# LGBT 5xx Queering Comics

LGBTQ+ Studies

San Diego State University

# Instructor Information

**Name:**

**Email:**

**Voicemail:**

**Office Hours:**

**Office Location:**

# General Course Information

**Scheduled Class Days/Time:**

**Modality:** Seminar/Discussion

**Class Location:**

# What is this class about?

How has sequential art, in the form of comics and graphic narratives, been used to communicate queer ideas and build queer community, historically and in the present? “Queering Comics” is an exploration of LGBTQ+ culture, ideas, aesthetics, relationships, identity, and politics through the prism of sequential art. We will use the medium of comics to explore the politics of representation, assessing both the consequences of the absence of complex queer and trans characters, and conversely the stereotypes that are reproduced when queer and trans people do appear. We will also explore how queer and trans people have practiced disidentifying with comics, teaching themselves to locate queerness even in narratives not intentionally created as queer. We will encounter creators who have used comics and graphic narratives to communicate queer ideas, express queer sexuality, and build queer community, sometimes subversively when queer identities are politically suppressed. We will evaluate the backlash against queer and trans comics, the politics of censorship, and the banning of queer visual narratives as sexually explicit content. Finally, we will celebrate the joyful struggle to continue to create and distribute queer and trans graphic narratives.

**Catalog Description:** Exploration of LGBTQ+ culture, ideas, aesthetics, identity, and politics through sequential art. Queer methods of reading comic strips, comic books, and graphic narratives. Examines the politics of queer representation. Introduces queer and trans comic creators.

# What will you learn?

By the end of this this course you will be able to:

1. Define key terminology used in the study of gender and sexuality, and in the study of comic arts.
2. Analyze how gender identity, gender presentation, and sexuality have been represented in comics and graphic narratives historically and in the present. Identify stereotypes and tropes that represent non-normative genders and sexualities in negative ways.
3. Discuss the history and current use of sequential art to communicate queer ideas, especially in contexts where sexuality and gender expression have been suppressed.
4. Analyze cases of censorship of comics that explore themes of gender and sexuality, and evaluate the multiple dimensions of such controversies.
5. Identify challenges and opportunities in comics as a queer medium, through encountering queer and trans comics creators and by creating your own queer comic.

# What will you read?

Each week we will pair comic strips, comic books, or graphic narratives with articles that analyze the material. All of these required readings are in the SDSU library collection or available freely online. Links to each comic and article are in Canvas.

# What does the professor expect of you?

1. **Read the assigned material prior to class.** Class time will revolve around collectively working to understand the concepts presented in the assigned readings. The more you commit to devoting time each week to reading, the richer our conversation will be.
2. **Check your e-mail regularly.** Any changes to reading assignments, instructions for completing assignments, and any other announcements will be sent via the e-mail address that if linked to your Canvas account. If you don’t check your university account, you should go into Canvas and update your email settings.
3. **Regularly attend and participate in class.** Class discussion will be spent comprehending the arguments made in assigned material, analyzing and evaluating the material, and synthesizing and integrating ideas across assigned readings. It will be difficult to complete this class without attending regularly. *If you have an emergency or serious situation that requires you to miss more than 1 class period, especially if it is more than 1 week in a row, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss how to keep you on track. Please quarantine or isolate as necessary due to COVID-19 exposure or positive test.*
4. **Participate respectfully during class time.** We join the classroom from a variety of situations and from different life experiences. I ask that you make every attempt to join our class each week, and that you minimize as many distractions as can during the session. During these discussions, you will be asked to abide by some community agreements that we will create together during the first session.
5. **Complete all assignments to the best of your ability and on time.** You are responsible for keeping track of when assignments are due. **Late policy:** I am okay if you submit minor assignments (such as drafts) 1-2 days late, without penalty. Major assignments will be accepted up to one week late, reduced by 15% so that the maximum grade is a B. No late work will be accepted beyond xxx, due to the turnaround in grading time. *If you have an extreme and unavoidable reason preventing you from turning in your assignments on time, please contact me.*

# How will you know you are learning?

## Weekly Quizzes – 20 points

At the end of class each week, you will complete an online quiz to present your knowledge about the concepts and themes from class. Quizzes will consist of short answer, matching, and application questions. Weeks 2-12 will each have an online quiz worth 2 points each. You can miss one quiz and still potentially earn full credit for this component of your grade. If you complete the 11th quiz, it will count as extra credit.

