

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2016-2017 SCAND 399 [22774, A1: *Mamma Mia! 'Queer' I Go Again!*]
(Spring Term, May 8-June 14)

Instructor: Dr. John F. Eason III
Office: 316-B
Fax: 780-492-9106

Time: MWF 12-1:50
Place: HC L1 10
Office Hrs.: Mon., 2:30-3:30pm
or by appointment

Email: easoniii@ualberta.ca

Course Prerequisite: There is no prerequisite for this course.

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved.

Community Service Learning component

Required Optional None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

- Exam registry – Students' Union
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (Please specify)
- NA

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Course Description and Objectives:

Of all the musical groups and individuals to have gone on to attract large gay followings, the status of Abba – the Swedish super group from the 70s – as international gay icons, is unrivalled. While it may seem unlikely that a group consisting of two heterosexual couples could go on to achieve deistic status in gay culture, Abba’s consistently strong presence in the world’s LGBTQIA communities cannot be ignored. The objective of this course is two-fold: firstly, to introduce a phenomenon, which until the 90s was largely hidden from mainstream society, and secondly to explore ways in which queer fans understand, identify with and relate to the visual, aural and performative aspects of Abba in ways that often differ significantly from mainstream interpretations.

Before one can understand Abba’s ubiquitous status in gay culture, one must first understand the group and their music within the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which the group members lived, created and performed. Thus this course will also trace the development of the band starting from the early days in Sweden in the 1960s before the formation of Abba to their breakthrough at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1974, from Abba-mania in Europe and Australia, to the unofficial dissolution of the group in the 1980s, from the gay-led Abba revival in the 1990s, to the internationally-acclaimed ‘*Mamma Mia*’! *The Musical* phenomenon of the 2000s. While Abba’s place in the world of gay iconography will take centre stage in the course, ‘Mamma Mia’ (Queer) I Go Again will also critically examine the group as artists, innovators and public personalities in their own right.

Integral concepts such as camp, kitsch, sentimentality and diva worship will be explored as will musical genres with which Abba and gay culture (in Sweden and beyond) are intrinsically linked such as *schlager* and disco along with musical contests such as the Swedish *Melodifestival* (the Swedish precursor to the Eurovision Song Contest) and the Eurovision Song Contest itself.

Listening, watching (feature films, TV clips and documentaries), interpreting and discussing will provide a deeper, broader and more personal understanding of the band’s enduring appeal to both queer and straight audiences alike.

At the end of the course you should have good knowledge of the following:

- The history of Abba and its four members
- Swedish society in the 1970s (and beyond!)
- Swedish Lesbian and Gay history
- The “*schlager* phenomenon” in Sweden and the role “*schlagerfestivaler*” (*schlager* festivals), i.e. *Melodifestivalen* (The Melody Festival) and *Eurovision Song Contest* play in mainstream and queer societies

- The concept of “Diva Worship” and the central role of the “*schalgerdiva*” in queer Swedish culture
- The concept of “*camp*” and its four components: *aesthetics* [including kitsch and sentimentality], *theatricality*, *irony* and *humour*
- Musical genres crucial to understanding Abba and their queer appeal, namely: *schlager*, glam rock, disco and Broadway-style musicals

You will understand key theories and concepts central to this course including:

- Queer Theory
- The gay sensibility
- Gay iconography
- Queer receptive theory
- Finally, you will be able to apply what you have learned about Abba during the run of this course (that is the visual, aural and performative aspects of the group) to another gay icon!

Texts:

There is no textbook for this course; however, there will be a number of short articles and readings to get you thinking about concepts central not just to Abba as gay icons but to gay iconography and culture more generally.

A tentative reading list can be found at the end of the syllabus. Readings may be added or omitted based on how the course develops. All readings will be posted to eClass in PDF form, and you will need access to them in class. Paper or electronic form is fine.

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

Attendance/participation	20%
Midterm #1	25% (Fri., May. 26, 2017)
Midterm #2	25% (Mon., June. 12, 2017)
Group Presentation	30% (Fri., June 16, 2017 @8am.)

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):

[http://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=806#Examinations_\(Exams\)](http://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=806#Examinations_(Exams))

Explanatory Notes on Assignments and Percentage Breakdown:

Attendance and participation – 20%:

It is absolutely essential that you come to class. Missing even one day will put you at a disadvantage. If you must miss it is your responsibility to consult with a fellow classmate. Absences will reflect in the attendance and participation portion of your

grade. Film screenings are required, as they are integral to the course material. Out of respect for your classmates and me please be on time.

