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Special Issue: Re-Queering The Nation: America's  
Queer Crisis

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# Introduction: America's Queer Past, Present, and Future

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- 1 LGBTQ social, cultural, and political issues have become a defining feature of twenty-first century American life, transforming on a national, international and transnational scale a number of institutions. This special issue of the *European Journal of American Studies* sets out to stage a timely and much-needed conversation between American Studies and Queer Studies, in order to address America's ever-changing position in relation to LGBTQ issues.<sup>1</sup>

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Silenced, hidden, censored, hinted, claimed, or celebrated, queer dynamics have always been an integral part of American culture and history. Much has changed particularly in this still young twenty-first century: films and television shows now feature openly gay characters and themes, which are celebrated by mainstream audiences and achieve both commercial success and win major industry awards; same-sex marriage has emerged as the most important civil rights cause for powerful organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign; the end of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy now allows gay men and women to serve openly; urban campaigners and civic promoters encourage business districts directed to LGBTQ communities as a means for achieving visibility and equality; and multibillion-dollar markets targeting LGBTQ tourists are rapidly increasing.

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For many, such expressions of LGBTQ identity in the public sphere provide evidence of visibility, equality, and true social and political progress. Yet in the past decade, more radical activists and scholars have addressed such changes not as progressive signs of equality and liberation, but as responses directly linked to an authoritative and dominant brand of neoliberal politics. Lisa Duggan, for example, has identified these developments as evidence of "the new homonormativity... a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them" (50). Following this rationale, established LGBTQ organizations

increasingly embrace agendas that compete for acceptance within contemporary economic and political systems, thus abandoning earlier commitments to protecting sexual freedoms, such as those who challenge serial monogamy and those—including bisexual, pansexual, transgender, intersex constituencies—who feel subjugated by a binary gender or sex system.

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This special issue of the *European Journal of American Studies* has found its impulse in these debates and seeks to contribute to this conversation by addressing the multitude of America's queer expressions and dynamics. The seventeen articles in "Re-Queering the Nation: America's Queer Crisis" are organized in four separate sections, and taken together offer examinations of the place, role, use, and power of queer expressions and dynamics in the face of a rapidly changing twenty-first century America. This issue includes contributions by authors from across the globe and from a variety of disciplines (ethnic and postcolonial studies, performance studies, literature, history and politics, film and television studies, cultural studies, anthropology and sociology, and law and religion). These authors combine disparate theoretical fields of knowledge to explore the multiple convergences between American and Queer Studies in innovative and compelling ways. The articles do so by examining cultural, political and social particularities and differences of queer America, by presenting new analytical frameworks for talking about LGBTQ culture and history that expand and challenge current models of identity and community formation, and finally by proposing models of political and cultural resistance in America. Ultimately, "Re-Queering the Nation: America's Queer Crisis" seeks this way to offer examinations and re-examinations of America's queer past and present, and point to America's queer future.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003. Print.

## NOTES

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