

WGSS 397

Transgender Identities, Issues and Public Policy

Fall 2016

Monday & Wednesday, 4:00-5:15 PM

Class room: Bartlett 203

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Office Hours: M & W, 1:00 – 2:30 PM, and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the social, cultural, legal and political issues transgender and gender non-conforming people face in the United States. We will explore historic issues this group of people have encountered and engendered both today and as they have evolved since the colony at Jamestown in 1607. Among the problems we will probe in this course are: The conceptual frameworks around gender, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation; the categorization, medicalization and pathologization of trans identities and bodies; how media has portrayed trans people; how laws have shaped and been shaped by trans identities and bodies; and, finally, the politics of the trans equality and justice movement. We will seek to find the contexts within which transgender can be used to make claims of the state in a representative democracy. We will ask, what possibilities and problems are presented by using the term to describe people who refuse it as descriptive of their experiences? Similarly, we will inquire what issues arise when cisgender people question those who take the category transgender as meaningful and even essential to their lives. And we will seek to answer, what does transgender tell us about the organization of gender and sexuality in the contemporary United States?

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

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. ISBN-13: 9781580052245

Spade, Dean. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. ISBN-13: 9780822360407

Yoshino, Kenji. *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*. ISBN-13: 9780375760211

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	10%
Research paper	25%
Oral research presentation	15%
	100%

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 6-10 discussion questions and an “FYI” sheet. 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- 10%

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 November 2. I will review your proposal with you so that you may continue with your research and writing, with the paper being due the December 19, 2016 at 11:59 PM. I will give more concise instructions as we near late October, and we will discuss any questions in class.

Oral Presentation of Research- 15%

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 office hours in Bartlett 11B are 9:30-12:30 on Tuesdays, 2:30-5:30 on Thursdays and by appointment Monday through Thursday. You may reach her at: eswinford@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 the 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

September 7: Gender, culture and the law. Introductions and syllabus review.

Week 2: (Trans)Gender at Contact

September 12: Lecture and discussion. (M) Kathleen Brown, "Changed... into the Fashion of Man': The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement"

September 14: Discussion. (M) Will Roscoe, "We'wha and Klah: the American Indian Berdache as Artist and Priest;" (M) Enaemaehkiw Kesiqnaeh, "Two Spirit People: Gender Variance & Resistance in Onkwehón:we Culture."

Week 3: Trans/history in America

September 19: Discussion: Stryker, Transgender History (pp. 1-57)
Response Paper 1 due

September 21: Discussion: Stryker, Transgender History (pp. 59-153)
 View *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*

Week 4: Hegemonic Compulsion: Society and Gender Conformity

September 26: Lecture and 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."

September 28: Discussion: (M) *Price-Waterhouse V. Hopkins*; (M) Tony Beauchamp, “Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and U.S. State Surveillance after 9/11.”

Week 5: Media Portrayals of Gender-transgressors

October 3: Lecture and discussion. (M) Julia Serrano, “Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels.”

October 5: Discussion. (M) Judith Halberstam, “Unclosing Brandon: Brandon Teena, Billy Tipton and Transgender Autobiography.”

Week 6: The Law and Gender: Sex Segregation/Gender Regulation

October 10: ***No Class: Columbus Day holiday***

October 11: Discussion: Historical antecedents: why sex-segregated spaces? (M) Jeanine Ruhsam, chapter excerpt from *The Great Maine Bathroom Case: Contesting Sex Segregation and Gender Regulation in America*

October 12: Discussion. (M) Paisley Currah, “We Don’t Know Who You Are: Contesting Sex Designations in New York City Birth Certificates;” (M) Lori Watson, “The Woman Question.”

****Response Paper 2 due****

Week 7: The Medicalization and Pathologization of Trans* People

October 17: Discussion. (M) Magnus Hirschfeld, excerpt from *The Transvestites*; (M) Bernice Hausman, “Body, Technology and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies;” (M) Meyerowitz, excerpt from *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexualism in the United States*.

October 19: Discussion. (M) Excerpts from *The DSM IV* and *The DSM V*; (M) Arlene Lev, “Disordering Gender Identity: Gender Identity Disorder in the DSM-IV-TR;” (M), Nick Gorton, “Transgender as Mental Illness.”

October 20: Ryka Aoki lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75 (read (M) Ryka Aoki, “When Something is Not Right”)

Week 8: Backlash

October 24: Lecture and discussion. (M) Janice Raymond, excerpt from *The Transsexual Empire* and (M) Sheila Jeffreys, excerpt from *Gender Hurts*
Take-home exam due

October 26: Lecture and Discussion. (M) Morabito, “How the Trans Agenda Seeks to Redefine Everyone;” (M) McElwee, “Francis strongly criticizes gender theory, comparing it to nuclear arms;” (M) WOLF v. U.S. Dept. of Justice

Week 9: Transfeminist Responses

October 31: Discussion. (M) Emi Koyama, “Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate;” (M) *TSQ: Trans/Feminisms* pp. 5-34.

November 2: Discussion: (M) Vivian Namaste, “Inclusive Pedagogy in the Women’s Studies Classroom: Teaching the Kimberly Nixon Case.”
Research Paper Abstract & Annotated Bibliography due

Week 10: Bathroom Battles: the Law and Gender Transgression

November 7: Lecture and discussion. (M) *G.G. V. Gloucester Co. School Board*; (M) Jeannie Suk, “The Transgender Bathroom Debate and the Looming Title IX Crisis;” (M) *Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act*; (M) *United States of America v. North Carolina*; (M) “Dear Creepy Heterosexual Men Guarding Our Bathroom.”

Is Trans Equality the Grail?

November 9: Discussion. Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. (Read chapter 1-3, pp. 1-72)

Week 11:

November 14: Spade, cont. (Read chapter 4-afterword, pp.73-162).

November 16: **No Class- Veteran’s Day holiday, UMass makeup day.**

Week 12: No Class: Thanksgiving Break!

Week 13: Covering and Conforming

November 28: Discussion: Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (Read chapters pp. 1-107)

November 30: Discussion: Yoshino, cont. (Read pp. 107-201); (M) Jack Halberstam, excerpt from *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal*

December 1: C. Riley Snorton lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75. Read: (M) C. Riley Snorton & Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death and the Trans of Color Afterlife."

Week 14: Moving Forward

December 5: Discussion. (M) Noa Ben Asher, "The Necessity of Sex Change: A Struggle for Intersex and Transsex Liberties."

December 7: Discussion: (M) Bassichis, Lee and Spade, "Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got."

Week 15: Student Presentations

December 12: Student Presentations

December 14: Student Presentations

****Research Papers due* via Moodle or email by December 19 at 11.59 PM***