

WGSS 297

Introduction to Transgender Studies

Fall 2016

Monday & Wednesday, 2:30-3:45 PM

Class room: Bartlett 203

Dr. J. Jeanine Ruhsam

Office: Bartlett 7C

413-545-1922

jruhsam@umass.edu

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

Course Description

This course introduces the interdisciplinary field of transgender studies. While the history of gender-variant identities in America far precedes that of the United States of America, and while gender diversity is and has been prevalent in most global societies, "transgender" is a recent social category and phenomenon. Many academic disciplines--including anthropology, history, gender studies, psychology and gay and lesbian/queer studies--have studied transgender identities, bodies and communities, but only very recently has the field become institutionalized in the academy as the discipline "Transgender Studies." In this course we examine the ongoing development of the concept of transgender as it is situated across social, cultural, historical, legal, medical, and political contexts. Just as the discipline is interdisciplinary, so is our approach to it. We will engage with and critically discuss texts from the fields of legal studies, history, English, science, medicine, sociology, anthropology, ethnography and feminist studies in our quest to answer some fundamental questions: What is transgender studies and how does it differ from other forms of scholarship within gender, queer and sexuality studies? What are the key questions and debates within the field? How is the concept of transgender remapping the relationship among biological sex, gender, and sexuality, as well as reshaping the meanings of these categories? How does transgender politics compare or contrast to feminist politics, queer politics, and anti-racist politics? Is the term "transgender" applicable to non-Western and previously occurring embodiments and practices? As students immerse themselves in this course, they will consider the broad range of identities the category of transgender describes, the global political movement it has become, and how the community it embraces has emerged into visibility, popular discourse and the academy since the 1990s.

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 Trans* persons.
- Articulate the challenges faced by Trans* persons and organizations.
- Employ gender and gender identity as categories of analysis that intersect with sexuality, race, ethnicity and class.

Required Texts

Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. ISBN-13: 9780807079416

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

Rubin, Henry. *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*. ISBN: 9780826514356

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

Participation & discussion leading	30%
Terms quiz	5%
Two (short) response papers	20%
Take-home mid-term exam	10%
Research paper	20%
Oral research presentation	<u>15%</u>
	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- 10%

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. 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.

Discussion Leading- 20%

You will choose a partner and together will lead one discussion session during the semester. Together you will guide our discussion, directing it to topics and issues you think are important or significant. Do not summarize the assigned texts, as your classmates have read them. Rather, try to make connections between the readings, the overall subject theme and other texts we have read. In thinking about the texts, ask yourself, what ideas are the most critical, controversial, enlightening, provocative or difficult to understand? What key terms or questions can you draw from these readings, and how might you use these ideas outside this particular context? Try to illuminate key issues with specifics and examples from the readings, bringing relevant passages to the class's attention, or comparing different authors or scholars. Your goal is to prompt interesting class discussion, so highlight things in the readings you found illuminating, challenging, surprising, informative, and unusual. By 11:59 PM the evening before the class you will lead, provide your classmates (post to Moodle) with a list of 5 to 6 discussion questions and an "FYI" sheet. On this information sheet, include (and cite

sources for) pertinent factual information that will inform our class further on the readings assigned for the day.

Quiz- 5%

You will have one scheduled quiz on key terms and concepts.

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 (40%)

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 a late paper.

Response Paper 1: Reflection Essay- 10%

In this autobiographical reflection, consider your own relationship to gender. 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? 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 response to any one of the essays or selections that we have covered thus far (three-to-four pages). 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- 20%

For this, your key written project, you will research and write a paper in which you investigate an aspect of gender, sex, or sexuality 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 a short abstract (title and one or two paragraph description) of the paper to me via Moodle by October 31. I will review your proposal with you so that you may continue with your research and writing, with the paper being due December 19. I will give more concise instructions as we near mid-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. We will decide on a time target when we get closer, as it will depend on how many students are in the class; ideally it will be about twenty (20) minutes. You are encouraged to not read from your paper, but rather 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. 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 if need dictates)

Week 1: Introduction

September 7: Transing gender. Introductions and syllabus review.

