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Office Hours: Tuesday 10am -12pm or by appointment

Reading Transgender

T/Th 1:00-2:15 | South College Room E245

Course Overview:

From newspaper chronicles of 19th century gender benders to the present-day explosion of transgender poetry, our personal, cultural, and political understandings of gender variance have long been tied to particular modes of text-based representation. Through sustained engagement with such creative work, as well as background reading in trans history and theory, this course will offer a literary history of “trans.” Although we will pull material from across time and genre, we will focus on contemporary writers. Together, we will ask questions about authorship; the relationship between social conditions and representational strategies; the possibilities and limitations of different genres; and, ultimately, what makes literature (and/or literary analysis) trans.

Books:

Required:

- Chase Berggrun, *R E D*
- Andrea Lawlor, *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*
- Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*
- Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love, & So Much More*

Optional (I will provide PDFs of the sections we are going to read together):

- Ari Banais, *Anybody*
- Casey Plett, *A Safe Girl to Love*

All other material will be made available to you online.

Requirements:

- ***Analysis Papers (20%)***
Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor; in this course alone, we will draw on research/writing methods from history, literary studies, critical theory, and creative writing. To reflect this, each of these short (~3 page) papers will ask you to practice a mode of analysis ‘proper’ to a different discipline. In paper #1, you will choose from a set of primary sources and analyze your selected source in light of its historical context. In paper #2, you will choose one of the creative pieces discussed in class and analyze it in light of its formal elements.

Each of these papers is worth 10% of your grade. Points for paper #1 will be given for timely completion rather than “quality” in order to prioritize developing your writing over the course of the semester. However, you will be required to workshop this paper in class. We’ll talk more about the mechanics of workshop as we approach our first deadline, but know that this will be a chance for you to get peer feedback on your writing and ideas. Paper #2 will be graded.

- **Reading Responses (20%)**

For this requirement, you are responsible for uploading a very short, very informal response to the day’s reading to Moodle by 12pm. Your response can be formatted as bullet points, full sentences, whatever, but must include three things: 1) one thing in the reading that confuses you, 2) one thing that you like about it / find interesting and why, 3) one thing you dislike and why. Each one is worth 2% of your grade, so you must submit a total of 10 reading responses over the course of the semester, but when you do so is up to you.

- ***Final Paper + Proposal (35%)***

Toward the end of the semester, you will each hand in a final paper proposal that 1) outlines the paper you plan to write, 2) identifies the sources with which you plan to engage, and 3) gives a narrative account of *why* this paper. We will workshop these proposals in much the same way as we workshop your first analysis papers. The paper itself should be a 10-12-page essay that uses the course reading to build on one of the previous assignments. For example, you might write a paper that “commits” to one discipline and expands one of your analysis papers into a longer piece. I am also open to—and encourage!—creative final projects, but these must be discussed with me well in advance of the end of term. There are many ways to approach this project, so we will talk about both the paper and the proposal in class as the semester winds down.

- ***Participation (25%)***

This is a discussion based course, so your participation is vital to making it function. There are many ways to be engaged and many styles of participation. But, at minimum, I expect that you: come to class, be on time, do the reading and be ready to discuss it, and participate in in-class discussions and activities to the best of your ability. I recognize that some students have trouble speaking up in class due to shyness, language barriers, processing speeds, and so on. Because public speaking is a useful skill, I encourage you to push yourself to participate verbally. However, if the above describes you and you are worried that it will negatively affect my evaluation of you, come to my office hours and we will work out how you might use writing to supplement your participation grade. Additionally, we will be coming up with a set of ‘rules of engagement’ together, which will set out our collective expectations regarding what it looks like to participate *well*.

Policies:

- ***Absences***

Again, this is a small, discussion based class, so it going smoothly depends on your showing up to each class meeting. However, because I understand that sometimes things come up,

you are allowed *two* absences, no questions asked. Any additional absences will have to be cleared with me, in advance, or they will negatively affect your participation grade.

- ***Late Work***

Late assignments will be marked down a half grade (5%) per day past the deadline. If you are having trouble with the work for the course, I recommend taking advantage of the many resources available to you well before any deadlines. Come to my office hour, visit the Writing Center (<https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>), or make an appointment with Kate Litterer (www.wgsswritingtutor.com / wgsswritingtutor@gmail.com), who is the department-specific writing tutor for WGSS.

