

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

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

2021-2022 SCAND 399 [56270, *A1: Mamma Mia! 'Queer' I Go Again!*]
(Fall Term, September 1-December 7, 2021)

Instructor: Dr. John F. Eason III
Office: 316-B
E-mail: easonjii@ualberta.ca

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00pm-3:30pm
Place: T 3-65
Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00pm-3:00pm
or by appointment

Bachelor of Arts / Major in Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

<https://www.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies/undergraduate-program-information/prospective-undergraduate-students>

Course Prerequisite: It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisites for the course.

Experiential Learning Component

this course has a significant experiential learning component (15% or more of the course grade)

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

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved.

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

Course Description, Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes:

Of all musical groups that 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 band of two heterosexual couples could go on to achieve such high 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 differ from mainstream interpretations.

Before one can understand Abba's status in gay culture, one must first, of course, understand the group and their music within the social, cultural, political, and historical contexts in which the group members lived, created, and performed. Consequently, this course also traces 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' 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 critically examine the group as artists, innovators, and public personalities.

Integral concepts such as camp, kitsch, sentimentality, and diva worship will be explored in this course as will musical genres with which Abba and gay culture are intrinsically linked such as *schlager*, disco, and musical theatre. Queer-friendly song contests with which Abba is also closely associated such as *Melodifestivalen* (the Swedish precursor to the Eurovision Song Contest) and the Eurovision Song Contest itself will also be examined.

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 its role in mainstream and queer societies
- The concept of “Diva Worship” and the “*schlagerdiva*”
- The concept of “*camp*” and its four components as outlined by scholar Jack Babuscio: *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 musicals

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

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

Course Format: 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 queer and straight audiences alike.

Texts:

Short articles and readings posted on eClass will be used as jumping off 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. PowerPoints will be posted on eClass following lecture.

The “Weekly Schedule” can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Additional Course Fees

Yes No

Important Dates: [See Academic Schedule in current Calendar](#)

First Day of Class: September 1, 2021
Add/Delete Date: September 15, 2021
50% Withdrawal Date: October 4, 2021
Withdrawal Date: November 30, 2021
Last Day of Class: December 7, 2021
Midterm Exam Date: Thursday, October 28, 2021, 2:00pm-3:20pm
Final Exam Date: Monday, December 20, 2021, 9:00am-11:00am

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):

Please consult the following site:

<https://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=34&navoid=10107#examinations-exams>

Deferred Final Examination: For information on how to apply for a deferred exam see [“I Missed my Final Exam, Now What?”](#)

Components of Course Grade (see “Explanatory Notes”):

Attendance/participation	15% (Cumulative)
Midterm	30% (Thurs., October 28)
Final	30% (Mon., Dec. 20, 9:00am-11:00am)
Group Presentations	25% (Thurs., Dec. 2 and Tues., Dec. 7)

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Attendance and participation – 15%:

It is essential that you come to class. While PowerPoint presentations will be posted on eClass following class they are not intended as stand-ins or substitutions for lectures. Taking good and thorough notes in this class will be crucial to your success, so if you must miss it is vital that you consult with a fellow classmate to

find out what was stated. Absences will reflect in the attendance and participation portion of your grade. Coming to class prepared in a very integral part of this course but is only part of the component. If it is apparent that you have not done the reading, are not participating in pair, group, or class discussions, it will be reflected in this part of your grade. Film screenings are required so failing to attend (or leaving in the middle, at the end of a film or documentary, etc.) will also factor negatively. Out of respect for your classmates and me please strive for punctuality.

Midterm – 30%:

The midterm will consist of short response and essay questions based on material covered in class. The midterm will be written Thursday, October 28 during class, and you will have the entire 80 minutes.

Final – 30%:

Like the midterm, the final will consist of short response and essay questions based on material covered in class. In terms of content, it will focus on material covered after the midterm. The final will be written Monday, December 20 at 9:00am and you will have two hours to complete it.

