

THEA 4380: LGBTQ Plays and Performance After 1960

Spring 2026

Fridays 9:00am - 11:50am, Lang 113

Instructor Contact

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Course Description

Survey of LGBTQ plays and performance after 1960 to the present day, focusing on themes and issues of identity and representation. Course geared toward those interested in both production and criticism.

This course will examine contemporary plays with a concentration in LGBTQIA+ performance and production. This is a genre within the theatre of the oppressed. We will specifically examine significant plays, playwrights, theatre groups in the late 20th century.

We will examine historic representations of queer life, which include immense suffering, endurance, triumph, joy, and resurgence. Within the course material you may encounter mentions of alcoholism, abuse, suicide, violence, and loss. However, alongside this is the enduring hope, pride, and community of the queer experience. Therefore, in addition to script and production analysis, we will discuss political actions and ramifications, social and cultural contexts, current events, and sociological identities and roles.

Learning Outcomes

During the course, students will:

- Gain an understanding of Queer Theory and feel confident applying it to media
- Experience a variety of performance texts and styles from the American, Queer canon of theater
- Analyze Queer theater and its ties to history, politics, and current events
- Develop an appreciation for the cultural expressions of theatre

Course Expectations

When in class, be present in class. You should be prepared to focus and engage with that day's topic. Please do not engage in outside work while in this space. Out of respect for your classmates, your professor, and your work, please refrain from being on your phone during class time. The structure of this course is a hybrid between lecture and open discussion. As such, student engagement is vital to the success of the course.

Reading Materials:

I will provide **ALL** reading materials on Canvas. You do not need to purchase any texts or plays for this course.

- *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes
- *The Secretaries* by Five Lesbian Brothers
- *La Cage Aux Folles* by Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein (Libretto)
- *Angels in America (Parts I & II)* by Tony Kushner
- *The Inheritance (Parts I & II)* by Matthew Lopez
- *The Hungry Woman* by Cherríe Moraga
- *Stop Kiss* by Diana Son
- *Fun Home* by Allison Bechdel (Graphic Novel)
- *Fun Home* by Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron (Libretto)
- *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung
- *Oh, Mary!* by Cole Escola
- *Fat Ham* by James Ijames*

**To be read in conjunction with DTC's production*

Optional Reading (Included in Canvas)

- *The Cake* by Bekah Brunstetter
- *The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer
- *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman
- *Theater of the Oppressed* by Augusto Boal

OPTIONAL Textbook if you'd like more background on what we will discuss in class each week: *Milestones in Queer US Theater* edited by Dennis Sloan - [Amazon Link](#)

ADA Accommodations

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation.

Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](http://www.unt.edu/oda) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Please contact me at the start of the semester to discuss a plan for how I can help you best succeed in this course.

Student Obligation to Academic/Production Work

Dance & Theater students are expected to budget and organize their time and efforts in order to meet both their academic and production commitments satisfactorily and on time. The faculty and staff recognize that the academic and production assignments within the department, as well as outside employment and other obligations, sometimes impose conflicting pressures on D&T students. One of the main responsibilities of each student is to identify carefully and monitor the commitments that comprise their departmental assignments and outside obligations. It is also important to keep in mind that production work and outside obligations **do not constitute an excused absence** from D&T classes **or from the completion of any required class assignments**.

Class Conduct

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be referred to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

View [UNT's Code of Student Conduct](#) to learn more.

The University of North Texas prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Please see additional UNT policies and procedures on the [Student Support Services & Policies](#) page.

Academic Integrity

UNT Honor Code: *“I commit myself to honor, integrity, and responsibility as a student representing the University of North Texas community. I understand and pledge to uphold academic integrity as set forth by UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy, 06.003. I affirm that the work I submit will always be my own, and the support I provide and receive will always be honorable.”*

See UNT Policy [06.003. Student Academic Integrity](#)

Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the submission of AI-generated work is not accepted in this course. Any violation of this will result in a full loss of points for the assignment.

When considering whether to use AI tools in your studies, please consider these guiding principles laid out by the university:

- **Be Transparent** - Clearly disclose when AI tools are used to generate content, make decisions, or assist in communication.
- **Ensure Accountability** - Take full responsibility for any AI-assisted work; do not blame the tool for errors or harmful outcomes.
- **Fact-Check AI Outputs** - Always verify the accuracy and reliability of information produced by AI, especially in research, education, and public communication.
- **Maintain Academic and Professional Integrity** - Do not use AI to cheat, plagiarize, or misrepresent knowledge or work. Follow institutional policies on AI use.
- **Credit and Cite Appropriately** - Acknowledge use of AI tools when relevant, and cite sources if AI outputs include or are based on third-party content.
- **Hallucinations and Fabricated Information** - Generative AI tools may produce content that sounds plausible but is factually incorrect or entirely made up.
- **Lack of True Understanding** - AI tools do not comprehend meaning or context the way humans do—it predicts text based on patterns in data.
- **Bias in Outputs** - AI can reflect or amplify social, cultural, or data-based biases present in its training data.

