

Gay men's urban cultures: San Francisco in the 1970s and today

Eric Rofes

Associate Professor of Education

Location of Class	HGH 217
Time & Date of Class	Thursdays: 4:30-7:30 p.m. San Francisco field trip (required): April 26-28, 2006
Professor's Office	HGH 209
Office Hours	By appointment; also Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 1:30-3:00
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Class Requirements, Deadlines & Grading

Your final grade in this class will be determined by assessments in four key areas:

1. Class attendance and participation (20%)

You are expected to attend every class session, including the weekend field trip to San Francisco. You are expected to arrive in class on time and depart class only when the session is completed. You are permitted one absence without your grade being affected. Each additional absence moves your grade in this category down 1/3 of a grade (for example, from B+ to B). Three late arrivals or early departures equal one absence. Please notify the professor in writing or by email (not in a face-to-face conversation) that you will have to miss a class or arrive late / leave early, so he might plan accordingly. Please consult other students--your peers--to find out what you missed in class and to photocopy any handouts. If additional questions emerge after this consultation, see the professor. This portion of the grade also will evaluate the frequency and quality of your participation in class and your ability to demonstrate significant recall and analysis of the class readings.

2. **Conference Journal** (20%)

You will be expected to register and attend three workshops related to LGBT issues at one of three conferences occurring this semester:

- North Coast Education Summit (February 2-5)
- HSU Diversity Conference (March 3-4)
- Q-Fest: Multicultural Queer Film Festival (March 23-25)

You will be asked to record your reflections on these three workshops/events in journal format and link them whenever possible to our course readings and class discussions. A specific instruction sheet will be distributed for this assignment. The length of your journal should be 5-7 pages, typed and double-spaced. Due date: two classes after the conference has occurred.

3. **Team-Presentation on Book** (20%)

You will choose one additional book to read that focuses on the topics highlighted in this course. In most cases this book will come from a recommended list distributed by the professor. You will be asked to work with a small group of students to prepare a 40-minute lesson that you will teach to our class during the second half of the semester. The team's work will be evaluated and graded based on four factors: (1) the team's ability to convey key information or "learnings" from the book to our class; (2) The team's ability to link the book to other themes, readings, and issues discussed in the class; (3) The team's ability to engage and motivate students to participate in the lesson. A worksheet will be distributed about this assignment. Due date: second half of the semester.

4. **Paper** (40%)

Each student will choose a question or topic early in the semester and investigate it throughout the course. In the final weeks of the semester, you will be expected to hand in to the professor a 10-12 page paper (undergraduate students) or a 15-20 page paper (graduate students). Due date: May 4

Overview

This new course emerges out of the professor's decade-long research project focused on gay men in the United States during the decade before HIV/AIDS was felt in a meaningful way and a community-based response was mounted. The project involves social-history research and focuses on a central question:

- How did self-identified gay men in the United States create identity and community during the decade before HIV/AIDS?

The course is designed to probe this question through one narrow lens: the experience of gay men in one urban center--San Francisco. By using San Francisco as a case study of urban gay male cultures during the 1970s and today, we hope to gain a greater understanding of the ways culture, identity, race, socio-economic class, age, and urbanicity inform men's understandings of their homosexuality and the social worlds they create for themselves and others.

Among the questions this course attempts to consider are:

- Were the 1970s in San Francisco a time of mindless hedonism for gay men, focused narrowly on sexual pleasure or were other projects taking place?
- What diverse subcultures of gay men existed in San Francisco during the 1970s and how did such subcultures come to exist, develop, and thrive?
- In what ways did disco, bathhouse, sex club, and bar culture inform gay men's sense of themselves and their community? How did such spaces interact with efforts in the political, religious, health, education, and arts arenas?
- In what ways did the arrival of AIDS in the early 1980s transform gay men's cultures in San Francisco? In what ways was the 1980s AIDS response in San Francisco strengthened or weakened by the decade that preceded it?
- What gay male subcultures, organizations, rituals, and events have emerged during the "post-crisis" or "post-AIDS" decade (1995-2005)? In what ways are they similar to or different from counterparts in the 1970s?

