

SHAME! HISTORIES & CULTURES OF AN EMOTION

GNDR_ST 361 / HUM 370-6 / COMP_LIT 390

SPRING
2023



Emotions are integral to our lives and influence how we navigate the social worlds we inhabit. This course explores an emotion that is notoriously difficult to characterize—shame—as it manifests itself in literary and visual media in historical and contemporary culture. During the quarter, we will explore the concept of shame in contexts ranging from sexuality studies (transsexuality, #MeToo), to Black feminist theory (white supremacy), post/neo-colonial discourses (Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa), Holocaust and postcolonial studies (survivor guilt), and inequity (poverty and class struggle). We will discuss a variety of materials, selected from a variety of literary texts (J.M. Coetzee, Franz Kafka, Nella Larsen, Primo Levi, Thomas Mann), essays (phenomenology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, cultural studies), film (Boys Don't Cry, reality T.V.), and excerpts from political commissions (TRC in South Africa). Topics for discussion may include: How do we “read for” emotion/render emotion legible? What role do identity and identification (gender, race, class, religion, and sexuality) play in shame? Does shame differ from guilt (and why should this matter)? Can shame be political and a social force? Does shame have a history? Is shame a social or a private emotion; a bodily or a psychic reaction? We will pose these and other questions and search for answers to them.

Anna Parkinson

MW 2-3:30pm
Library 3370