

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

2018-2019 SCAND 399 [22503, A1: *Mamma Mia! 'Queer' I Go Again!*]
(Spring Term, May 6-June 12)

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

Time: MWF 10am-11:50am
Place: TBA
Office Hours: TBA

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 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 often 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 in their own right.

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.

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.

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 "*schlagerdiva*" 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
- 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. The PowerPoints and lectures will function as such. Short articles and readings 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.

A tentative reading list may be found at the end of the syllabus. Readings may be added or omitted based on how the course develops. A detailed, weekly schedule will be posted on eClass.

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

Attendance/participation	15% (Cumulative)
Midterm #1	30% (Mon., May. 27, 2019)
Midterm #2	30% (Mon., June 10, 2019)
Group Presentation	25% (Thurs., June 13 @ 11:30am)

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):

Please consult the following site:

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

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

Explanatory Notes on Assignments and Percentage Breakdown:

Attendance and participation – 15%:

It is absolutely essential that you come to class. While PowerPoint presentations will be posted on eClass they are not intended as stand-ins or substitutions for lectures. 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. Coming to class prepared is a very integral part of this course. If it is apparent you have not done the reading it will be reflected in this part of your final grade. Film screenings are required as they are integral to the course. Out of respect for your classmates and me please be on time.

Two Midterms – 30% x 2 = 60%:

The midterms will consist of short response and essay questions based on what we have covered in class.

Midterm 1 - Mon., May 27, 2019

Midterm 2 – Mon., June 10, 2019

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 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 15 minutes is adequate. You’re encouraged to use video clips as I have done, however, make sure what you show is relevant to your analysis and is no longer than 3-4 minutes. To ensure everyone has a different solo artist or group, you should inform me who you would like to present on as soon as possible. Group presentations will be held Thurs., June 13 @11:30am.

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.

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 (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) 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](#).

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](#).

Territorial Statement:

“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.” (*from the beginning of the Calendar*).

University of Alberta Sexual Violence Policy:

The Sexual Violence Policy was approved by GFC in June 2017. It plays a vital role in ensuring a safe and respectful learning and working environment.

As defined in the policy, **sexual violence** is any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, committed without consent. **Sexual violence** is a complex and serious problem in society and on university campuses. Sexual violence can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those from all ages, abilities, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Through this policy, the University of Alberta recognizes its responsibility to reduce sexual violence in the University community. The university aims to do so by fostering a culture of **consent** and support through education, training and policy. The University recognizes the possible effects of trauma on those who have experienced sexual violence and supports the efforts of individuals to seek support and recover.

To read the policy in more detail, please visit:

<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Policies/Sexual-Violence-Policy.pdf>

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.

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.

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.”

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>.

Accessibility Resources: (1 – 80 SUB)

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage.

The Academic Success Centre: (1-80 SUB)

[The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

The Centre for Writers: (1-42 Assiniboia Hall)

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.

Health and Wellness Support: There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support](#) webpage.

Office of the Student Ombuds:

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

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

Notes on Grades:

According to the UAPPOL Grading Procedure Policy pre-determined quotas of letter grades in courses are not permitted, though Faculties may recommend grade distributions. Accordingly, on *March 11, 2015*, Arts Faculty Council debated and approved the following motion “The Faculty of Arts recommends that the class average in each undergraduate course fall in a range around the Faculty historical average grade for that course level . . .” The complete policy can be found on the Faculty of Arts intranet, but in summary the effective range for each level will be:

CLASS LEVEL	RANGE FOR CLASS AVERAGE
100	2.48 - 3.08
200	2.63 - 3.23
300	2.72 - 3.32
400**	2.98 - 3.58

Reading List for Course:

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.

Felski, Rita. "Kitsch, Romance Fiction and Male Paranoia: Stephen King Meets the Frankfurt School." *Continuum* 4 (1990): 54-70. 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.

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 and Robert Deam Tobin. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 25-35. Print.