See UNT [AI policy and FAQs](#)

Sexual Assault Prevention: UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648.

Sensitive Subject Matter: In this course sensitive subject matters may be discussed. Everyone is expected to treat these moments with the sensitivity and respect they deserve. Racist, misogynistic, homophobic, or any other form of hateful language/action is disruptive and will not be tolerated. All discussions should be civil and courteous. Disagreement and debate is welcome; however, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming online environment. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please email me or meet with me in my virtual office hours. Anyone who finds it difficult to act respectfully toward their classmates and the subject matter may be asked to leave the class.

Student Perceptions of Teaching: Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Attendance and Tardies

Students are allowed no more than a total of **two** absences during the semester. Every successive absence is grounds for losing 10% of your final grade per absence.

Keep in mind that we only meet once a week – two absences is equal to missing two weeks of class!

Tardy Policy

In the theater there is a basic expectation for everyone involved in production to be ready to work **on time**. We will mirror this expectation in this class. Walking in right at class start is **not** exemplifying this practice.

Three tardies equal one absence, which means you receive 0 points for every third time you are tardy. A tardy of more than fifteen minutes will be considered the same as an absence. The professor's rollsheets are the official record of absences and tardiness.

Course Content

Conversations that take place in this class, or topics that we discuss may be uncomfortable to some, including the plays assigned. Sexuality, gender, personal relationships, political and religious beliefs, and personal ideals will be examined.

My hope is that you will approach this course with a sense of openness, but there is zero expectation or requirement to share personal information about yourself in order to engage with class material. My goal is for this course to expand your perception of what it means to be queer. I am not here merely to feed you information just as you are not here to accept all that I say without thinking critically.

Grading

All written work will be submitted on specified due dates. Written work must be typed.

AI-generated work, in whole or in part, will receive a grade of 0.

Grading Breakdown

Assignments	Point Value
Play Reflections (11 @ 25 points each)	275 points
Queer Theater Artist Presentation	100 points
AIDS Impact Paper	100 points
Living Theater Research Project	100 points
Living Theater Performance	50 points
Discussion Participation (15 @ 25 points each)	375 points
Total Points Possible	1000 points

Final Grading Scale:

A: 900-1000 points

B: 800-899 points

C: 700-799 points

D: 600-699 points

F: 599 points or below

Course Assignments

THEA 4380 is a study of various dramatic texts, thus, requiring detailed reading and critical examination. Typically, we will analyze a play each week, either by reading or watching.

Weekly assignments are due **Thursdays by 11:59 pm via Canvas.**

Play Reflections

Share your opinion and impressions of the play. What caught your notice? What importance do you feel this play holds for queer/theater history? Aim for a response of 500 words.

Some helpful tips: look for recurrent images, phrases, ideas, events, character types that give the work its coherence.

Your analysis should touch on the following questions:

- What are the key ideas presented in the play?
- What is the most significant thing(s) you learned by reading the play?
- What question(s) is uppermost in your mind after reading it?
- How is the information/issue applicable today?

Think of the assignment as if you are a theater critic. While the reading material for the course may be at times intellectually rigorous, it will have a unique emotional impact on you: sometimes joyful, sometimes disturbing. I want to hear YOUR perspective on the play.

You can also be creative and submit a video of the assignment, a recorded review or monologue, or stage and costume ideas.

Figures in Queer Theater History Presentation

You will select a queer theater artist who was active sometime from 1960-present. There are no restrictions on artist specialization as long as they have a strong theater connection! If you have questions, I'm happy to assist you with choosing an artist. To ensure there are no duplicates, I will post a signup on Canvas where you will share who you are researching.

After choosing your artist, you will research their life and career. This might include looking for relevant documentation of their work (scripts, videos, photos, interviews, etc), reading or watching their work (if applicable), or looking at their social media or website (again, if applicable).

Make note of any major partnerships with other artists, most publicized accomplishments, awards won, etc. Condense your findings into a short paper response. Then, prepare a 3-5 minute presentation to share with the class on your artist. This can be lecture style, a powerpoint, a video, collage, or other creative means of sharing the material.