- ***Accessibility***

I assume that we all have different learning needs, many of which don't fall under the official rubric of disability. Our first in-class writing assignment is intended to provide you with a space to articulate your learning needs, and I will do my best to accommodate them. I also assume that brains and bodies change overtime, so if you find that you are having trouble, please come talk to me and I will be happy to help you find ways to succeed, which may or may not mean making use of the resources available at Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>). However, if you have, or think you have, a disability which will require accommodation in this or other courses, I recommend setting up an appointment with Disability Services sooner rather than later.

Please Note: Many of the texts considered in this course—fictional and non-fictional—contain sexually explicit material and scenes of (sexual) violence. Because these are both unavoidable and central to the intellectual content of the course, I urge you to speak with me at the beginning of the term if you feel this will be a problem.

- ***Communication***

With a few exceptions, all course material—including reading, assignment prompts, and updates—will be posted to Moodle. Therefore, please check Moodle regularly, and consult it first if you have a question. That said, I do welcome appropriate email inquiries, and will do my best to get back to you within 24-48 hours. If you have complex questions that require complex answers—i.e. “Is this an appropriate paper topic?” “How do I boost my participation grade?”—I urge you to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to talk face-to-face.

Course Schedule

*This is a provisional document. We may decide to spend more time on some books and less on others. All changes will be discussed together in class; you will be responsible for adjusting to any changes to the syllabus that we make.

Introductions

9/4 Go over syllabus; in-class writing assignment

- 9/6 1) Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies”
 2) Casey Plett, “The Rise of the Gender Novel”
 3) Joy Ladin, “Ours for the Making: Trans Lit, Trans Poetics”

Trans Pasts

- 9/11 1) Clare Sears, “Electric Brilliancy: Cross-Dressing Law and Freak Show Displays in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco”
 2) Newspaper Packet
- 9/13 1) Lou Sullivan, *From Female-to-Male: The Life of Jack Bee Garland* (selections)
- 9/18 1) Joanne Meyerowitz “A Fierce and Demanding Drive”
 2) Early trans autobiography selections
- 9/20 1) Bernice Hausman, “Body, Technology, and Gender in Transsexual Autobiography”
 2) Sandy Stone, “The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto”
 * Bring the autobiographies from last class with you

Feeling Historical

- 9/25 1) Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, Chapters 1-6
 2) Jason Cromwell, “Passing Women and Female-bodied Men: (Re)claiming FTM History”
- 9/27 1) *Stone Butch Blues*, Chapters 7-13
 2) Gayle Rubin, “Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries”
- 10/2 1) *Stone Butch Blues*, Chapters 14-19
 2) C. Riley Snorton, “A Nightmarish Silhouette: Racialization and the Long Exposure of Transition”
- 10/4 1) *Stone Butch Blues*, Chapters 20-end
 2) Deborah A. Miranda, “Extermination of the *Joyas*: Gendercide in Spanish California”

Paper 1 Due by end of day 10/5

10/11 Workshop Day – Please come to class having read your classmates’ papers.

The Transgender Gaze

- 10/16 1) Casey Plett, “Other Women” and “Lizzy & Annie”
 2) J. Halberstam: “The Transgender Look”
- 10/18 1) Ari Baniyas, selections from *Anybody*
 2) Ellen Bass, “Jubilate Homo”

3) Jenny Johnson, "Dappled Things"

10/23 1) Chase Bergrun, *R E D*

2) Susan Stryker, "My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above The Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage"

10/25 Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*, Part 1-3

10/30 *Fierce Femmes*, Part 4-End

So, What is Trans Lit?

11/1 Andrea Lawlor, *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*, Chapters I and II

11/6 *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*, Chapters III and IV

Paper #2 due before class

11/8 *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*, Chapter V to as far as you can get

11/13 Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness*, Introduction and Part 1

11/15 *Redefining Realness*, Part 2

11/27 Watch: *The Life and Death of Marsha P. Johnson*

Read: C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife."

11/29 1) Samuel Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah"

2) *Redefining Realness*, Chapters 12-16

12/4 Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"

Final project proposal due by the beginning of class

12/6 Final project proposal workshop – come having read your classmate's proposals

12/11 Wrap Up

Final project due by end of day 12/18