



WGSS396: Transgender Identities, Issues, and Politics

Overview

Many people feel pressured to conform to particular gendered norms. This course is designed to help us think critically about gender, gender non-conformity, and trans* identity. This course will explore some of the cultural and political issues transgender, transsexual, and gender variant people face in the U.S. We will explore these issues in contemporary culture, and we will also look at these issues historically, examining how they have changed over the last century. A large part of our continuing focus will be on issues of gender non-conformity, a topic that affects everyone. This class is open and welcome to all.

Goals

Our goals for the semester:

- To gain an introduction to the study of trans* theory and concepts.
- To understand the links among systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and ethnicity.
- To distinguish between individual attitudes and institutionalized forms of discrimination and oppression facing trans* and gender non-conforming individuals and communities.
- To understand how seemingly “different” forms of domination interconnect – and to think through various responses to this domination.
- To apply the concepts and theories of class topics to lived experience and recognize how each of our lives is touched by these issues.

Requirements

1. Attendance: You are required to attend class. Missing more than 6 classes will result in a failing grade. You may miss up to 3 classes without any penalty. After 3 classes, ½ letter grade will be deducted for each class you miss.
2. Participation: You are required to engage in the material (read the assigned readings) and come to class prepared. I also require you to participate in class discussion.
3. Respect: This semester we will be discussing sensitive and controversial topics. We will discuss in the first two weeks what the guidelines will be for class discussion.
4. Communication: Please be in communication with me if something is happening outside of class that is preventing you from doing your work. The day before the final paper is due is NOT the time to e-mail me with concerns.

University of Kansas
Fall 2012 :: Fraser 108
[Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:45]

Instructor: Liam Lair
E-mail: liam.lair@ku.edu
Office: Bailey Hall 403
Office Hours: W 9:00am-12:00pm

Materials

Required Texts:

- * Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008.
- * Dean Spade, *Normal Life* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 2011).

Recommended Texts:

- * Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2007).
Required reading from this text will be available on BB.

Important Dates

Weekly Assignments

This assignment will be due each day in class. No late assignments will be accepted/graded.

Other Assignments

Trans* Topics: 9.20.12 and 10.16.12
Paper Proposal: 10.30.12
Proposal/Ano Bib: 11.15.12
Final Paper: 11.29.12

Final Essay

Your final essay is due November 29th. One letter grade will be deducted for everyday the paper is late.

THE BUSINESS PART

SPECIAL NEEDS, RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES, ETC

If you have **special needs or conditions** (physical, learning, or otherwise) that need to be addressed, Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) / Disability Resources (DR) arranges accommodations and services for students who are eligible. It is your responsibility to contact the SSD or other appropriate KU office in a timely manner (that means sooner rather than later!); otherwise accommodations will be unreasonable.

If you have **recognized religious observances or recognized university obligations** or if **unforeseen circumstances** arise that conflict with course events or requirements you must let me know immediately, so that we can discuss and arrange a reasonable accommodation before the course is underway.

HOW TO “ATTEND” CLASS

This class is discussion-based, so all of us must come to class ready to engage the texts (both written and visual) and each other critically. **“Critically” means** being able to point out and discuss strengths and weaknesses in texts and conversations, thinking about what assumptions or rhetorical strategies a speaker/writer uses, being able to compare and contrast texts, and being able to take a stand and support it with reason and reference to the texts (even if you don’t sincerely hold that opinion in your “real life”). Comments about whether or not you liked something are not “critical” unless you are also able to explain why. **“Critically” does not mean** jumping to conclusions, avoiding reasoned thinking, or assuming that your point of view is the only or best point of view.

When a reading assignment is listed for a particular date, you should read it **before** the class period and be prepared to discuss the reading – that means more than simply ‘reading’ the way you would read a novel at the beach. “Reading” at a research university like KU means reading closely (and even more than once!), taking notes and/or underscoring/highlighting key parts of the reading, puzzling through terms or passages that are confusing, and considering whether you agree with the reading or not (and why!).

Although I expect us all to participate in discussions equally, as the instructor I reserve the right to end or alter discussions as needed to keep us on track. (Words and behavior that don’t productively further the discussion can be considered “academic misconduct” under University rules and regulations.) **Disagreements and open expression are part of critical thinking. It’s not only okay to disagree, it’s required!** Our goal in this class is not to discover any “right answer” or to agree about everything but rather to locate, develop, and articulate ways of understanding these topics as well as to learn how to locate and evaluate the assumptions that underlie various stances and opinions.