Two Midterms – 25% x 2 = 50%:

The midterms will consist of short response and essay questions. If you've attended lectures regularly, taken good notes and are well acquainted with the concepts and arguments dealt with in class as well as have some examples under your belt to support your arguments you should be in good shape.

Midterm 1 - Fri., May. 26, 2017

Midterm 2 – Mon., June. 12, 2017

Pair/Group Presentation – 30%:

Instead of a research paper, your final project will be a group presentation. For your group presentation I would like for you to present an analysis of a popular gay icon in the music industry. You are to analyse your icon based on what you have learned about Abba (that is the visual, aural and performative aspects of the group). Specifically, applying what you have learned about *camp* and its four components: aesthetics, irony, theatricality and humour you will explore why your artist appeals to gay fans. Other overarching questions you will want to address and keep in mind throughout are:

- *Why are they a 'gay icon'?*
- *What is it about their appearance, music and performances that beg the title of 'gay icon'?*
- *How do they reflect a 'gay sensibility'?*
- *What is their relationship to gay fans?*
- *What do their gay fans have to say about them?*

These are all issues you should consider in your analysis. In terms of length 15-20 minutes is adequate. You're encouraged to use video clips as I have done, but please make sure what you are showing is relevant to your analysis and no longer than 3-4 minutes. The bulk should be on your analysis, a "queer reading" if you like.

Presentations will take place during final exam time: (Fri., June 16, 2017 @8am)

Cell Phones & Laptops:

Use of cell phones and laptops is permitted for classroom activities only. Such activities include note taking, accessing readings and lyrics posted to eClass. Surfing, texting or using either as a listening device is forbidden.

Required Notes:

"Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar."

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#)

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.”

Students in languages courses should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

****In this course,*** student/instructor communication is important. If a student knows of upcoming absences, the instructor should be notified. If not, the instructor should be notified as soon as possible to be able to offer instructions regarding missed material, and/or assistance. Moreover, in this course attendance and participation go hand in hand. When a student is absent, his/her level of participation in class cannot be assessed. The 20% allotted for attendance and class participation is based on effort and active engagement in shown when in attendance. As this is an intensive course bear in the mind one missed day equals two days’ worth material.

Policy for Late Assignments/Homework:

Students who consult **in advance** with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension **just one time** throughout the course with no penalty. However, if a second excuse will be granted for late assignments, half of the mark assigned for this particular work will be deducted. Otherwise, all assignments should be handed in on the stated deadline. Any assignment not handed-in in time or unexcused late assignments will not be given any marks. Late excuses will **not** be accepted for any reason.”

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82
Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72
Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
Failure.	F	0.0	0-59

The Norwegian service club Sons of Norway *Torskeklubben* will provide bursaries of \$150 to students who have successfully completed a Scandinavian course (including SCAND 399: ‘Mamma Mia’ (Queer) I Go Again) with a minimum grade of A-.

Tentative Reading List for Course:

- Babuscio, Jack. "The Cinema of Camp (AKA Camp and the Gay Sensibility." *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*. By Fabio Cleto. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999. 117-35. Print.
- Bennett, Andy. "The Forgotten Decade: Rethinking the Popular Music of the Seventies." *Popular Music History* 2.1 (2007): 5-24. Print.
- Broman, Per F. "When All Is Said and Done:" Swedish Abba Reception During the 1970s and the Ideology of Pop." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 17 (2005): 45-56. Print.
- Bronski, Michael. "Part 2: Opera: Mad Queens and Other Divas." *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility*. Boston, MA: South End, 1984. 134-143. Print.
- . "Part 3: The Theory of the Pleasure Class." *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility*. Boston, MA: South End, 1984. 198-214. Print.
- Champagne, John. "Dancing Queen? Feminist and Gay Male Spectatorship in Three Recent Films from Australia." *Film Criticism* 21 (1998): 66-88. Print.
- Creekmur, Corey K., and Alexander Doty. "The Great Escape." *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 60-70. Print.
- Dyer, Richard. "Introduction." *The Culture of Queers*. London: Routledge, 2002. 1-14. Print.
- . "The Politics of Gay Culture (with Derek Cohen)." London: Routledge, 2002. 15-30. Print.
- Lemish, Dafna. "Ch. 11: Gay Brotherhood: Israeli Gay Men and the Eurovision Song Contest." *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Ed. Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 123-34. Print.
- Raykoff, Ivan. "Chapter 1: Camping on the Borders of Europe." *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Ed. Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 2-12. Print.
- Storey, John, and John Storey. "Chapter 6: Music." *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. Athens: U of Georgia, 2003. 110-29. Print.
- Tobin, Robert Deam. "Chapter 3: Eurovision at 50: Post-Wall and Post-Stonewall." *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Ed. Ivan Raykoff Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 25-35. Print.