Week 2: Whither the category “Transgender”?

September 12: Discussion. Complete and bring to class “The Gender Aptitude Test” by Kate Borstein, found on Moodle; read (M) Susan Stryker, “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin.”

September 14: Discussion. (M) Talia Bettcher, “Feminist Perspectives on Trans Issues;” Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies.”

Week 3: Transgender History

September 19: Discussion: Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. (Ch. 1-10)

September 21: Discussion: Feinberg, cont. (Ch. 11-end). Watch film *Screaming Queens* in class.

Response Paper 1 due

Week 4: The Transsexual Empire: Beginnings of the Discipline

September 26: Discussion. (M) Janice Raymond, Chapter 4, “Sappho by Surgery,” *from The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the Shemale*.

September 28: Discussion. (M) Sandy Stone, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto.”

Week 5: Becoming Nicole

“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).

October 3: Discussion. Amy Ellis Nutt. *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*. (Part 1, pp. 1-83)

October 5: Discussion: Discussion. *Becoming Nicole*, cont. (Part 2, pp. 87-155)
Response Paper 2 due

Week 6: Becoming Nicole, cont.

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

October 11: Discussion: *Becoming Nicole*, cont. (Parts 3 & 4, pp. 159-end.)

October 12: Discussion: (M) Joshua Safer et al, "Evidence Supporting the Biological Nature of Gender Identity;" (M) Richard Friedman, "How Changeable Is Gender?"

Week 7: Trans*feminisms

October 17: Discussion: (M) Julia Serano, "A Trans Woman Manifesto;" Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate."

October 19: (M) Ryka Aoki, "When Something is Not Right;" Guest lecturer in class: Ryka Aoki

October 20: Ryka Aoki lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75

Week 8: The Butch/FTM Border

October 24: Discussion: (M) Judith Halberstam, Introduction to *Female Masculinity*.

Take-home exam due

October 26: Discussion: (M) Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender and Boundaries;" (M) C. Riley Snorton, "'A New Hope': The Psychic Life of Passing."

Week 9: Monstrosity and Mutilation

October 31: Discussion: Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamonix."

Research Paper Abstract Due

November 2: Discussion: (M) Dean Spade: “Mutilating Gender.”

Week 10: Intersex

November 7: Lecture and discussion. (M) Anne Fausto-Sterling, introduction and chapter 1 from *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sex*; (M) Alice Dreger, “Shifting the Paradigm of Intersex Treatment.”

November 9: Discussion. (M) Foucault, *Herculine Barbin*; (M) articles on Castor Semenya, 2016 Olympic Women’s 800m Gold medal winner.

****Terms and Concepts quiz in class****

Week 11: The Construction of Sex & the Etiology of Gender Identity

November 14: Discussion: (M) Meyerowitz, Introduction and Chapter 4 from *How Sex Changed*; (M) Marjorie Garber, “Spare Parts: The Surgical Construction of Gender.”

November 16: ***No Class: Veteran’s Day Make-Up***

Week 12: No Class: Thanksgiving Break!!

Week 13: Self-Made Men

November 28: Discussion: Henry Rubin, *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*; (M) Coyote Grace, *Ghost Boy*.

November 30: Discussion: Rubin, cont. (M), watch film, *You Don’t Know Dick*

December 1: C. Riley Snorton lecture at 5:00 PM in CC 162-75

Week 14: Current Conflicts/Student Presentations

December 5: Lecture and Discussion: The bathroom wars of 2015 & 2016. (M) *United States of America v. North Carolina*; *United States of America v. North Carolina Defendant’s Brief in Opposition to Preliminary Judgement*; *G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board*.

December 7: Student Presentations

Week 15: Student Presentations

December 12 & December 14: Student presentations.

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