I have zero tolerance for people talking on their cell phones or texting in class. If I see you texting in class I will take your phone and return it after our class session is over. I want us to respect each other and our learning styles, and texting/talking on the phone is very distracting.

During almost every class discussion I will ask you to explain yourself, to answer “why,” or to take your answer a bit further. I will also play “devil’s advocate” to get you to think through points we make in class. When I use these tactics to further the discussion it does not mean that your answer or comment is “wrong,” or that you aren’t doing well or that I’m trying to “catch you” or “embarrass you.” QUITE THE CONTRARY! It means that you are onto something good that we need to explore more!

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT / PLAGIARISM

As a student registered and enrolled for courses at KU, you are presumed to be familiar with all university policies relating to plagiarism, academic misconduct, and related topics. That means that “I didn’t know” and “I wasn’t sure” are not excuses. **If you are unsure about whether something counts as academic misconduct, cheating, or plagiarism, don’t do it and/or ask beforehand!**

Plagiarism is turning in someone else's work (including online websites) as **your** work and/or quoting another person's work or statement without proper citation or acknowledgement. If you do not know what plagiarism is, read the following guide from the KU Writing Center guide on "Avoiding Plagiarism": “Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or work as your own. Plagiarism applies to material taken from another person without properly citing your sources. Paraphrasing another writer, substituting words, or rearranging sentences from the work of another also constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is easily detected with databases and search engines. Plagiarism is academic misconduct and is a violation of rules and regulations of the University of Kansas. Penalties for academic misconduct range from an automatic failure of the assignment, failure in the course, academic suspension with a flag on your Arts Form, to expulsion from the University.”

Cheating can mean getting answers on exams from someone else or from some help that is not in your own brain (e.g., iPods, cell phones). And finally, Section II.6.2.6.1 of the Rules and Regulations of the Kansas University Senate tells us that "[a]cademic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments [= cheating]; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work [= plagiarism]; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing another's work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research." WGSS and the University consider these to be very serious offenses, and any violations will be handled following the procedures set forth by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. At the very least, you will fail the offending assignment and I will file an academic misconduct charge with the Office of Academic Services. You'll then have the opportunity to contest the charge and to accept or appeal the punishment. If the student has committed prior offenses or if I judge the academic misconduct severe enough, a harsher punishment (e.g., failure of the course or suspension or expulsion from the University) may be imposed.

ASSIGNMENTS!

Participation (10pts): Participation (See: How to Attend Class) will count directly towards your grade. To participate, you must attend class. In this class there are no "excused" or "unexcused" absences. You can miss up to three lectures or discussion sections for any reason (illness, family emergency, oversleeping, whatever) without affecting your course grade; after three absences, each subsequent absence reduces your final course grade by five points (half a letter grade). Missing ten or more lecture and/or discussion sections means that you fail the course. NOTE: any in-class work you miss or any assignments you fail to turn in because of your absence will count against your grade, regardless of your attendance record. You will also be counted absent if you are inattentive during class (as demonstrated by whispering, Facebooking, texting, websurfing, sleeping, and the like).

Weekly Responses (25 responses due, 2pts each): These will be due every time we meet in class, even if there are other assignments due. This response is comprised of three parts: 1. Summarize one main point/argument from that days reading. 2. Find a particularly interesting or difficult quote from the reading and copy it into your response. Cite appropriately. 3. Ask a question about the content you've already presented. (If there are multiple readings you do not need to complete the 3 steps for all of the readings). The assignment is to find one quote from the reading, copy the quote (cite correctly), and ask a question directly related to the quote. These papers will facilitate class discussion – come to class ready to share you ideas and thoughts.

Trans* Topics Paper 1 & 2 (5 pts each): You will prepare a 3-page review of a topic relevant to trans* and/or gender non-conforming individuals. More instructions will be provide on this assignment later in the semester, but be prepared to use these assignments as a springboard for your final paper.

Final Paper (30 pts): As a culmination of your work on the Trans* Topics papers, and additional writing and research, this final paper (10-12 pages in length) should reflect in-depth engagement with the topic you choose. You will use our course concepts and extra-classroom research to describe and analyze a topic of personal interest to you. This clean and polished essay will be in lieu of exams, so you will you will be expected to use (and cite!) our course texts and concept extensively. Be prepared to share with the class your topic and research.

