WMST 201: Topics in Women’s Studies: Intro to Transgender Studies
MW 4:25-5:40 | Welles 134
Spring 2008

Professor. Alice Rutkowski
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Course website: http://mycourses.geneseo.edu
    (site has links to: syllabus, course readings, class contact information, copies of all assignments
    and the course email list)

Course Description:
In the past decade, the term “transgender” has rapidly come to be used to describe a range of social
identities, a political movement, and a community that had no name until the early 1990s. This course will
be an introduction to this new and growing field of study. We’ll begin by examining some basic
assumptions and definitions about gender identities, study some instances of transgendered
behavior/identities throughout history and literature and closely examine the medicalization of so-called
“abnormal” gender and sexual identities at the turn of the twentieth century with the rise of modern
psychology. But the bulk of the course will examine texts from more recent history, however, looking at
literature, film, anthropology, sociology, and science writing about cross-dressing, drag and camp, overlaps
and disjunctions between feminism and trans as well as gay and lesbian and trans issues. Because this
course is a women’s studies course, we’ll pay special attention to what trans issues, theories and identities
might mean for the future of feminism and women’s studies.

You will not be evaluated on your opinions on these topics. Instead, you will deconstruct and critique
arguments, demonstrate intellectual empathy (i.e., show that you can understand alternative viewpoints),
and substantiate your views with evidence, reason, and an awareness of implicit assumptions/values. This
discussion-centered course will require consistent, highly-engaged classroom participation, weekly web
discussion board posts, three critical essays and two group projects.

In this class, you’ll be reading/watching material with explicit sexual and violent images. Students who
have philosophical or religious objections to such material should withdraw from the course; your
enrollment signifies your agreement to engage fully with all course material.

Course objectives: the successful student will
- Synthesize recent feminist scholarship, methodologies, concepts, and analysis on gender and
gender identities
- Negotiate multiple disciplinary approaches to gender including psychology, history, sociology, and
literature
- Critique essentialist and constructionist perspectives on the creation and maintenance of sexual and
gender identities and behaviors.
- Investigate the limitations of binary classification systems as pertaining to gender roles, gendered
behavior, sexual behaviors, and sexual orientation.
- Investigate the intersections of gender and gender performance across other identity categories
such as race, class, and nationality.
- Engage with contemporary issues associated with sex and gender that impact her or his life and
extend awareness into an activist response.
- Reflect critically on her or his own ideas about sex and gender and articulate these in writing and
in respectful, productive discussions with others who may hold differing ideas to contribute to a
climate of mutual inquiry and academic exchange.
Required texts:
PLUS additional readings available on mycourses.geneseo.edu

Optional texts:
*The Drag King Book*, eds. Del Grace Volcano and Judith “Jack” Halberstam. Serpent’s Tail, 1999. This is a great book filled with awesome photographs, and we’ll have a short paper assignment based on it (see below). BUT it’s expensive (as low as $19 on amazon, more other places) and I’ll put three copies on circulating reserves in Milne for those who are not able to buy it.

Evaluation:
- online postings 20%
- participation 20%
- papers 40%
- group poster project 5%
- final group project 15%

Final grades in my courses are not meant to come as a surprise and the calculations I use to arrive at them should not be mysterious. If, at any point during the semester, you would like to know what grade you have earned up to that point in the course, let me know. The procedure for inquiring about your current overall grade is as follows: 1) let me know you’d like to know your current grade (by email, in person, etc.) and then 2) schedule an office appointment with me. This will give me time to calculate your grade and then together we can discuss your performance in class.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments must be completed by the date they appear on the syllabus. Often the reading assignments are somewhat complicated – that is to say, there are several readings from several different places, so pay close attention to the syllabus. Students are expected to bring the assigned text to class; when the reading is from mycourses, students must print a hard copy and bring it to class.

Essays: see course schedule for due dates
format: always must have a title, standard fonts and margins, spell-checked, proof-read, double-spaced, numbered pages, stapled; if more than primary text used, include list of “works cited” using consistent citing practices (any style is ok, MLA, Chicago, APA, as long as you’re consistent).
Due dates: papers are due in class (unless noted otherwise) on the day listed on the syllabus. Email attachments are unacceptable. Under extraordinary circumstances, extensions may be granted, provided you speak with me in advance. Late paper policy is as follows: penalties begin to accrue at 6 PM on the day the paper is due; up to one day (24 hours) late, penalty is 1/3 letter grade (e.g. A becomes an A-); up to two days late, 2/3; three days, 1 full grade; four days, 1 1/3; etc. There is no maximum penalty. Weekends and breaks count in calculating lateness – if you need to hand in a paper late, either have a secretary in Welles 226 initial, on the paper, the date/time it was finally handed in or send a duplicate copy to me by email (hard copy still should be handed in to Welles 226 box) to get credit for the time you turned it in. Documenting the time a paper was handed in is YOUR responsibility; given a lack of documentation, the penalty will be calculated based on when I receive the paper.

