

WGSS 393B Spring 2017

From Berdaches to Bathroom Bills:

Gender Transgressors and their Suppressors in America

Tuesday & Thursday, 11:30 AM-12:45 PM

Class room: South College, W219

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:00-11:15 AM, and by appointment

Course Description

This course critically examines instances of non-normative gender expression as they have occurred since the early encounters of European colonists with indigenes up to the present day in America. Using an interdisciplinary American Studies approach, we will delve into and probe texts from history, literature, the law, film and the media as we come to understand how the maintenance of the gender binary is critical to the grasp of power by the state and how third and fourth gender, transgender and gender non-conforming people threaten the stability of the traditional sex/gender system. We will examine the historic alliance between church and state to reveal how they have worked together to impose and maintain hegemonic heteronormativity on the American people; in turn, we will come to realize the very real danger those who transgress gender pose to the extant hierarchical power structure and those few who direct it from the top. In coming to understand that transgender goals are feminist goals in that both seek to end sexist oppression—here we use transgender as catch-all term to include all who have transgressed Western gender norms—we will inquire into the strange alliance of trans-exclusionary radical feminists with patriarchal neo-liberals who seek to eradicate the very notion of gender identity and those so embodied. We will probe the radical feminist argument that all trans people simply endorse the gender binary through their conformity to stereotypical gender roles and consider the response to it. Finally, we will critically examine the contemporary plethora of legislation known as “bathroom bills” that are intended to eradicate not only trans identities but also the very notion of gender as a social construction.

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 demonstrate a critical understanding of Trans*identities, the key issues faced by Trans* people and the ways in which public policy shapes and is shaped by their lives.
- Articulate the challenges faced by Trans* and gender non-conforming people.
- Employ gender and gender identity as categories of analysis that intersect with sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class.

Required Texts

Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*. ISBN: 978-1101973240

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

Roscoe, Will. *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. ISBN: 978-0312224790

Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. ISBN: 978-1580051545

Other texts- both readings and films- will be available as downloadable or streaming files on the course website via Moodle. 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

Participation & discussion leading	30%
Two (short) response papers	20%
Take-home mid-term exam	15%
Research paper	25%
Oral research presentation	<u>10%</u>
	100%

Extra credit (5%) : attend one of the Trans* Studies Speakers Series public lectures and write a short (3-4) page response paper on it.

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 and Participation- 15%

You are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the duration of the class. 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. More than three unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade, and missing class more than five times will result in your failing the course.

Discussion Leading- 15%

You will lead two discussion sessions during the semester. For those classes, you should provide the class with a list of 5-8 discussion questions and an “FYI” sheet on Moodle the night before class. On this information sheet, include (and cite sources for) pertinent factual information that will inform our class discussion beyond what is provided in the text you are presenting (for example, the basic procedures for transgender FTM & MTF surgery, the definitions of “anti-androgen” or “autogynephilia,” and so on).

Exam- 15%

You will have one take-home, mid-term (or later) exam that will be composed of essay responses to your choice of three (3) out of six (6) prompts. I will thoroughly review the exam guidelines, structure and expectations with you before you receive it.

Papers and Written Assignments (45%)

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 typed, double-spaced in 12-point font (Times New Roman, Georgia or similar) and formatted with 1-inch margins. 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. All papers are due in the drop box in Moodle before the start of class on the day they are due. Assignments that are not submitted on time will drop one letter grade for each twenty-four hour period past the due date. Computer or technical problems are not acceptable excuses for late paper.

Response Paper 1: Reflection Essay- 10%

In this autobiographical reflection, consider your own relationship to transgender. How do you communicate your gender expression? How did you learn about performing your gender role? Are you comfortable with your gender attributes? Are you secure with your gender or your particular gender identity? In what ways has your relationship with gender evolved over time (or, might it evolve in the future?) What cultural lessons have you internalized about gender? How do you feel the law affects how you present and perform your gender? How much pressure do you feel the law and society exert to maintain a two-gender system? There are no correct or incorrect answers or responses in this essay, which should be three-to-four pages. You may present creative or alternative interpretive ideas to this assignment (poetry, short stories, art, etc.) but if you choose to do so, please clear your idea with me prior to composing it.

Response Paper 2: Probing Theories, Questioning Arguments Essay- 10%

Here, you will write a reflective, three-to-four page response to any one of the texts that we have covered thus far. This is not a research paper, nor is it formal; you may write in first person. What questions are raised by the text for you? What do you agree or disagree with? Is there a particular or contentious point that troubles or challenges you? Please engage with a text other than the one you have led discussion on (if in fact you have).

Research Paper- 25%

For this, your key written project, you will research and write a paper in which you investigate an aspect of trans* identity, history, or issues related to culture and public policy and craft an argument that questions some essential facet of the topic. You will want to meet with me to discuss your topic, and you will submit an abstract (title and one or two paragraph description) and annotated bibliography of the paper to me via Moodle by March 30. I will review your proposal with you so that you may continue with your research and writing, with the paper being due May 9 at 11:59 PM. I will give more concise instructions as we near mid-March, and we will discuss any questions in class.

Oral Presentation of Research- 10%

On one of the final two days of class you will present an oral synopsis of your term paper's research, findings and argument to your fellow students. Your presentation should be timed to take twenty (20) minutes. You are encouraged to not read from your paper, but rather to try to deliver an extemporaneous presentation of its main points, the challenges you encountered crafting it and why your thesis works. You are allowed- and encouraged- to use visual props such as Prezi or PowerPoint to augment your talk.