AIDS Impact Paper

As you will no doubt find through the exploration of queer theater history in this course, the AIDS epidemic had a profound impact on theater and queer history as a whole. After reading the expansive plays which bookend the AIDS crisis in theater history (*Angels in America* and *The Inheritance*), you will formulate your own reaction and response to what the lasting impact of AIDS is. Possible avenues of discussion could include:

- Current perception/relevance of AIDS in 2026
- Your impression of the impact AIDS had on the theater canon
- Do we over-emphasize HIV/AIDS in discussions on queer history/theater?
- How do we move forward from a tragedy without forgetting it?
- Finally, why do you think I would ask you to do this assignment?

While this is largely a paper generated from your own impressions, opinions, and experiences, you may want to consult outside sources to inform your historical point of view. Aim for a response of 3-4 pages, not including a works cited page if necessary.

Living Theater Research and Performance Project

Over the course of the semester, we will read a handful of plays that were written directly reacting to current events, politics, or news items. For your final project, you will select an event to research and then generate your own performance over. While it is open to any topic/event/news story covered in the purview of our course, I recommend being as precise as possible. Narrowing on an extremely specific event will make your research easier, and give you less to condense into a public performance.

The guidelines for this project will be limited in an effort not to impact your creative freedom. In observance of the rich tradition of queer theater, your culminating performance is completely open to your own interpretation. Your live performance might include: music, dance, movement, video, poetry, visual art, and more. While not required, you are fully encouraged to make this a group or partner assignment!

Living Theater, or Newspaper Theater, is a century-old tradition that was then taken up by Augusto Boal in his work under the umbrella of Theater of the Oppressed. Watch him discuss it [here](#).

Rough Course Schedule

** subject to change*

January 16th:

Syllabus, Course Introduction, Overview of Queer Theory, Setting the Scene: the LGBTQ+ Community in the 1960s

January 23rd

Queer Theater So Far

HW: Read *Fefu and Her Friends*; Play Reflection due **Jan 29th @ 11:59pm**

January 30th

Maria Irene Fornes & *Fefu* play discussion

Theater of the Oppressed

1960s counter-culture and the off-off-Broadway theater scene

February 6th

The Second Wave, Lesbianism, and Performing Gender

HW: Read *The Secretaries*; Play Reflection & Artist Bio due **Feb 12th @ 11:59pm**

February 13th

Play Discussion: *The Secretaries*, *Fat Ham*

“Queering” Theater: Theater in Adaptation

Presentations: Figures in Queer Theater History

HW: Read/Look over *La Cage Aux Folles* libretto

February 20th

Queer Broadway

Discuss & watch *La Cage*

HW: Read *Angels in America - Millennium Approaches*; Play Reflection

due **Feb 26th @ 11:59pm**

February 27th

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HW: Read *Angels in America - Perestroika*; Play Reflection due **March 5th @ 11:59pm**

March 6th

Lasting Impact: AIDS and the Arts

Watch: *Angels in America* produced by the National Theater (2017)

HW: Read *The Inheritance* Parts I & II*; Play Reflection due **March 12th @ 11:59pm**

**Listen along with a recorded live performance on audible:*

<https://www.audible.com/pd/The-Inheritance-Audiobook/B0BXQTDCY5>

March 13th: Spring Break

No Class

HW: AIDS Impact Paper, due **March 19th @ 11:59pm**

March 20th

The Third Wave: Intersectionality & Queer Theater

HW: Read *The Hungry Woman*; Play Reflection due **March 26th @ 11:59pm**

**If you are unfamiliar with the story of Medea, you might find it helpful to read an overview first: <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/medea/summary/>*

March 27th

Play Discussion: *The Hungry Woman*

HW: Read *Stop Kiss*; Play Reflection due **April 2nd @ 11:59pm**

April 3rd

Play Discussion: *Stop Kiss*

HW: Read *Fun Home* graphic novel, *Fun Home* libretto;

Play Reflection due **April 9th @ 11:59pm**

April 10th

21st Century Queer Broadway

Watch: *Fun Home*

HW: Read *Wolf Play*; Play Reflection due **April 16th @ 11:59pm**

April 17th

Gender Expansive Theater

Play Discussion: *Wolf Play*

HW: Read *Oh, Mary!*; Play Reflection due **April 23rd @ 11:59pm**

April 24th

Celebrating Trans Theater

Play Discussion: *Oh, Mary!*

HW: Read Topical Queer Play (Choice of 3: *The Cake*, *The Laramie Project*, or *The Normal Heart*); Play Reflection due **April 30th @ 11:59pm**

May 1st

Politically-Responsive Theater

Play Discussion: Compare/Contrast Plays from Final Reflection

HW: Living Theater Research Project & Performance due **May 8th @ 9am**

May 8th

Living Theater Research Project Performances