

SHABBAT DINNER



Screen the film!

Length: 14 minutes

Watch the film: <http://shabbatdinnerfilm.com/> which has the film as well as downloads to help you prepare for your screening: blank Shabbat Dinner posters, publicity images, and this document.

Shabbat Dinner is an award-winning film that has screened at over 50 film festivals around the world. Through the story of two high-school boys at an awkward family dinner, it confronts issues of coming out, self-discovery, and what it's like to have parents who don't get it. With its bold realism, the film presents a real opportunity to engage a community in discussion.

Summary

The year is 1999, and Shabbat Dinner is boring as usual for William Shore. His mother has invited two crazy hippies and their son and is doing her best to show off, his father is berating their oddball guests, and he doesn't have much in common with their son Virgo. That is, until Virgo tells him that he has just come out as gay. In William's room, the boys speak directly to each other about themselves, while just a few feet away the adults discuss trivialities about prep school, marrying Jewish, and nonfat ice cream. It's not just another Friday night.

The film presents a realistic high school experience in lieu of a heavyhanded message, and in doing so encourages viewers to come to their own conclusions.

Ways to use the film

For a long-standing Gay-Straight Alliance or a one-time event, Shabbat Dinner presents a great opportunity to open a discussion. Some discussion ideas:

- What was your coming out experience like? How does the film relate to your experience?
- How has being gay changed in the past 15 years? (As a round-table discussion or a panel, with faculty discussing experiences of being gay and coming out directly with students.)
- Homosexuality and religion. Some see religion as a set of prescriptive rules, and others as a spiritual relationship. Is one of the rules in your religion not to be gay? Is your religion embracing or homophobic? How do the two interact? (Possible guest speaker or round-table discussion.)

Other discussion topics:

- Being LGBT often means coming out every day: to new and old friends as well as casual acquaintances. How do you approach this process?
- How are gay people portrayed in other films and media? Similarly to in this film?
- How might the film have been different if the characters were straight? How would this event be different?

The film can also be used to segway into more general discussions relevant to the community:

- Bullying
- Safe sex – did the characters in the film practice safe sex? How can safe sex be practiced?
- Home life – What are the challenges at home for dealing with sexuality? Are parents accepting? Does it change relationships and expectations? How about siblings?
- Church/religious life

The best way to engage with the film is through our response video campaign. Tell us your own #WhenIToldThem story about a time you had to tell someone something difficult.

Visit WhenIToldThem.com/submit for more information!