## Comic Series Analysis – 2 for 20 points each (total of 40 points)

You will complete two comic series analysis papers OR slidedecks over the course of the semester. The purpose of this assignment is for you to apply the concepts and theories from class to your own reading of a comic book, comic strip or graphic narrative. There will be a list of potential books/strips to choose from, and if you want to go beyond this list you will need permission from the instructor. Choose one or more of the units from class to analyze your object: disidentification/queer reading; creating queer culture; backlash and censorship; addressing racism in LGBTQ+ texts and decentering whiteness. You will apply the concepts and theories from that unit to make an argument about how you interpret the impact of this comic/graphic narrative on audiences. Examples: How might audiences read the close relationship of Batman and Robin as a queer one? How is racism represented (or not) in *Dykes To Watch Out For*? Undergraduates have the choice of submitting your analysis in the form of a 5-6 page written essay OR a slidedeck with 15-16 slides. Graduate students have the choice of submitting your analysis in the form of a 8-10 page written essay OR a slidedeck with 20-22 slides, AND presenter notes.

## Group Project: Comic Creation – 40 points

Your final project in the class will be to join a creator team of 3-4 students, and to collaboratively create your own graphic narrative or series of comic strips. The final project can be fictional (realist or fantasy), memoir/autobiographical, or non-fiction/informational. You can draw by hand or use a digital design program. Your project must engage with LGBTQ+ themes in some way, defined by the units we explore in the class. The last weeks of the course will be devoted to the comic creation project, and there are several short assignments that earn points contribute to your overall score for this assignment (proposal, storyboard, rough draft/peer review). You will also receive points for participating in the showcase of final projects during finals week.

In addition to submitting your final work, undergraduates will submit a short (1-2 page) reflection paper discussing your group process, your contributions to the project, any barriers or challenges you faced, and your plans if any to use this comic or to continue creating comics. Graduate students will submit a 3-5 page essay in which they describe how they deployed the assigned readings and materials from class in their comic creation. Graduate essays should refer to at least three readings from class in their essays.

## Overall grades will be based on the following points earned:

Weekly Quizzes 20 points

Comics Series Analysis 1 20 points

Comics Series Analysis 2 20 points

Group Project: Comic Creation 40 points

Total 100 points possible

A = (94-100); A- = (90-93)

B+ = (87-89); B = (83-86); B- = (80-82)

C+ = (77-79); C = (73-76); C- = (70-72)

D+ = (67-69); D = (60-66); F= (≤ 59)

Note: At any point in the course, you can estimate your grade by adding up the points you have earned and compare that to the remaining points available.

## Other important things to know

**Students are responsible for being familiar with the university wide policies found at:** <https://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/GC1617/143_UniPolicies.pdf>**.**

### **Content warning**

A course on queer and trans experiences necessarily requires us to encounter texts discussing sexual violence and state-sponsored violence. Please reach out for support from me or the following resources if you are experiencing distress due to this content.

* Campus-based Counseling and Psychological Services, M-F 8 am – 4 pm: 619-594-5220
* San Diego Access & Crisis Phone Line available 24/7: 1-888- 724-7240
* San Diego Access & Crisis Chat Line available M-F 4-10 pm: <https://svcrplv.uhc.com/sdchat/>

### Disability and Access Information

I invite all students to communicate their other access needs with me. If you have a campus accommodation letter, it would be helpful to get a copy as soon as possible.

If you think that you could benefit from an accommodation, even if you do not yet have a learning disability or psychiatric diagnosis, or if you are experiencing a new or temporary disability caused by injury, please contact the Student Ability Success Center and they will go through the process with you. Visit: <http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/services-overview.aspx>. Voice: (619) 594-6473.

