

WGSS 293

Introduction to LGBT Studies

Spring 2017

Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30-3:45 PM

Class room: South College, W101

Dr. Jeanine Ruhsam Office: South College W421 jruhsam@umass.edu

Office Hours: T & Th, 10:00 – 11:15 AM, and by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies. Students will uncover the history of modern, western ideas about sexuality and sexual and gender identity through a wide variety of texts and images across a range of disciplines and methodologies. Sexuality and gender will be considered not as “natural” or consistent phenomena, but as sets of cultural beliefs that have changed over time, manifesting themselves differently in varied cultural and historical contexts. Students will learn how the categories of sexuality and gender relate to shifting regimes of normativity in the twentieth century. Students will also discuss controversies in the contemporary period while being tolerant and respectful of differing viewpoints.

Course Objectives

The engaged student will:

- Read controversial and difficult material objectively and critically.
- Participate in discussions by articulating their own ideas and by respectfully listening and responding to the ideas of others.
- Write papers that critically reflect on key issues faced by LGBT persons.
- Articulate the challenges faced by LGBT persons and organizations.
- Employ sexuality and gender as categories of analysis that intersect with race, ethnicity, and class.

Above all, the course seeks to encourage critical thinking: the ability to evaluate the connection between evidence and potential conclusions. This promotes the likelihood of making logically sound judgments, identifying assumptions and alternatives,

asking relevant questions, and of being fair and open-minded when evaluating the strength of arguments.

Required Texts

Rupp, Leila. *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America*. ISBN-13: 9780226731568

Nutt, Amy Ellis. *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*. ISBN-13: 9780812995435

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. ISBN-13: 9780618871711

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues: A Novel*. ISBN-13: 9781555838539

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - A Biomythography*. ISBN-13: 9780895941220

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*: Revised and Complete Edition. ISBN-13: 9781559363846

Other texts- both readings and films- will be available as downloadable or streaming files on the course website via Moodle, designated with (M) before their author and title. If necessary, some films may be available on course reserve at the library at least one week prior to their in-class discussion. Some texts may be offered as links that you may readily access simply by clicking on them. *Please have copies of the readings in class so you may reference them in discussions.*

Grading

- 15% Participation, attendance and quizzes
- 10% Exam #1 (one class period)
- 15% Exam #2 (one class period)
- 25% Final exam
- 10% Short paper (3-4 pages)
- 25% Final paper (5-7 pages)
- (Extra credit assignment: 5%)

Grading Scale

Highest	Lowest	Letter
100.00 %	94.00 %	A
93.99 %	90.00 %	A-
89.99 %	87.00 %	B+
86.99 %	84.00 %	B
83.99 %	80.00 %	B-
79.99 %	77.00 %	C+
76.99 %	74.00 %	C
73.99 %	70.00 %	C-
69.99 %	67.00 %	D+
66.99 %	60.00 %	D
59.99 %	0.00 %	F

Attendance, Participation and Quizzes

You are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the duration of the class. Our class time will usually be divided into several types of activities, including lectures, discussion of the assigned reading, and group work. You are to complete the reading of the assigned text by the day that we discuss it in class so that you are prepared to contribute to our discussion. Your meaningful participation in this class will affect your final grade, and you must be in class in order to participate in discussions. You may be excused for appropriate reasons but please advise me of this promptly and in advance if at all possible. Let us expect that more than three absences will strongly affect your final grade, and missing class more than five times will likely result in your failing the course.

Quizzes

Because frequent evaluation is essential to your grasp of the course work, your progress in this class is subject to being measured with unscheduled quizzes.

Exams

You will take a final exam which is worth 25% of your grade. In addition, you will take two other one-hour exams scheduled during one class period. They will be of identical structure and are noted in bold type in the Course Schedule. Though the final exam will

be cumulative, its emphasis will be on material covered since the second exam. I will go over the exam guidelines, structure and expectations a week in advance and will pass out a detail sheet which I will also post on Moodle.

Exam Make-up Policy

If you cannot attend an exam, please notify me by email on or before the day of the exam. To qualify for a make-up exam, you must provide a valid reason with documentation (i.e., a doctor's note). Make up exams must occur within a week of the scheduled exam and will need to fit both our schedules. Expect the make-up exam to be more difficult, simply because I will have presented the most obvious problems in the scheduled test.