Grading: To receive an “A” on a paper you must do excellent work in all these areas: original thinking, organization, clear analysis, use of sufficient and specific evidence, and consistent and correct grammar
and mechanics. I consider a grade of “B” a very good grade for work that is shy of excellent. Students who earn C’s and D’s fall short in these areas. In particular, they often fail to have a thesis, i.e. an arguable point, and they fill their essays with summary rather than analysis. Visit the Writing Center on the second floor of Welles for help in any of these areas.

***To pass this course you must attempt all three papers and earn a passing grade on the forum posts. Please keep a back-up copy of papers when you hand them in (either hard copy or disk). Should we disagree about whether or not you have turned in a paper, you will be able to produce a duplicate immediately.

**Participation:** Participation in class discussion is critical to the success of the course, and therefore will figure into the final grade. I will keep track of both the quantity and the quality of each student's contributions; this factor can raise-- or lower -- the final grade significantly. For more details on the expectations and standards for participation, please see the attached sheet.

**Mycourses discussion forum posts**
Ten times over the course of the semester students will post a short but pithy question/interpretation to the course web discussion forum. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own posts (although there are functions on the site to help you with this). At the end of the semester, students will turn in a portfolio of their best posts and this will count for 20% of the final grade. See assignment for more details about this assignment.

**Small group projects** will be made by students in groups of 4 to 6; different groups will be assembled for each project. **Breaking the binary flyer project (5%):** your group will develop one or more flyers (based on the Hey Hetero! campaign done in Australia) that challenges observers to question the gender binary.

**End-of-semester project (15%)**: Your group will present for 15-20 min toward the end of the semester. Presentations may involve interactive components; use of audio or video clips, handouts, or activities is especially encouraged (as opposed to use of Powerpoint presentations or posterboards). Your group will choose a topic relevant to transgender that is approved by the instructor **before spring break**. This topic may expand upon information in the course or introduce a new topic. Possible topics (**you are NOT limited by this list!**): gender-specific toys, legal issues facing transgendered folks, transgendered individuals in the media/pop culture, intersex activism, trans presence/role in gay/lesbian community, trans pornography, medical technologies, violence/bashing, trans and class issues, cross-cultural and/or -historical instances of trans. The presentations are a venue for students to contribute to the course content. If the schedule excludes a topic about which you are eager to learn, please consider developing your presentation.

**Evaluation:** grades on both projects will consider overall group performance as well as individual contributions. Full, detailed assignments will be distributed well before the due dates.

**Policies**

**Academic Honesty:** It is expected that the work you submit belongs to you and you alone. Any act of plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade on the assignment and the notification of the Dean of Students. Plagiarism includes using anyone else’s ideas or words without giving him or her credit, whether the author is a fellow student, a published author, or a web page on the Internet. It doesn’t matter how much you change the words if you are basically paraphrasing someone else’s ideas. If you want to engage with or acknowledge someone else’s ideas, include a clear and through citation. If you have any questions about plagiarism, feel free to speak to me. You may also find this Geneseo website helpful: http://library.geneseo.edu/~Liles/plagiarism.htm

**Accommodations:** SUNY-Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons of documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should notify the Director of the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin, tbuggieh@geneseo.edu) and their faculty of any needed
accommodations as early as possible in the semester. Information on services and campus polices can be found at: http://www.geneseo.edu/~doc/otherareas/disability.shtml
## Course Calendar

**Wed Jan 23**  
Introduction to the course  
*What is gender? and gender policing*

**Mon Jan 28**  
Kessler & McKenna, “Toward a Theory of Gender” (trans reader, 165-182); Dean Spade, “Undermining Gender Regulation” (*Nobody Passes*, 64-70)

**Wed Jan 30**  

**Mon Feb 4**  
Sandra Salmans, “When an It is Labeled a He or She” (mycourses), Marjorie Garber, “Dress Codes, or the Theatricality of Difference” (mycourses) and Kathleen Brown, “Changed...into the Fashion of Man’: the Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement” (mycourses). PLUS visit http://www.hasbro.com/tonka/ and click on “watch video” (middle right – next to icon of video camera). Take notes about images/language employed in ad.  
*Psychology, physiology & the pathologizing of identity*

**Wed Feb 6**  
Riki Wilchins, “Changing the Subject: My Mother Made Me a Lesbian” (*GQ*, 47-54)  
Richard von Krafft-Ebing, selections from *Psychopathia Sexualis* (trans reader 21-27); Magnus Hirschfeld, selections from *The Transvestites* (trans reader, 28-39); handout of DSM entries.

**Mon Feb 11**  
PAPER #1 due/gender policing;  
*Bodies that Matter, Intersex and Undermining the Biological Binary*

**Wed Feb 13**  
Riki Wilchins, “Queerer Bodies” (*GQ* 33-46), Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough” (mycourses), Cheryl Chase, “Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism” (trans reader, 300-314).