Group Presentation – 25%:

Your final project will be a group presentation. You will 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). 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 include are:

- *Why are they considered 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?*

In terms of length 20-25 minutes is adequate, however, depending upon how many groups we have, this may require some adjustment. In the past groups consisting of 3-4 people work best, but there may be exceptions. You are encouraged to use video clips as I have done, however, make sure what you show is relevant to your analysis. The focus, of course, should be on analysis. To ensure every group has a different artist or band, you must inform me via email easoniii@ualberta.ca who you would like to present on as soon as possible. It will also need to be approved. In the unlikely event it is not, I recommend having a backup (or two). If I receive multiple requests for the same artist or band, I will encourage you to work together. Group presentations will be held Thursday, December 2 and Tuesday, December 7 during class. Detailed guidelines will be posted on eClass in due time.

Cell Phones & Laptops:

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

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.

Deferral of term work is a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferral will be granted. Misrepresentation of facts to gain a deferral is a serious breach of the [Code of Student Behaviour](#).

In this course, student/instructor communication is important. When a student is absent, his/her level of participation in class cannot be assessed. The 15% allotted for attendance and class participation is based on effort and active engagement shown when in attendance. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you missed.

Policy for Late Assignments:

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 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.”

Required Notes:

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

Student Responsibilities:

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](#) 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.

All students should consult [the Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

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, digital or otherwise, 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. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course 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).

Disclaimer:

Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass. The date of the final examination is set by the Registrar and takes precedence over the final examination date reported in this syllabus.

Student Resources:

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

[The Academic Success Centre](#) provides professional academic support to help students maximize their academic success and achieve their academic goals. We offer appointments, advising, group workshops, online courses, and specialized programming year-round to students in all university programs, and at all levels of achievement and study.

They also administer the University of Alberta's [Duty to Accommodate procedure](#) for students and works with students, instructors, campus units, Faculties and departments, community and government agencies, and on and off-campus service providers to coordinate students' disability-related accommodation needs for participation in university programs.

For general information and to register for services visit the [Academic Accommodations](#) webpage.

[The Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

[The First Peoples' House](#) provides an environment of empowerment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners to achieve personal and academic growth.

[Health and Wellness Support for Students](#) outlines available mental and physical health resources that are offered on-campus and in the community.

[The Office of the Student Ombuds](#) is a confidential service that strives to ensure that university processes related to students operate as fairly as possible. We offer information, advice, and support to students, faculty, and staff as they deal with academic, discipline, interpersonal, and financial issues related to student programs.

Learning and working environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment.

It is the policy of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. Resources and more information can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence>

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

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

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	%
<p>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.</p>	A+	4.0	95-100
	A	4.0	90-94
	A-	3.7	86-89
<p>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.</p>	B+	3.3	82-85
	B	3.0	75-81
	B-	2.7	70-74
<p>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.</p>	C+	2.3	66-69
	C	2.0	61-65
	C-	1.7	58-60
<p>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.</p>	D+	1.3	55-57
	D	1.0	50-54
<p>Failure.</p>	F	0.0	0-49