Papers and Written Assignments

I will distribute detailed guidelines for papers and written assignments in class closer to the due date and will also make them available on Moodle. Papers must be prepared as a word document, double-spaced in 12-point font (Times New Roman or Georgia), with 1-inch margins, and submitted in the assignment drop box on Moodle. Your name, the course name and the assignment title should be in the upper left corner of the first page; the title may be placed, centered, below that. Choose a title that is interesting and that helps the reader understand what the paper is about. Do not print a separate title page. Number all pages, in the upper right hand corner. Handwritten submissions will not be accepted. Your papers must be submitted by the beginning of class on the due date. Your first paper will allow me to assess your level of academic ability, and thus I will allow you to revise and resubmit it for a higher grade. Assignments that are not submitted on time will drop one letter grade for each day past the due date. Computer or technical problems are not acceptable excuses for late papers.

WGSS Writing Tutor

Our WGSS department is fortunate to have a full-time writing tutor available to help all students with their papers. Elise Swinford is available to meet with students to discuss any aspect of their writing. Her drop-in office hours in South College W414 are 12:00-4:00 on Tuesdays, 9:30-12:00 on Wednesdays and by appointment. You may reach her at: eswinfor@umass.edu

Moodle

I will provide a quantity of important material to you on Moodle, including the syllabus, assigned reading material, assignment instructions, and any informative/lecture presentations. Please consult Moodle regularly and habitually so you do not miss assignments.

Technology in the Classroom

While you are expected to take notes and access texts on your laptop or tablet, other use not integral to our course (such as surfing the net, engaging in email, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) is prohibited. Infractions of this policy may result in your dismissal from class. I reserve the right to ban the use of computers or tablets for any individuals or for the entire class (unless you need it for accessibility purposes). Cellphones are to be turned off and kept out of sight; earbuds are prohibited.

Academic Freedom

We will all work together to foster a classroom environment that is welcoming and respectful to all, especially in light of the sometimes controversial topics that we will be dealing with in this class. I encourage you to engage in discussion of contemporary controversies while remaining respectful of others, especially those with whom you disagree. Because this college is a secular institution, intellectual values will be held in higher regard than religious, moral or political ideals.

Trigger Warnings and Self-Care

We will be openly engaging with numerous topics and issues that some students might find discomforting. If you feel you need to excuse yourself from the conversation or the classroom because of emotional stress brought on by our discussion, you are certainly permitted to do so. Please be sure to indicate to me at some point before or after if this is the case. You are responsible for any information you might have missed in your absence from class.

Title IX and Mandated Reporting

WGSS classes are a place where issues of sexual violence and other sexual misconducts are discussed as a matter of course. It is not a taboo subject, and feminists have long worked to develop theory and activism around sexualized violence, including rape, dating violence, child sexual abuse and the like. If you want to discuss your own personal experiences of sexual violence in class, we do not consider that a “report” covered by Title IX (although if you want faculty help and support in reporting sexual violence, we are here to help you do that). Other available resources on campus for addressing sexual violence include both confidential and non-confidential resources—non-confidential resources will keep your concerns private but will report your concerns to the Title IX coordinator, or, the Dean of Students Office who will provide you with different options to assist you. Confidential resources will keep your concerns confidential and will provide you support, assistance in addressing safety concerns and other services such as providing you with an advocate. The resources can be found at www.umass.edu/titleix/

Names and Pronouns

Students should be referred to by the name they prefer and with the proper pronunciation by faculty and other students. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name you prefer and the gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please inform me of your name’s pronunciation and any name or pronouns not reflected by the record in Spire early in the semester so that I may make any appropriate changes.

Academic Integrity

Do not cheat. You are here to learn, and that is what your grade reflects; there are no shortcuts. Academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, is prohibited by the University. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed on students who commit acts of academic dishonesty. For the University’s Academic Honesty Policy, please see: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.

Disability Access

If you need accommodations related to disability, please let me know as soon as possible so that your learning needs can be appropriately met. For information about campus services, visit Disability Services at www.umass.edu/disability/

Absences

You are expected to attend every class meeting. You may miss up to two classes for reasons you deem valid—religious holidays, illness, emergencies, inescapable appointments. Each additional absence, up to six, will lower your participation grade by a full grade (i.e., from B to C). If you miss more than six classes, you will fail this course. Repeated tardiness will adversely affect your grade because it is disruptive to class and is inconsiderate of your professor and your classmates. Similarly, leaving early is discouraged and can adversely affect your grade. If you need to come late or leave early from class, please let me know in advance. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to ask a fellow class member for details and catch up. I encourage you to exchange contact information with one or two classmates and arrange to be “study buddies” together, so that you can support one another in the event one of you misses class.

