WMNS 201: Introduction to LGBTQ Studies
Emily Kazyak

This interdisciplinary course is designed to introduce you to the study of sexuality with perspectives from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer scholarship. You will engage with theoretical and empirical scholarship that addresses key topics in LGBT Studies, including: the changing historical configurations of same-sex desires and practices; regulations of bodies and sexuality by science, law, and culture; constructions of LGBTQ identities and communities; and histories of LGBTQ politics and activism. We will grapple with questions like: Have “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” always existed? How do people make sense of their sexuality – and what shapes these understandings? What kinds of oppression or discrimination do people experience on the basis of sexual or gender identity? How do sexual minorities build communities and subcultures? How have sexuality and gender been intertwined? What are the current legal protections for sexual minorities — and how do those shape the relationships and families of LGBT people?

This course is divided into four sections. In the first section, we will consider the different ways that same-sex relationships have been understood in different cultures and historical time periods. In this section we will also consider the role that science has played (and continues to play) in shaping how we think about bodies, gender, and sexuality. In the second section of the course, we will focus on LGBT subcultures and activism starting in the early 20th century in the United States. The third part of the course focuses on the identities and experiences of contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and straight individuals. In the last part of the course, we will focus on scholarship relevant to recent legal decisions and debates that are currently happening around sexuality. We discuss sexual privacy, marriage, and parenting. Throughout the course, we will consider the intersection between sexual identity and other axes of differences such as gender, race, class, geography, and religion.