People who successfully complete this course will emerge with a greater understanding of the social and cultural history of gay men in San Francisco during the past 40 years. They will also be able to articulate the ways race, class, sexual identity, and generation intersect with specific subcultures and spaces in urban centers in the United States.

Course Readings

This course has four required texts plus a course reader. Additional readings may be handed out, put on reserve, or assigned in class.

Bottom line--> Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the week's assignment in class. The required texts are:

- *Gay by the Bay*, by Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk, (Chronicle Books, 1996)
- *Out in the Castro: Desire, Promise, Activism*, edited by Winston Leyland (Leyland Publishing, 2001)
- *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco, 1970-1982*, by Jack Fritscher (Harrington Park Press, 2005 or Palm Drive, 1990)
- *Latino Gay Men and HIV: Culture, Sexuality and Risk*, by Raphael Diaz (Routledge, 1997)
- *Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures*, by Eric Rofes (Haworth Press, 1998)

There will also be a course reader prepared for the class with additional articles and academic studies.

A copy of each of the required texts will be placed on reserve in the library if requested.

Special Notes

- An e-mail list will be created for this class. Students are expected to check their email accounts at least once every two days. This is a course requirement.
- The use of personal cell phones and beepers while class is in session is discouraged. If an emergency arises and you must have your technology turned on, please notify the class during opening announcement period of potential disturbance.
- The use of standard, grammatically correct English in your writing and speaking is key to your success in this course. If you need assistance with your writing, please visit the university's Writing Center, seek help from classmates and friends, or visit the instructor during office hours. Please take seriously this emphasis on English-language skills. Any paper that includes many errors or is not carefully proofread and edited will receive a maximum grade of C.
- Students are urged to attend office hours throughout the semester to discuss topics raised in the class, or seek help with assignments, study skills, academic or other matters. If scheduled times are not convenient, I am happy to schedule additional times to fit your schedule.
- Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to check-in with me as soon as possible.
- Students are responsible for information about academic dishonesty and plagiarism as stated in the HSU Catalogue.
- Visitors are welcome to this class. Food and beverages are welcome. If you have friends who might benefit from joining us for a specific session, please bring them along and introduce them during the opening announcements.

Assignments are due on the announced date unless alternate arrangements have been made at least 48 hours in advance of the due date. Otherwise, late assignments will have a full grade deducted for every two days they are late.

Gay men's urban cultures

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Date	Topic	Assignment
January 19	Course Orientation	Gay by the Bay, 1-28
January 26	San Francisco History & the 1960s	Gay by the Bay, 30-67 Some Dance: TBA Transcript: Robert S.
February 2	1970s Neighborhoods: Polk, SOMA, Castro	Gay by the Bay, 51-85 Out in the Castro, 11-35 Reader: A, B, C
February 2-5		North Coast Education Summit
February 9	1970s: Bathhouses & Discos	Some Dance: TBA Transcript: Jonathan K. Reader: D, E
February 16	1970s: Politics & Religion	Out in the Castro, 36-139 Reader; F, G Transcript: Leo E.
February 23	1970s: Leather Subculture	Some Dance: TBA Reader: H, I Transcript: Bob B.
March 2		No Class
March 3-4		Diversity Conference
March 9	1980s: What brought about an end to the 1970s in San Francisco?	Out in the Castro, 140-257 Reader: J, K
March 16		Spring Break
March 23	1980s: HIV Response & bathhouse closures	Gay by the Bay, 85-116 Some Dance: TBA Reader: L, M
March 23-25		Queer Film Festival
March 30	1990s: Queer Nation	Latino Gay Men, TBA Out in the Castro, 258-301 Dry Bones, xi-120
April 6	1990s: Changes in HIV	Latino Gay Men, TBA Dry Bones, 121-238 Gay by the Bay, 117-154
April 13	2005: Gay Men's Health debates; Race in the Castro	Dry Bones, 239-306 Reader: N, O, P, Q, R
April 20		No Class

April 27	2005: The Marriage Moment & the Changing Castro	Out in the Castro, 302-348 Reader: S, T, U, V
April 28-30		San Francisco Visit
May 4	Course Wrap-Up	Reader: W, X, Y, Z