

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- [www.unine.ch/lettres](http://www.unine.ch/lettres)

### Sém. Ang II/TC : Queer Classics (2AN2131)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
<b>Pilier principal M A - littératures</b>	<b>Séminaire: 2 ph</b>	Voir ci-dessous	5
<b>Pilier secondaire M A - littératures</b>	<b>Séminaire: 2 ph</b>	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

#### Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

#### Equipe enseignante

Patrick Vincent

#### Contenu

Long viewed as being 'against nature', sexual relations between men were proscribed until the 1960s, and it wasn't until the 21st century that same-sex marriage became legal. At the same time, 'inversion' (the idea of a woman's soul trapped in a man's body), 'sapphism' and 'homosexuality' became newly available models for non-heteronormative identity toward the end of the 19th century, culminating with Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial, which was also one of the first times the term 'queer' was used, pejoratively, to identify gays and lesbians.

The fact that it was a writer who helped constitute modern codes of homosexuality should come as no surprise. From Plato to Shakespeare, Sappho to Kate Chopin, literary texts have long represented same-sex desire as an open secret, helping the LGBTQ community to become more accepted and assert its rights, notably by reclaiming the 'queer' label starting in the 1980s.

Drawing on seminal essays by Freud, Foucault, Sontag, Sedgwick, Lord, Butler, and others, this seminar will explore a selection of 20th and early 21st century British and American novels, touching upon a variety of themes and approaches to sex and gender, including male and female homosexuality, but also heterosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, masculinity, homophobia, sexism, racism, feminism and intersectionality.

Several of these texts, starting with E.M. Forster's *Maurice* were self-censored or banned yet are all today considered as 'queer classics.' This begs a variety of questions: what constitutes a classic? Are gender and sexuality important when defining a literary text? Is there such a thing as a 'queer' style or aesthetic? Isn't it counterproductive to canonize norm-breaking works? And how do you factor in other markers of identity, including race and class?

#### Forme de l'évaluation

In-class presentation of a theoretical or critical text (20%); a 5000 word research essay, to return after the exam session (80%).

Note on AI: Students may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material.

#### Modalités de rattrapage

Students will have the opportunity to rewrite the essay if failed before the end of the spring semester 2025.

In case of a pandemic or another unseen event, the course will be pursued online.

#### Documentation

E.M. Forster, *Maurice* (1914/1971)  
Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)  
Patricia Highsmith, *The Price of Salt* (1952)  
James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)  
Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man* (1964)  
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1983)  
Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)

Books will be available at Payot in Neuchâtel or can be purchased used at [www.abe.com](http://www.abe.com)

#### Pré-requis

None

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**Forme de l'enseignement**

seminar: reading and active participation are essential, and can help students improve their grade.