

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

**2015-2016** SCAND 399 B3: *Mamma Mia! 'Queer' I Go Again!*  
(Winter Term)

Instructor: Dr. John F. Eason III  
Office: 316-B  
Fax: 780-492-9106  
E-mail: [easoniii@ualberta.ca](mailto:easoniii@ualberta.ca)

Time: TR 2-3:20  
Place: CAB 377  
Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:00

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**Course Prerequisite:** There is no prerequisite for this course, but native and near-native Swedish speakers are not allowed.

**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 undeniably 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 the 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 beyond, to the unofficial dissolution of the group in the 1980s, from the gay-led Abba revival a decade later, to the internationally-acclaimed *‘Mamma Mia’! The Musical* 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. Listening, watching, 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 will have solid knowledge of the following: the history of Abba and its four members; Swedish society in the 1970s; Swedish LGBTQIA history; *camp* (and its four components: aesthetics [including kitsch and sentimentality], theatricality, irony and humour); musical genres crucial to understanding Abba and their queer appeal, i.e. *schlager* and “*schlagerfestivals*” (*schlager* festivals), namely *Melodifestivalen* (The Melody Festival) and *Eurovision Song Contest*, glam rock, disco and Broadway-style musicals; Abba’s music in both short and feature-length films as well as the post-modern musical. You will understand key theories and concepts central to this course including queer theory, the gay sensibility, gay iconography, queer receptive theory, queer identity formation and queer musical spaces. 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 (required):***

All required texts will be posted on eClass available for you to download and print out as required. The articles and readings I have selected will be used as starting points to get you acquainted with and thinking about concepts central not just to Abba as gay icons but to gay iconography, culture and fandom more generally. A tentative reading list for the course follows.

***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.
- 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.
- Doty, Alexander. "Chapter 1: There's Something Queer Here." *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1993. 1-16. 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.

***Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):***

Attendance/participation	20%	
Midterm	25%	(Tentative date: Thurs., Feb. 18, 2016)
Group Presentation Pre-assignment	10%	(Due date TBA)
Group Presentation	20%	(To be presented in class. Times TBA)
Final	25%	(Tuesday, April 19, 2016 @2pm)

***Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):***

[http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6\(3\)](http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6(3))

***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. While Power Point presentations will be posted on eClass they are not intended as stand-ins or substitutions for the lectures. There is simply way too much information to be included on them. 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. Out of respect for your classmates and me please be on time.

***Midterm – 25%:***

The midterm will consist of four sections. You’ll be asked to answer one question from each. If you’ve attended lectures regularly, studied the power points thoroughly, are well acquainted with the concepts and arguments dealt with and have examples under your belt to support your arguments and/or statements, you should be in good shape.

***Group Presentation Pre-assignment – 10%:***

A detailed outline addressing your key points will be required. So that I have sufficient time to provide you with feedback and for you to implement it the assignment must be handed in at the prescribed date (TBA). Presentations will need to be kept to around 15 and no longer than 20 minutes, thus preparedness, organization and structure are paramount. Every group must select a different artist, which must be approved by me.

**Group Presentation – 20%:**

For your group presentation I would like for you together with three or four other students to present an analysis of a popular gay icon in the music industry based on what you have learned about Abba (that is the visual, aural and performative aspects of the group) during the run of this course. Specifically, applying what you have learned about *camp* and its four components: aesthetics, irony, theatricality and humour I would like for you to explore why your artist appeals to gay fans. The overarching questions you will want to address and keep in mind throughout are:

- Why is your artist a ‘gay icon’?
- What is it about your artist’s appearance, music and performances that begs the title of ‘gay icon’?
- How does he or she reflect a ‘gay sensibility’?
- What is his or her relationship to gay fans?
- What do your artist’s gay fans have to say about him or her?

These are all issues you should consider in your analysis. In terms of length I think 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.

**Final – 25%:**

In terms of format the final will resemble the midterm. The final will cover material dealt with since the midterm.

**Cell Phones & Laptops:**

Use of cell phones is not permitted in the classroom. Use of laptops will be permitted in certain cases; however, you will need to clear this with me first.

**Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) 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 which 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 safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or 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 directs 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 student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110>

### ***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 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 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.

***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 Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca); Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB [www.ssds.ualberta.ca](http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca) ).

***Grading:***

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

### “MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Letter	%	Pts	Descriptor
A+	95-100%	4.0	<b>Excellent:</b> Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of subject matter far exceeding expectations.
A	90-94%	4.0	<b>Excellent:</b> Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	86-89%	3.7	<b>Excellent:</b> Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.
B+	82-85%	3.3	<b>Good</b>
B	75-81%	3.0	<b>Good:</b> average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
B-	70-74%	2.7	<b>Good</b>
C+	66-69%	2.3	<b>Satisfactory:</b> Basic understanding of the subject matter
C	61-65%	2.0	<b>Satisfactory</b>
C-	58-60%	1.7	<b>Satisfactory</b>
D+	55-57%	1.3	<b>Poor:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
D	50-54%	1.0	<b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
F	0-49%	0.0	<b>Failure:</b> Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements

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 B-.