Introduction to Transgender Studies
Fall 2011
Course Syllabus

Time:
Place:

Instructor: Professor Aren Aizura
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Office phone: 
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Office hour:

Course Sakai site:

Course Description

This survey of transgender studies maps the emergence of transgender as an emerging subject and object of study in the twenty-first century. Studying knowledges produced about transgender across medicine, history, anthropology, and women’s and gender studies, we look at emerging transgender social practices as embedded in dynamics of race, class, sexuality, nationality and ability. The questions we ask in this course include the following: What does the word “trans” mean, and in its multiple meanings, how does it open up space to imagine new possibilities of becoming? How does “trans” illuminate the institutional constraints on subjectivity on everyone’s gender, and how does it relate to feminist and queer understandings of gender and power? How are transgender and transsexuality emerging as new identities with claims to medical care, rights, and recognition globally in the twenty-first century? What concerns are emerging as central to trans community formation, and for whom does the new visibility of trans identity function best? What trans and gender non-conforming communities, practices, and immigration flows are taking place outside the United States, and how do they inflect a global trans culture? We will frame our discussions of transgender social formations within historical, political, and economic contexts, and examine how transnational flows of global capital impact transgender and gender non-conforming identities. The readings reflect a range of disciplinary voices, including diverse forms of scholarship like memoir and manifesto, as well as film, art, graphic novels, blog posts and vlogs.

Learning Goals

Women’s and Gender Studies Department learning goals met by this course:
• Effectively communicate orally and in writing and engage in critical analysis of words and the world
• Interrogate cultural stereotypes and naturalizations of hierarchies of difference
• Analyze power dynamics from the micro-level to the macro-level
• Undertake innovative research and knowledge production
• Devise creative strategies to promote social change
• Collaborate across differences with others in course work, co-curricular activities, and in life

Learning goals specific to this course:
• Demonstrate the capacity to name, understand, and use critical tools used in transgender studies, particularly how
• Demonstrate an understanding of the critical meanings of key terms: transgender, gender identity, sex, gender non-conforming, medicalization, subjectivity, rights discourse, transnationality, somatechnics, etc
• Demonstrate an understanding of how concepts of gender transformation have differed across history and geography, and particularly how the concept of transgender and transsexuality are key to thinking about 21st century U.S. practices of gender transformation
• Demonstrate an understanding of how transgender theory has been influenced by, and draws on, other bodies of political and theoretical theory: feminist theory, queer studies, theories of bodies and technology, etc.
• Demonstrate skill in researching, planning and writing papers, incorporating an analytical understanding of key concepts in the course
• Demonstrate the capacity to form your own opinion within debates about transgender studies, drawing on perspectives from inside and outside of class

Weekly required readings

The required texts for this course are:


Essays from other books will be posted as PDF’s on Sakai under the Resources tab.

**Please do your readings before class.** Schedule at least two hours per class meeting in your calendar to get the reading done. Weekly quizzes will be assigned.

**In Class Discussion and Note-Taking**

This is a seminar, not a lecture class. The success of the discussion depends on all of us being present rather than checked out. If you use a laptop to take notes, please be smart about how you multitask in class: checking a word or facts in the dictionary or Wikipedia is fine. Checking Facebook, email or any non-related site during class is not permitted.
Class Attendance and Late Assignments

In order to succeed in this course, you need to attend classes, complete assignments on time and keep up with the weekly readings. Part of your final grade will be based on your attendance (see below). As an instructor, it’s my responsibility to offer interesting, fun and challenging teaching material. In return, I expect students to attend classes on time, to participate in group activities, to ask questions, pay attention and think critically.

Attendance Requirements: I will be taking an attendance roll for every class. If you need to miss a lecture for medical or personal reasons, please talk to me in advance or provide me with a medical certificate. You can miss two classes without providing a medical certificate or other form of excuse: after two, I will begin to dock your attendance mark.

Late Assignments: Assignments turned in after their deadlines will be marked down a $\frac{1}{2}$ grade for each day late (e.g., A goes to A-) unless other arrangements have been made in advance or in instances of documented medical reason.

If you are having serious health problems or a personal emergency and fall behind, please come and see me as soon as possible. We may be able to arrange for you to catch up on missed work. I can also direct you to student services that may assist you if you’re having difficulties. However, attending classes and completing assignments on time is the best way to keep up with the course.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on your performance, meeting assignment deadlines, regular and prompt attendance and class participation. The grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staged research essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Attendance and participation 20%

Attendance is required. Absences will only be excused with a doctor’s note or in cases of emergency. More than two unexcused absences will lower your grade. Since this is an upper division seminar class it is imperative that you come prepared to discuss the assigned reading material. Participation means taking part in discussions, asking questions if you don’t understand a concept or argument, pulling your weight in group activities. Remember, no question is too dumb or obvious — if it seems “stupid”, probably half the class is thinking it.

