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“Gay Histories / Queer Cultures of the United States”

For the past twenty years the interdisciplinary field of American studies has served as an intellectual incubator for a still-emerging body of scholarship focusing on the historical experience of sexual minorities in the United States. In turn, the work of scholars who often identify these days as queer theorists or as students of lesbian and gay studies has significantly transformed the field of American studies from within. This short course will investigate the intersecting, often reciprocal relation that exists between American studies and LGBTQ studies. Specifically, it will introduce students to some of the established conceptual frameworks that govern US-focused lesbian and gay historiography while also laying out some of the methodological problems, theoretical controversies and political disagreements that currently inform scholarly work being done at the intersection of these two interdisciplinary fields. Of particular interest will be the significant disagreements that have emerged between scholars who seek to historicize the emergence of modern lesbian and gay *identity* in the United States and those who seek instead to queer our understanding of American history culture by critiquing sexual normativity as such.