

What is the opposite of masculine?

Gay men and masculinity

Sophomore Seminar for Spring 2007

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You can get at least four answers to this question: unmanly, feminine, effeminate, and gay. These are different answers, but they're related, through a web of conceptualizations and beliefs about gender and sexuality. Taking gay men as its focus, this seminar explores that web. We'll examine:

- Linguistic worlds: Words, concepts, and uses of words.
- Social worlds: How gay men structure their social and sexual worlds.
- Artistic worlds: How gay masculinities and relationships are depicted in mainstream art and in material aimed at a gay audience, in particular in Gayland, the fantasy world of gay eros (where there is a high premium on masculinity).

We will see that the (real) worlds of gay men and the fantasy world of Gayland both have their own conventions, but that attitudes and beliefs about men and women, masculinity and femininity, are carried over from the larger culture to (real) gay worlds, and then, metaphorically, to Gayland.

Though the course focuses on gay men, it is grounded on the literature of feminism and will refer often to literature on masculinities (mostly concerning straight men). Everyone is welcome.

Warning: This course will be heavy with sensitive topics, frank language, and sexual images. If this is likely to offend you, you should not apply to take the seminar.

Catalog description: A look at the linguistic and social worlds of gay men, and artistic representations of or for gay men, with a view to examining the relationships in our culture between the oppositions masculine/feminine, manly/unmanly, masculine/effeminate, and straight/gay.