### Student Privacy and Intellectual Property

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](http://bfa.sdsu.edu/hr/oerc/students/ferpa.aspx) (FERPA) mandates the protection of student information, including contact information, grades, and graded assignments. I will use Canvas to communicate with you, and I will not post grades or leave graded assignments in public places. Students will be notified at the time of an assignment if copies of student work will be retained beyond the end of the semester or used as examples for future students or the wider public. Students maintain intellectual property rights to work products they create as part of this course unless they are formally notified otherwise.

### Religious Observances

According to the University Policy File, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances by the end of the second week of classes.

### Academic honesty

I encourage students to study together and to talk about their ideas for the exams together. However, any work that you turn in **must be in your own words**. In order to be give credit to the ideas of others, any phrase, sentence or paragraph that is an exact copy of what somebody else wrote (or said) should be attributed to the author (or speaker) by name and include a page number. In addition, any idea from an author or theorist that you use in your work, even if it is not a direct quote, should also be attributed to that author by name. To present someone else’s words as your own is considered plagiarism, whether you intended to steal their work or not.

Students who are found to be plagiarizing, whether intentionally or not, will be subject to penalty. This can include: receiving a zero on the assignment or exam, receiving a failing grade in the course overall, or being referred to student conduct.

### Sexualized Violence and Reporting Requirements

All employees are required to report incidences of sexual assault and sexual harassment to the campus Dean of Students office. That means that professors and other employees who become aware of sexual assault or harassment must contact the Title IX office. HOWEVER, it would be YOUR choice to pursue any action beyond the initial report. You do not have to talk to the university at any point, even if a report is made about you. Anyone who would prefer to talk to someone confidentially about sexual assault or harassment can contact:

* Counseling & Psychological Services (see above)
* **Campus-based Sexual Violence Advocate & Educator**,[Calpulli Center](http://www.myatlascms.com/map/?id=801&mrkIid=152630), 2nd Floor, (619) 594-0210
* **Center for Community Solutions (CCS)**, 24-Hour Hotline: (888) 385-4657 (Bilingual)

## Course Schedule

Subject to change with fair notice, especially given the pandemic and changing circumstances. Any changes will be made through an announcement in class, and also posted and distributed through Canvas.

| Week/Date | Readings | Class topic/keywords | Deadlines and due dates |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 |  | Welcome* Introductions
* Overview of the class
* Discussion agreements
 | Purchase, rent, borrow, or locate at the library the assigned readings for the class  |
| 2 | Articles:* “Lowbrow” by Sean Guynes (in *Keywords for Comics Studies*, 2021, New York University Press)
* “Why Comics Studies?” By Angela Ndalianis (*Cinema Journal*, 50:3, Spring 2011)
* “Introduction: Queer About Comics” By Darieck Scott and Ramzi Fawaz (*American Literature*, 90:2, June 2018)
 | * How to read comics/graphic narratives
* Why study comics?
* What’s queer about comics?
 | Quiz 1 |
| 3 | Comic strip excerpts from:* “LGBTQ Comic Book Characters from the 1940s” compiled by Mark Carlson-Ghost
* *Krazy Kat*
* *Wonder Woman*

Articles:* *“*Presence and Absence in Theory and Practice” by Anna F. Peppard (in *Supersex,* 2020, University of Texas Press)
* “The White to Be Angry” by José Esteban Muñoz (in *Disidentifications*, 1999, University of Minnesota Press)
 | Unit 1: A Queer History of Comics* Queer Text v. Queer Subtext
* Stereotypes and LGBTQ Villains
* “Disidentifying” with Comics
 | Quiz 2 |
| 4 | Comic strip excerpts from:* *The Uncanny X-Men*