Class Cancellation

If our campus is closed due to inclement weather, then this class is also cancelled. If you are a commuter and are worried about your safety traveling to class due to adverse weather conditions when the campus is open, please notify me. If for any reason I must cancel class, I will notify you by email in advance.

Contacting Me

I am passionate about the subject we are studying, and I want you to be as well. Never refrain from approaching me about anything related to this class! You can talk with me personally before and after class, during my office hours, or by appointment. E-mail (jruhsam@umass.edu) is the best way to contact me, and I will make every effort to respond to you as promptly as possible, though weekends and holidays might be exceptions.

Tentative Course Schedule (This schedule and the texts assigned are subject to modification as need dictates)

Week 1: Introduction; Stonewall and the Birth of a Movement

January 24: Introductions and syllabus review.

January 26: Read: (M) Duberman, "The Night They Raided Stonewall;" View film in Class: *Stonewall Uprising*

Week 2: LGBT History/Herstory in America

January 31: Lecture and discussion. (M) Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality."

February 2: Discussion: Rupp, *A Desired Past* (Ch. 1-5)

Week 3: LGBT History/Herstory in America

February 7 Discussion: Rupp, *A Desired Past* (Ch. 6- end); watch film in class, *She even chewed tobacco: she drank, she swore, she even courted girls: passing women in 19th century America'*

February 9: Lecture and discussion: Women desiring women; (M) Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence;" (M) Audre Lorde, "'The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power.'"

Week 4: Women Desiring Women

February 14: Discussion. (M) Vicinus, "'They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity;" (M) Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman." ***First (short) paper due by start of class***

February 16: Discussion. Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Chapters 1-13)

Week 5: Women Desiring Women, cont.

February 21: Discussion. Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* cont. (Chapters 14- end).

February 23: ***First Exam (in class)***

Week 6: Crossing Gender

February 28: Lecture and discussion. Nutt, *Becoming Nicole* (read through chapter 19).

March 2: Discussion. Nutt, *Becoming Nicole* (complete reading book). Watch film at home (M) “Ma Vie en Rose.”

Week 7: Constructing Gender & Sex

March 7: Discussion. (M) Kessler and McKenna, *Toward a Theory of Gender*; (M) Butler, excerpt from *Gender Trouble*.

March 9: Discussion. Watch film at home (M) “Middle Sexes: Defining He & She;” (M) Dreger, “The Social Construction of Sex;” Marjorie Garber, “Spare Parts: The Surgical Construction of Gender.” ****First (Short) Paper Due****

Week 8: Spring Break! No Class. (get started reading Bechdel & Lorde!)

Week 9: Intersection: Sexuality, Gender Roles and Family.

March 21: Discussion: Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Chapters 1-4).

March 23: Discussion: Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Chapters 5-End).

Week 10: Intersection: Race and Sexuality

March 28: Discussion. Audrey Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - A Biomythography* (Read chapters 1-17)

March 30: Discussion. Lorde, cont. (Read chapters 18-end) ***Second Exam in Class***

Week 11: Men Desiring Men

April 4: Lecture and discussion: Men desiring men. (M) Whitman, selections from *Leaves of Grass*

April 6: Discussion: (M) Abelow, "Freud, Male Homosexuality and the Americans;" (M) Halperin, "How to do the History of Male Homosexuality."

Week 12: Intersection: Sexuality, Religion, Politics and AIDS

April 11: Discussion. Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (Read *Millennium Approaches*)

April 13: Discussion. Kushner, cont. (Read *Perestroika*)

Week 13: Sexuality, Gender and the Law

April 18: **No Class- Holiday make-up**

April 20: Lecture and discussion: (M) (excerpts) *Lawrence v. Texas*; *Bower v. Hartwick*; (M) (excerpts) *G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board*

Week 14: Sexuality, Gender and the Law; Student Presentations

April 25: (M) (excerpts) *U.S. v. Windsor*; *Obergefell v. Hodges*; (M) Halberstam, "Gaga Relations: The End of Marriage;"

April 27: Student Presentations

Second paper due in Moodle by start of class.

Week 15: Last Day of Class

May 2: Student Presentations

Final Exam: TBA