Teaching Presentations 20%

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Instructor: Professor Aren Aizura
In groups of two, you will be responsible for presenting and leading discussion on an assigned article. For the assigned article, you will prepare a handout, minimum 3 pages, which MUST include the following:

1. a summary of the main points of the argument
2. the purposes of the scholarly intervention or research inquiry
3. a critique of the arguments and evidence to support your critique
4. brief keyword definitions, highlighting unfamiliar terminology and concepts
5. links you can make to other readings or topics
6. questions for class discussion

Note: The readings should not be divided up individually. This is a group assignment and the handout and presentation must reflect this. No credit will be given if the collective effort is unclear.

Sign up for reading assignments will take place in Week One. Expect to make at least one teaching presentation throughout semester.

**Midterm exam**

*Due Thursday October 11*

The midterm examination will cover materials from weekly readings and in-class discussions. This will be a take-home exam to be typed and printed out with references and a bibliography. The exam paper will be handed out in class on Tuesday October 4 and will be due at 5pm sharp on Thursday October 11.

**Final staged research essay**

*Due Tuesday December 13*

The final assignment is a staged research essay on an assigned topic. Students will submit a research bibliography, submit an essay plan, and finally submit the written essay. The final essay will be 8 pages long, plus footnotes and bibliography. Grading will be based on a percentage for each stage: the bibliography, essay plan and final essay.

**Grading Criteria**

Grading for written assignments from A through F will be based on the following categories:

Critical and thoughtful analysis
Grasp of key term and concepts
Initiative taken in researching and reading
Written expression
Structure (i.e., essay and exam have strong introduction, body and conclusion)
Correct referencing and bibliography
Presentation: assignments typed in 12 point font, double-spaced with wide margins

**Academic Integrity**

Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity fully and abiding by them in all their work at the university. Information on violations of academic integrity, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, etc can be found in the Rutgers New Brunswick course catalog:
http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nb-ug_current/pg1206.html

**Note:** This class deals with sexuality in an explicit and frank manner. We will be reading and watching material featuring explicit sex scenes. If you don’t want to do so, you may want to rethink taking the class. The subject matter will sometimes be controversial. I encourage lively debate and expect all students to behave with respect for others’ differing opinions. We come from a range of different backgrounds and social or political perspectives. Thus, it’s important to think carefully before we speak in class and not make assumptions about to whom, or for whom, we are speaking.
Reading Assignments

Week One  Learning and Teaching About Trans Studies Now
September 4 & 6

What is “transgender”? How do we trace it as a critical political movement, an identity category and an “umbrella term”? How do we teach and learn about transgender studies in WGS?

Tuesday  Introductions / Interrogating “Transgender”

Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in the Transgender Studies Reader, 1-17.

Part I: Ways Of Knowing About Transness

Week Two  Pre-20th Century, Pre “Transgender”: Historical Perspectives
September 11 & 13

If transgender and transsexuality are the most commonly used terms today to speak about gender nonconforming bodies and practices, what are the “roots” of that knowledge? How have gender non-conforming bodies been understood and treated historically?

Tuesday  Michel Foucault, Introduction, Herculine Barbin


Week Three  Medical Models and Wrong Bodies
September 18 & 20

How has medicine and science understood gender nonconforming practices? What does it mean for someone to to understand themselves as being born into “the wrong body”? How does that metaphor map onto medical models of gender dysphoria as something pathological but treatable?
Introduction to Transgender Studies

Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Aren Aizura

Tuesday
David O. Cauldwell, “Psychopathia Transsexualis” in the Transgender Studies Reader

Thursday
Dean Spade, “Mutilating Gender,” in the Transgender Studies Reader

Week Four
Anthropological Writing on “Third Genders”
September 25 & 27

Transgender’s career as a modern medical or social phenomenon is often contrasted with cultural concepts of “third genders” in non-“Western” contexts, particularly in anthropology. How has anthropology traditionally understood gender variance? How have transgender writers taken up those understandings and/or rejected them?

Tuesday
Excerpt from Alfred Kroeber, “Psychosis or Social Sanction,” Journal of Personality 8:3 (1940), 204–215.

Thursday
Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan, “Romancing The Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the “Third Gender’ Concept,” in the Transgender Studies Reader.

Week Five
Feminist Encounters With Transgender/Transgender Encounters With Feminism
October 2 & 4

This week we look at some feminist understandings of transgender and some ideas of trans what a trans feminism might look like. How has transgender shaped feminist thought? How has feminist thought and politics transformed what it means to be trans now?


Thursday
Cei Bell, “Radical Queens Manifesto, 1973,” in Smash the Church, Smash the State: The Early Years of Gay Liberation.