Articles:* “X-Men” by Alexandro Segade (in *Keywords for Comics Studies*, 2021, New York University Press)
* “Mutants, Metaphor, and Marginalism: What X-actly Do the X-Men Stand For?” by P. Andrew Miller (*Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 13:3, 2003)
* “’Flesh-to-Flesh Contact’: Marvel Comics’ Rogue and the Queer Feminist Imagination” by Anthony Michael D’Agostino (*American Literature*, 90:2, June 2018)
 | * More on Queer Text v. Queer Subtext
 | Quiz 3 |
| 5 | Comic strip excerpts from:* *Wimmen’s Comix*
* *Bitchy Bitch*
* *Hothead Paisan*
* *Dykes to Watch Out For*

Articles:* “Comix” by Nicholas Sammond (in *Keywords for Comics Studies*, 2021, New York University Press)
* “‘Super-Gay’ *Gay Comix*: Tracing the Underground Origins and Cultural Resonances of LGBTQ Superheroes” by Sarah M. Panuska (in *Supersex,* 2020, University of Texas Press)
* “Why Queer?” by Hillary Chute (in *Why Comics?,* 2017, Harper)
 | Unit 2: Sex, Taboo, and Underground Comics | Quiz 4 |
| 6 | Watch: Artist Talk for “Comic Velocity: HIV & AIDS in Comics” June 30, 2020Comic strips from VisualAIDS’ StripAIDS 2020 by:* Andrews & J. Amaro, Inés Ixierda & Clio Sady, Carlo Quispe, and Mel Rattue
 | Guest speakers Inés Ixierda and Clio Sady (creators of “Legalize Postivity” comic strip) | Quiz 5 |
| 7 | Graphic Narrative:* *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (2012, *Blindspot Graphics*)

Articles:* “Life out loud in the closet: the grotesque as Latinx imagination in Cristy C. Road’s Spit and Passion” by Jennifer Caroccio Maldonado (in *Routledge Companion to Gender and Sexuality in Comic Book Studies,* 2020)
 | Unit 3: Telling our Stories: Narrative Autobiography, Memoir, and Queer History | Quiz 6 Series Analysis 1 Due |
| 8 | Graphic Narrative:* *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe (2019, The Lion Forge)

Watch:* “An Evening with Maia Kobabe: Author of *Gender Queer: A Memoir*” Charis Books, April 2021
 | Unit 4: Backlash to and Censorship of Queer Narratives | Quiz 7 |
| 9 | Graphic Narrative:* *Sexile* by Jaime Cortez (2004, The Institute for Gay Men’s Health) (note: depictions of sex)

Articles:* “Jaime Cortez’s Sexile/Sexilo: Unlearning Homonationalism and Developing Alternative Discourses” by Kai Linke (in *Good White Queers?*, 2021, transcript)
* “Body Crossings: Gender, Signifying and Misdirection in Jaime Cortez’s Sexile/Sexilo” by Monalesia Earle (in *Writing Queer Women of Color*, 2019, McFarland & Company)
 | Unit 5: Intersectionality and the Next Generation* Sexuality, Race, and Decentering Whiteness in Queer Comics
 | Quiz 8 |
| 10 | Comic strip excerpts from:* Jen Camper
* Next generation of web comics
 | Film screening : *No Straight Lines: The Rise of Queer Comics* | Quiz 9 |
| 11 | Comic strip excerpts from:* *The World of Wakanda*
* *Black Panther*
* *All New X-Men*
* *The Uncanny X-Men*

Articles:* “Desiring Blackness: A Queer Orientation to Marvel’s Black Panther” by andré carrington (*American Literature*, 90:2, June 2018)
* “Bobby…you’re gay”: Marvel’s Iceman, performativity, continuity, and queer visibility” by Bryan Bove (in *Routledge Companion to Gender and Sexuality in Comic Book Studies,* 2020)
 | Unit 6: Mainstream Comics Come Out | Quiz 10 |
| 12 | TBD – material by local creators | Unit 7: Queer Content CreatorsGuest speakers | Quiz 11 & Series Analysis 2 Due |
| 13 | No readings | Group project work - Submit your proposal for your group project at the end of class |  |
| 14 | No readings | Group project work - Submit your storyboard at the end of class |  |
| 15 | No readings | Group project work - Bring rough draft of group project for a peer review activity |  |
| Finals Week | No readings | Comics Showcase |  |