ENGL 388 Topics in Gay/Lesbian Studies
MWF 12:30 to 1:20 p.m.
Instructor: Ben Bascom // ben.bascom@mail.wvu.edu

The word "queer" has a very *queer* history. Initially used to describe strangeness or oddity, by the twentieth century the word had become weaponized to demean and denigrate individuals for what dominant English-speaking cultures considered unsavory sexual practices. By the late 1990s, however, LGBTQ scholars, writers, artists, and activists had reclaimed the term from one of derision to one of celebratory identification, subsequently forming what today is considered the wide-ranging field of queer studies. In this course, we will consider how queer studies emerged from feminist and activist circles around political movements—such as the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)—and how remembrances of political connections (and disconnections) haunt queer studies today. This course will be both an introduction to the trajectories of queer studies and a deep dive into some of the contemporary questions animating folks working around the messy intricacies of queerness. As such, we will examine influential texts and contexts for these intellectual and cultural movements, and then seek to understand the context that surround this field of study. Students will be provided with opportunities to analyze and research the literary histories and meaning of queerness (and its relation to sex, sexuality, race, and gender) from a variety of literary texts (fiction, nonfiction, drama, graphic novels) and theoretical angles.