Part II: Law, Regulation, Politics

Week Six
Documenting Gender: Transgender Governmentality

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This week we look at the administrative ways in which gender nonconforming bodies are regulated: via identity documents, and via surveillance in bathrooms and airport security checkpoints. Whose bodies are most surveilled and regulated?

Tuesday:  
*Normal Life*, Ch. 4, “Administrating Rights.”

Thursday:  
Sheila Cavanaugh, excerpts from *Queering bathrooms: gender, sexuality, and the hygienic imagination*.

**Week Seven  Transgender Rights Talk**

**October 16 & 18**

What are transgender rights? Why are they important, and how do rights discourses play out in favor of some bodies at the expense of others? How is trans rights talk bound up with racial, economic, and citizenship inequities?

Tuesday:  
*Normal Life*, Ch. 2, “Rethinking Transphobia and Power—Beyond a Rights Framework.”

Thursday:  
Mauro Cabral, “(Trans)sexual Citizenship in Argentina”, in *Transgender Rights*.

**Week Eight  Borders, Geography, Transnationality**

**October**

This week we look at how gender nonconforming people encounter national borders, discuss why trans people might immigrate to the U.S. or elsewhere (and where they might immigrate from), and think about some of the hurdles to being “mobile” as a trans or gender nonconforming person.

Tuesday:  

Thursday:  
Film, *Travestis pleurent aussi*.

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Week 9  
Interrogating Trans Whiteness and Normativity  
October 23 & 25

What happens when transgender becomes the primary category under which people identify and come together politically? How have trans activists fought for their rights while also rejecting “trans” or “gay” as identities that makes it impossible to talk about other forms of injustice?

Tuesday:  
Normal Life, Conclusion.

Thursday:  

Part Three: Remaking Trans Representations

Week 10  
Performing Politics  
October 30 & November 1

How have trans people expressed themselves and fought exclusion through performance, drag, and parody? This week we take a look at different ways of performing trans/genderqueer/transsexual aesthetics and politics.

Tuesday:  
Jose Munoz, “Vaginal Crème Davis’ Terrorist Drag,” in Disidentifications.  
Ru Paul Drag Race (tv show)

Thursday:  
Excerpts from Kate Bornstein, Gender Outlaw.  

Week 11  
Trans Aesthetics  
November 6 & 8

Is there, as Jack Halberstam argues, a “transgender look”? If so, what constitutes that look? How are mainstream film-makers and artists representing trans experience, and how are trans art-makers and film-makers “talking back” to those mainstream representations? Is transgender art a new form of subcultural style?

Tuesday:  
Film, By Hook Or By Crook

Thursday:  
Jeanne Vaccaro, “Felt Matters,” in Transgender Studies Reader Vol II.
Week 12  Sex, Bodies, Affects, Somatechnics
November 13 & 15

What new feelings, affects, technologies of being and technologies of being sexed or sexual are being produced or written about within trans cultures? How does gender transformation implicate us within other, more “strange” kinds of transformation and becoming?

Tuesday  Susan Stryker, “My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above The Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” in the Transgender Studies Reader.

Thursday  Eva Hayward, “Lessons From A Starfish,” in Transgender Studies Reader Vol II.

Part Four: Trans Studies as a Living Organism

Week 13  Incarceration and Trans Existence
November 20 & 22

Incarceration within the “prison industrial complex” is emerging as one of the “hotspots” of trans political action within a nation where imprisonment is the solution to many social problems. Why are large numbers of trans people in prison? How are gender nonconforming bodies vulnerable to criminalization and incarceration?


Thursday  Excerpts from This is a Prison: Glitter Is Not Allowed: Experiences of Trans and Gender Variant People in Pennsylvania’s Prison System. Hearts on a Wire Collective, 2011.

Week 14  Trans Inclusion and Sex Segregated Spaces
November 27 & 29

Gender segregated spaces are also a hot button issue within and outside trans and queer communities. This week we look at events in which trans inclusion in women-only space, and now trans mens’ inclusion in “women and trans space” has sparked a whole new debate about feminism, identity politics, safe space and gender policing.

Viviane Namaste and Georgia Sitara, “Inclusive Pedagogy in the Women’s Studies Classroom: Teaching the Kimberly Nixon Case,” in Viviane

**Thursday**

Archive of articles, blog posts etc on Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

**Week 15**

**Are we that name?**

**December 4 & 6**

What categories and labels are generating new knowledges about gender, gender identity and transness? What are the politics of some of these debates about words? Why are they so powerful and so fraught?

**Tuesday:**

A. Finn Enke, “The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies,” in *Transgender Studies Reader Vol II*

**Thursday:**

Archive of blog posts, news articles etc on the use and abuse of the word “tranny”

**Week 16**

**Review**

**Staged Research Essay due Tuesday December 11**