- STEP 1 – Submit proposal for essay, including title (2pts)
- STEP 2 – Submit a revised proposal and an annotated bibliography and/or rough draft (3pts)
- STEP 3 – Submit Final Paper (20pts)
- STEP 4 – Present for 5 minutes on your project (5pts)

Course Outline/Tentative Schedule:

Our course schedule is liable to change for a number of reasons. It is your responsibility to check your registered email address and to attend class so that you are aware of any changes. You should read and prepare texts BEFORE the day they are listed on the schedule.

Failure to come to class having prepared the readings may result in loss of attendance points.

Transgender History = TH Queer Theory, Gender Theory = QTGT Blackboard (Sign into our course Bb site and look under the “readings” tab.) = BB

LANGUAGE, TERMS, and IDENTITY

Week 1: Introduction

Tues 8.21: Intro/syllabus. Defining Gender Non-Conformity.

Thurs 8.23: TH Ch1
Bornstein Gender Quiz (BB)

Week 2:

Tues 8.28: QTGT Ch1 and 2, 3 (BB)

Thurs 8.30: TH Ch3
Film: *Screaming Queens*

Week 3:

Tues 9.4: TH Ch2, Ch5 ***

Thurs 9.6: QTGT Ch4 (BB)
Janice Raymond, excerpts from *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of a She-Male*. (BB)

Week 4:

Tues 9.11: QTGT Ch6 (BB)
Riki Wilchins, “The Menace Statement to Janice Raymond” (BB)

TRANSFEMINITY

Thurs 9.13: Serano, *Whipping Girl*: Intro (BB)
Koyama, *Transfeminist Manifesto* (BB)

Week 5:

Tues 9.18: The Michfest Debate:
Wilchins: “Gender Rights are Human Rights from *GenderQueer* (BB)
Koyama: Michfest Handbook (BB)

Thurs 9.20: Koyama: “Whose feminism is it anyway?” (BB)

*****FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Week 6:

Tues 9.25: *GenderQueer*, excerpts (BB)
Film: *Beautiful Daughters*

TRANSMASCULINITY

Thurs 9.27: Valerio: “Now that You’re a white man” (BB)
Colorlines article: “Becoming a Black Man” (BB)

Week 7:

Tues 10.2: Intro to Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (BB)
Begin *Boy I Am*

Thurs 10.4: Finish *Boy I Am*

BEYOND MASCULINITY/FEMINITY

Week 8:

Tues 10.9: FALL BREAK: No Class

Thurs 10.11: Guest Speaker: Ashley Mog, WGSS PhD Student
Eli Clare's Exile and Pride, "Freaks and Queers" (BB)

Week 9:

Tues 10.16: Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude," from TG Reader (BB)
Alice Dreger, "What's the History behind the intersex rights movement?" at <http://www.isna.org/faq/history>

*****SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Thurs 10.18: Finn Enke, "The Education of Little Cis" in *Transfeminist Perspectives* (BB)

POLITICS for TRANS* and GNC INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Week 10:

Tues 10.23: Simone Chess et al., "Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries!" (BB)
PISSAR Checklist (BB)

Thurs 10.25: Cathy Cohen, "Punks Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," in *GLQ* Vol.3, 1997. pp. 437-465 (BB)

Week 11:

Tues 10.30: Spade, *Normal Life*, Preface and Intro

*****PROPOSALS DUE**

Thurs 11.1: Spade, *Normal Life* Ch1
Injustice at Every Turn Summary (BB)

Week 12:

Tues 11.6: *Normal Life*, Ch2 and 3

Thurs 11.8: Spade, *Normal Life* Ch4
Review: TJLP and SRLP websites: tjlp.org and srlp.org

Week 12:

Tues 11.13: Spade, *Normal Life* Conclusion
Film: *Against a Trans Narrative*

Thurs 11.15: Film: *Against a Trans Narrative*

*****REWRITTEN PROPSALS WITH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Week 14

Tues 11.20: No Class – Read, Research, and Write!

Thurs 11.22: THANKSGIVING BREAK: No Class

Week 15

Tues 11.27: **Library/Writing Day**

Thurs 11.29: *****Final Papers Due**
Presentations

Week 16

Tues 12.4: Presentations

Thurs 12.6: Presentations/Wrap-Up