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. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to my attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. For more information about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see the Dean of Students' website: 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 for any reason I must cancel class, I will try to 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 if need dictates)

Week 1: Introduction; Transing Gender

January 24: Transing gender. Introductions and syllabus review.

January 26: Discussion. (M) Gilbert Herdt, "Third Sexes and Third Genders."
(M) Anne Bolin, "Transcending and Transgendering: Male-to-Female Transsexuals, Dichotomy and Diversity."

Week 2: Gender in (non-Western) North America

January 31: Read Part 1, Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*.

February 2: Read Part 2, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*.

Week 3: Gender Variance and Its Troubling Nature

February 7: Discussion: Read (M) Enaemaehkiw Kesiqnaeh, "Two Spirit People: Gender Variance & Resistance in Onkwehón:we Culture;" watch film (M) "Two Spirit."

February 9: Discussion: (M) Kathleen Brown, "'Changed... into the Fashion of Man': The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement;" Wm. Barry M.D., "A Case of Doubtful Sex."

****Response Paper 1 due****

Week 4: Hegemonic Compulsion: the State, Society and Gender Conformity

February 14: Discussion. (M) West & Zimmerman, "Doing Gender;" (M) Schilt and Westbrook, "Doing Gender, Determining gender: Transgender People, Gender panics and the Social maintenance of the Sex/Sexuality System;" (M) Lorber, "Night to His day: the Social Construction of Gender."

February 16: Discussion: (M) excerpt from Gage, *Woman, Church and State*.

Week 5: Radical Feminist Exclusion of Transgender Women

February 21: Discussion: (M) Janice Raymond, excerpt from *The Transsexual Empire* and (M) Sheila Jeffreys, excerpt from *Gender Hurts*

February 23: Discussion: (M) Watson, "The Woman Question;" (M) Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate."

Week 6: Gender Deception and the Politics of Pretense

February 28: ****Response Paper 2 due****

Class visit: Talia Bettcher. Read: (M) Bettcher & Stryker, *TSQ: Trans/Feminisms* pp. 5-34; (M) Bettcher, "Appearance, Reality and Gender Deception."

March 1: Talia Bettcher public lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75

March 2: Discussion: The deceptive/predatory transwomen. Watch (M) *The Crying Game* before class.

Week 7: Transmisogyny

March 7: Discussion: Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Read through chapter 8).

March 9: Discussion: complete *Whipping Girl*

Week 8: Spring Break: No Class March 14 & 16

Week 9: Reproductive Transmisogyny

March 21: Class visit: Micha Cardenas. Read: (M) Cardenas, "Pregnancy: Reproductive Futures in Trans of Color Feminism." ****Take-home exam due****

****March 22: Micha Cardenas public lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75****

Transnormativity?

March 23: Lecture and discussion (M) Skidmore, "Constructing the "Good Transsexual": Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press."

Week 10: Becoming Nicole: Crossing Gender in the 21st Century

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female represents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... which is described as feminine" (Beauvoir, 1963).

March 28: Discussion. Amy Ellis Nutt. *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*. (Part 1, pp. 1-83)

March 30: Discussion: Discussion. *Becoming Nicole*, cont. (Part 2, pp. 87-155); (Parts 3 & 4, pp. 159-end.)

****Research Paper Abstract & Annotated Bibliography due****

Week 11: Bathroom Battles: the Law and Gender Transgression

April 4: Lecture and discussion. (M) Suk, "The Transgender Bathroom Debate and the Looming Title IX Crisis;" (M) Green, "America's Profound Gender Anxiety;" (M) Harvey, "Gender Anarchists and Their Bathroom Battles;" (M) "Dear Creepy Heterosexual Men Guarding Our Bathroom."

April 6: Discussion. (M) Dept. of Justice, *Dear Colleague* letter on transgender students; (M) Bauerlein, "Bathroom Battles' Erupt over Transgender Issue;" (M) "Obama Threatens Schools: Let Men in the Little Girls' Room Or Else;" (M) *WOLF v. U.S. Dept. of Justice*.

Week 12: Bathroom Battles: North Carolina, Virginia and the Supreme Court

April 11: Discussion. (M) *Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act*; (M) *United States of America v. North Carolina*;

April 13: Discussion. (M) *G.G. V. Gloucester Co. School Board*; (M) Amicus Curiae Brief by Republican Governors, *G.G. V. Gloucester Co. School Board*; (M) Howe, “Court enters, at least temporarily, the fray over transgender rights;” (M) Ford, “Conservatives try to convince the Supreme Court to embrace transphobia”; (M) “Two unlikely allies join forces to fight transgender bathroom ruling;” (M) Policy Brief, “State anti-transgender bathroom bills threaten transgender people’s health and participation in public life.”

Week 13: Gender Outlaw

April 18: **No Class- holiday make-up day**

April 20: Discussion: Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Woman and the Rest of Us* (read through chapter 14).

Week 14: Gender Outlaw; Student Presentations

April 25: Discussion: Complete *Gender Outlaw*.

April 27: Discussion: Student Presentations

Week 15: Student Presentations

May 2: Last day of class.

Final *Research Papers due* via Moodle or email by May 9 at 11:59 PM