**Mon Feb 18**  
T. Benjamin Singer, “From the Medical Gaze to Sublime Mutations” (trans reader, 601-620), Raven Kaldera, “Do It on the Dotted Line” (*GQ* 156-160) and visit http://www.isna.org/, look around, and prepare at least three informal comments/observations about the website.  
*Gay vs. Trans*

**Wed Feb 20**  

**Mon Feb 25**  

**Wed Feb 27**  
Esther Newton, selections from *Mother Camp* (trans reader, 121-130); Excerpts from Philip Core, *Camp: the Lie that Tells the Truth* (mycourses); Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” (mycourses)  
in-class film clips.

**Mon Mar 3**  
Majorie Garber, “Breaking the Code: Transvestism and Gay Identity” (mycourses) Bryant Alexander, “Querying Queer Theory Again (or Queer Theory as Drag Performance)” (mycourses), follow links to RuPaul video and “drag queen fools college jock” video on mycourses page.  
*Drag and Camp*

**Wed Mar 5**  
excerpts from *Persistent Desire: A Butch/Femme Reader* (mycourses); GROUP PROJECT #1 due

**Mon Mar 10**  
Jeanne Cordova, “Butches, Lies and Feminism” (mycourses); Amy André and Sandy Chang, “And then you cut your hair” (*Nobody Passes*, 254-269), Robin Maltz, “Fading to Pink” (*GQ* 161-5), Dawn Dougherty, “A Safe Trip Home” (*GQ*, 220-2)

**Wed Mar 12**  

**Mon Mar 17, Wed Mar 19, Fri Mar 21:** SPRING BREAK

**Mon Mar 24**  
*Stone Butch Blues continued*, ch 9-18, 91-220.

**Wed Mar 26**  
finish SBB, ch 19-end. 221-301.
Butch/FTM border wars


New medical technologies and the rise of sex-reassignment surgeries

Wed Apr 2  Harold Garfinkel, “Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sex Status in an “Intersexed” Person” (trans reader, 58-93), Dean Spade, “Mutilating Gender” (trans reader, 315-332), Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein” (trans reader, 244-256).

**Friday Apr 4, paper # 2/Drag King Book, due by 2 pm in Welles 226, Rutkowski mailbox**


Feminism’s Critique of Trans


**required film screening: Normal (2003), 110 minutes. Attend EITHER Mon Apr 14, 6:30-8:30 pm OR Th Apr 17, 6:30-8:30 pm in Milne Library, room 213**

Mon Apr 21 Rusty Mae Moore, “Transie House” (GQ, 279-283), Allie Lie, “Passing Realities” (GQ 166-170), Sylvia Rivera Law Project website: http://www.srlp.org/ Please look around, particularly at the materials under the “issues” link, and have at least 2 comments/observations about the site’s content.

Wed Apr 23  in-class film: Transgeneration. **note – we may need to stay 10 minutes late tonight to finish an episode

***no forum posting this week***

Mon Apr 28 paper #3/Normal due; in-class film: Transgeneration; finish episodes and discussion.

More Crossings: Gender, Nationality, Race, Class, Ability


(Tues May 6 is last day of classes)

***Friday, May 9, 3:30-6:30 – group project presentations during final exam period ***
Criteria for Class Participation Evaluation

The following criteria will determine your participation grade. The criteria focus on what you demonstrate and do not presume to guess at what you know. Why? Because what you offer to the class is what you and others learn from. I expect the average level of participation to satisfy the criteria for a "B."

A. Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed reading exceptionally well, relating it to other material (e.g., readings, lecture, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.). Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of reading, e.g., puts together pieces of discussion and lecture to develop new approaches that take the class further. Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc. Demonstrates active involvement, probably on a daily basis.

B. Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading well, has thought through implications of reading. Offers interpretations and analysis of the reading (more than just the facts) to class. Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

C. Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them. Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on. Demonstrates sporadic involvement.

D. Present, not disruptive. Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much. Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.

F. Absent.

Insufficient reasons for not participating:

- shyness – if this is you, feel free to come see me so we can work out strategies for getting you involved.
- thinking, “this conversation is shallow/obvious/stupid.” If you think the conversation needs more depth, redirect it, hotshot.
- being afraid you’ll offend someone because of their race/gender/sexuality/etc. It’s good to be sensitive to others’ feelings, of course, but not if it totally silences you.
- thinking, “I can’t say anything profound, so I’ll be quiet.” If this is you, start small. Answer a factual question I ask, or add on to someone else’s comment, e.g. “I agree with Sarah and there’s another example of that on page 67.”
- thinking, “I just like to listen.” Being actively involved can profoundly change your experience of a class. The rest of us are working hard to build readings of these texts and would love your help. Carry your weight.