

WGSS 397: Transgender Politics and Critical Thought

Fall 2014

Class Meetings: 10:10 – 11:10 AM, MWF
212 Bartlett Hall

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Office: 102 Bartlett Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM or by appointment

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Course Description

Transgender studies is a new and rapidly-growing interdisciplinary field today. This course will examine both long-standing and recent political debates, critiques, and practices of resistance in the field, among scholars, activists, and artists. Investigating these issues, we will consider the following questions. How are trans and gender diverse individuals' lives implicated by interrelated regulatory regimes of gender, racism, colonization, neoliberal global capitalism, nationalism and homonationalism, ableism, medicalization, empire, state governmentality, and ideals of normative embodiment? How do cultural assumptions of sex as fixed and binary shape interpretive frames and thus policies, institutions, administrative systems and social practices that trans people must negotiate? What discursive processes produce, discipline, expel, and erase bodies, and which bodies do they erase? What issues animate trans and gender diverse communities in the U.S. and across global sites, in this historical moment? How are trans and gender diverse people resisting complex systems of oppression? Through active engagement, both in and outside of class, we will build a critical analytical framework around contemporary trans politics and theory.

Course Learning Objectives

In this course, each student will:

1. Develop a complex, nuanced understanding of gender and power
2. Become familiar with inequality and injustice particular to gender nonconformity
3. Examine how race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nation and context shape trans and gender nonconforming people's lives
4. Develop critical thinking, self-reflection, and analytical skills
5. Build arguments in conversation with critical thinkers in trans studies
6. Communicate analyses accurately and clearly through writing and speaking

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation. Students are required to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings, to attend the entire class period, and to speak regularly in class. In-class and out-of-class activities will facilitate your active participation. Attendance, tardiness, and partial class attendance will be recorded and graded. There are no excused absences, but you have two free absences; you may be absent 2 times before it affects your grade. Those with perfect attendance will receive a special prize at the end of the semester. (10%)

Speaking Notes. These short writing assignments will prepare you for discussion; you will summarize and respond to readings. 10 total. You may choose readings from the syllabus to write on. These must be turned in by the end of the class period we discuss the text. (25%)

Transgender Community Event Reflection Essay. You will have opportunities to attend events relevant to the course several times during the semester. Some events will be on the course calendar; others will be announced as they are advertised. You'll write a 250-400 word reflection and analysis of the event, tying in course materials to your discussion. (5%)

Student Teaching Day. In teams of two, students will teach a 30-minute lesson on a topic of your choosing relevant to the course. This will involve both presenting a lecture on a topic you have researched and facilitating active student participation, through a class activity and/or discussion. Students will apply course themes, concepts and analyses and generate critical questions. Teams will consult with me before their teaching day. (10%)

Analytical Paper. 10-12 pages. Due in two installments: draft 1 and draft 2 (final draft), including a peer review with the final draft. (30%)

Peer Review. Students will read and write a review of a classmate's paper. This assignment is designed to teach evaluation skills and strategic reading and writing skills. (5%)

Social Action Project and Presentation. In teams of two, you will conduct a creative, political, educational-outreach project during the course of the semester. You will present your project at the end of the semester. (15%)

Materials

The primary text we will use in this course is:

The Transgender Studies Reader 2, edited by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura and published by Routledge in 2013.

Be sure you buy #2, not #1! They have similar cover images, but the one you want is green, not blue: It looks like this →

All remaining course materials will be available on Moodle.



Resources

Each Other: Write down contact information of 3 classmates. These will be your go-to contacts for this class. If you miss class, contact them (not me) to find out what you missed:

Your Instructor: Direct contact with the instructor is an important part of students' learning. Do attend my office hours at least once this semester.

WGSS Writing Tutor, Elise Swinford: *"I am available to meet with students to discuss any aspect of writing."* Her office hours are 1:30-3:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 2-4 on Wednesdays in Bartlett 102, or by appointment: eswinfor@english.umass.edu. Make use of this great opportunity to get individual attention with an instructor who specializes in feminist writing.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities: Welcome! It is my effort to move beyond compliance to create a welcoming space for all abilities and learning styles. If you need accommodations due to a disability, please talk to me, and contact Disability Services at 413-545-0892 (Voice/TTY) or ds@educ.umass.edu or 161 Whitmore within the first two weeks of class. All information and documentation of the disability will be confidential.

The Stonewall Center: *"providing cultural and educational programming; LGBTQIA ally training sessions; a Speakers Bureau on LGBTQIA and ally issues; a dvd, video, and book library; information and referrals; support for individuals who experience harassment and discrimination; advocacy for LGBTQIA students at UMass Amherst; and community outreach through Queer-e, our weekly listserv of LGBTQIA and Allies Five-College and local events."* <http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/>

Center for Women and Community: *"To provide innovative and informed education, leadership opportunities, advocacy, and support services, that address the cause and impact of sexism and recognize the multiple oppressions experienced by women. We offer services to people of all genders."* <http://www.umass.edu/ewc/>

The Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/index.html>) provides free, one-on-one help by appointment: writingcenter@acad.umass.edu or 413-577-1293.

OIT: For technical problems with Moodle, call OIT at 545-9400 or go to <http://www.oit.umass.edu/support/moodle/a-quick-tour-moodle-students>.

Expectations and Policies

Conduct: Be on time. Listen to your classmates. Maintain a respectful atmosphere. Communicate professionally, including in email correspondence. Do not pack up early or leave class early. In addition to my expectations, we will collaboratively create course discussion guidelines and conduct agreements, which I will post on Moodle.

Electronic Devices: You may not use cell phones during class; they are to be silenced and put away. You may not use any electronic devices in class, *unless I invite you to do so*.

Communication: All communication from you to me must be **in person**, either before or after class, in office hours, or by appointment. If you have a question, first consult the syllabus and/or a classmate before asking me. I will send out announcements and reminders via Moodle. If you have a concern, we'll set up a meeting to discuss it.

Email Etiquette: Please compose your emails to your instructors as if you were writing a letter. Use professional, appropriate language in your email correspondence, including a salutation, such as "Dear Sonny" (yes, you can call me Sonny) or "Hi Sonny."

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

Grade Concerns: If you would like to discuss a grade, I ask that you wait at least 24 hours before making an inquiry. We can meet in office hours or we can make an appointment. You have one week to inquire about a grade. I do not discuss grades via email.

Late Policy: All work must be submitted **in hard copy** and **on time**. I do not accept assignments via email. If you have extenuating circumstances, contact me as soon as possible in advance of the due date. Late work will be penalized by 5% per day late (including weekends). Assignments more than **one** week late will not be accepted.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of 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. For the University's Academic Honesty Policy, please see: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.