasz, David Oscar Harvey, and Bishnupriya Ghosh. "Ghost Stories: An Introduction." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 55 (Fall 2012).
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc55.2013/FinkDisabilityAids/index.html>.
- Harvey, David Oscar. "Ghosts Caught in Our Throat: Of the Lack of Contemporary Representations of Gay/bisexual Men and HIV." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 55 (Fall 2012).
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc55.2013/HarveyPoz/index.html>.