SCAND 399: Mamma Mia 'Queer' I Go Again! – Weekly Schedule – Spring 2019

Week 1: Introduction and the “Camping” of Abba

Day 1 (Mon., May 6):

- *Course Introduction
- History/Background: Documentary – *Abba: The Winner Takes It All*, 1999 (UK)

Day 2 (Wed., May 8):

- Pair activity and discussion of Documentary – *Abba: The Winner Takes It All*
- *Lecture/Presentation: The “Gay 90s” – Abba “Comes Out” (as gay icons)!
- *Lecture/Presentation: Abba as a Gay Phenomenon

Reading: For Fri., May 10., read: Jack Babuscio’s “The Cinema of Camp (a.k.a. Camp and the Gay Sensibility).”

Day 3 (Fri., May 10):

- Discuss Babuscio article
- Carol Burnett Skit “Movie Star Crazy.” Discussion: How is it “camp”?
- *Lecture/Presentation: Understanding Abba as “Camp”

Reading: For Mon., May 13, read: Per F. Broman’s “When All Is Said and Done: Swedish Abba Reception During the 1970s and the Ideology of Pop” and Rita Felski’s “Kitsch, Romance Fiction and Male Paranoia” (p. 54-60).

Week 2: The Aesthetics and Politics of Abba

Day 4 (Mon., May 13):

- Discuss Broman & Felski articles
- *Lecture/Presentation: The Aesthetics of Abba

Day 5 (Wed., May 15):

- Film: *Tillsammans [Together]*, Dir. Moodysson, 2000 (In Swedish with English subtitles)
- Discuss *Tillsammans*

Day 6 (Fri., May 17):

- *Lecture/Presentation: Swedish *Schlager*, *Melodifestivalen* and *The Eurovision Song Contest*

Readings: For Mon. May 20, read: “Gay Brotherhood: Israeli Gay Men and the Eurovision Song Contest,” “Camping on the Borders of Europe: A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest” and “Eurovision at 50: Post-Wall and Post-Stonewall.”

Week 3: Abba as “Schlager” and Disco

Day 7 (Mon., May 20):

- Discuss articles
- *Lecture/Presentation: Abba as “Schlager”

Day 8 (Wed., May 22):

- *Lecture/Presentation: Abba as Disco

Day 9 (Fri., May 24):

- *Lecture/Presentation: The Theatricality of Abba
- Film: *Abba the Movie*, Dir. Hallström, 1977

Week 4: Midterm #1 and Abba in Australia

Day 10 (Mon., May 27):

- Midterm #1

Reading: For Fri., May 31, read: John’s Champagne’s “Dancing Queen? Feminist and Gay Male Spectatorship in Three Recent Films from Australia.”

Film: For Fri., May 31, watch *Priscilla Queen of the Dessert* (1994)

Day 11 (Wed., May 29):

- *Abba: Bang a Boomerang*, 2013
- *Abba in Australia*, 1975
- *Made for Export*, 1977

Day 12 (Fri., May 31):

- Film: *Muriel’s Wedding*, Dir. Hogan, 1994
- Discuss Champagne article

Reading: For Mon., June 3, read: Michael Bronski’s "Part 2: Opera: Mad Queens and Other Divas."

Week 5: The Irony and Humour of Abba

Day 13 (Mon., June 3):

- Discuss Bronski article
- *Lecture/Presentation: The Irony of Abba

Day 14 (Wed., June 5):

- *Lecture/Presentation: The Humour of Abba

Day 15 (Fri., June 7):

- TBA

Week 6: Midterm #2 and Final Presentations

Day 16 (Mon., June 10):

- Midterm #2

Day 17 (Wed., June 12):

- Film: *Mamma Mia! The Movie*, Dir. Lloyd, 2008
- *Lecture/Presentation: Abba in Gay Culture Today

Day 18 (Thurs., June 13):

- Final presentations on gay icons @11:30am.

*Power Point Presentation (posted to eClass prior to lecture)

Documentaries: *Abba: The Winner Takes It All*, 1999 (UK) & *Abba: Bang a Boomerang*, 2013 (Australian)

Films: *Tillsammans* (2000), *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (1994)

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