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Mamma Mia ‘Queer’ I Go Again! – Weekly Schedule	
Week 1	Introduction & Abba History
Thurs., Sept. 2	Course Introduction History/Background: Documentary – <i>Abba: The Winner Takes It All</i> , 1999 (UK)
Week 2	Abba “Comes Out”
Tues., Sept. 7	History/Background: Documentary – <i>Abba: The Winner Takes It All</i> , 1999 (UK) Pair activity and class discussion of <i>Abba: The Winner Takes It All</i>
Thurs., Sept. 9	Lecture/Presentation: The “Gay 90s” – Abba “Comes Out”!
Week 3	Abba as a Gay Phenomenon & Camp
Tues., Sept. 14	Lecture/Presentation: Abba as a Gay Phenomenon <u>Reading for Thurs., Sept. 16:</u> “The Cinema of Camp (a.k.a. Camp and the Gay Sensibility).” Jack Babuscio. (eClass)
Thurs., Sept. 16	Discussion of Babuscio article Carol Burnett Skit: “Movie Star Crazy.” Group/pair Discussion: How is it camp? Lecture/Presentation: Understanding Abba as “Camp” <u>Reading for Tues., Sept. 21:</u> “When All Is Said and Done: Swedish Abba Reception During the 1970s and the Ideology of Pop.” Per F. Broman. (eClass)
Week 4	The Aesthetics of Abba
Tues., Sept. 21	Lecture/Presentation: Understanding Abba as “Camp,” continued. <u>Readings for Thurs., Sept. 23:</u> “When All Is Said and Done: Swedish Abba Reception During the 1970s and the Ideology of Pop.” Per F. Broman. (eClass) “Kitsch, Romance Fiction and Male Paranoia.” Rita Felski (p. 54-60). (eClass)
Thurs., Sept. 23	Discussion of Broman & Felski articles Lecture/Presentation: The Aesthetics of Abba
Week 5	Abba in Film
Tues., Sept. 28	The Aesthetics of Abba, continued. Film: <i>Tillsammans [Together]</i> , Dir. Moodysson, 2000 (In Swedish with English subtitles) <u>Readings for Tues., Oct. 5:</u> “Gay Brotherhood: Israeli Gay Men and the Eurovision Song Contest.” Dafna Lemish. (eClass) “Eurovision at 50: Post-Wall and Post-Stonewall.” Robert Deam Tobin. To be read prior to Week 6 (for background). Discussion will take place Week 7. (eClass)
Thurs., Sept. 30	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (No class)
Week 6	Schlager and Eurovision (or “The Gayest Show on Earth”)
Tues., Oct. 5	Finish watching <i>Tillsammans</i> and discussion Lecture/Presentation: <i>Schlager, Melodifestivalen and The Eurovision Song Contest</i>
Thurs., Oct. 7	Lecture/Presentation: <i>Schlager, Melodifestivalen and The Eurovision Song Contest</i> , continued.

Week 7	Abba as Schlager
Tues., Oct. 12	<i>Schlager, Melodifestivalen and The Eurovision Song Contest</i> , continued. Discussion of Lemish & Tobin articles
Thurs., Oct. 14	Lecture/Presentation: Abba as “Schlager” Lecture/Presentation: Queer Readings of some performances from <i>Melodifestivalen and The Eurovision Song Contest</i> (time permitting)
Week 8	Abba as Disco & The Theatricality of Abba
Tues., Oct. 19	Lecture/Presentation: Abba as Disco
Thurs., Oct. 21	Lecture/Presentation: The Theatricality of Abba
Week 9	Midterm
Tues., Oct. 26	The Theatricality of Abba, continued.
Thurs., Oct. 28	Midterm Written Exam
Week 10	Abba in Australia
Tues., Nov. 2	Documentary: <i>Bang a Boomerang</i> , 2013 (Australia)
Thurs., Nov. 4	Film: <i>Abba: The Movie</i> , Dir. Lasse Hallström, 1977 <u>Readings for Tues., Nov.16:</u> “Dancing Queen? Feminist and Gay Male Spectatorship in Three Recent Films from Australia,” John Champagne. (eClass) “Opera: Mad Queens and Other Divas,” Michael Bronski. Both articles to be read prior to Week 12. Discussion will take place Week 12. (eClass)
Week 11	Reading Week
Tues., Nov. 9/ Thurs., Nov. 11	Reading Week (no class)
Week 12	Abba in Queer Cinema
Thurs., Nov. 16	Film: <i>Muriel’s Wedding</i> , Dir. Hogan, 1994 Film: <i>Priscilla Queen of the Desert</i> , Dir. Stephan Elliott, 1994 (Watch on your own)
Tues., Nov. 18	Finish watching <i>Muriel’s Wedding</i> Discussion of Champagne & Bronski articles
Week 13	The Irony and Humour of Abba
Tues., Nov. 23	Lecture/Presentation: The Irony of Abba
Thurs., Nov. 25	Lecture/Presentation: The Humour of Abba
Week 14	Mamma Mia! The Movie & Presentations
Tues., Nov. 30	Film: <i>Mamma Mia! The Movie</i> , Dir. Lloyd, 2008
Thurs., Dec. 2	Group presentations – Day 1
Week 15	Presentations
Tues., Dec. 7	Group presentations – Day 2
	Final Exam
Mon., Dec. 20, 9:00am	Final Written Exam