

## **LGBT 448P: From Birth to Death: LGBTQ Life Trajectories**

Dr. Jessica Ann Vooris

Spring 2017, Tu/Th 12:30-1:45 pm

WDS 1114

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### **Course Description**

What is a queer child? How do queer people form families? What is it like to be a trans dad who is chest-feeding? How is aging different in LGBTQ communities?

Thinking through questions of age, development, identity, reproduction, and family formations, in this course we will explore gender and sexuality across the life-span. Starting with pregnancy and birth, we will continue through childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and end with elder-care and aging. Interdisciplinary in nature, this course provides scholarship from a variety of fields including psychology, biology, literature, queer theory, feminist theory, anthropology, and history.

The course will meet two times a week for a discussion-based class. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to participate in discussion. Additional readings, grades and assignments will be posted on Canvas.

Please visit me during my office hours, as I would love to learn more about what you are thinking and learning, as well as how your work is progressing! Be sure to let me know during office hours or after class if you need any help, or any special accommodations, the sooner the better. Students with disabilities or who need time from class to observe religious holidays, please contact me ASAP to make any arrangements necessary. If you will miss class due to religious observances, please let me know by February 9th.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester students will have

- understand people experience gender and sexuality across their life-span
- understand how age intersects with gender, sexuality, race, ability and other identities
- be able to apply concepts in class to analyzing life narratives
- think critically about heteronormative and homonormative assumptions about family, reproduction and what constitutes a "good life."

### **About Women's Studies and LGBT Studies at the University of Maryland:**

The Department of Women's Studies, in the College of Arts and Humanities, offers an undergraduate certificate and minor in LGBT Studies, in addition to the B.A. and undergraduate certificate in Women's Studies and a joint minor in Black Women's Studies (with African American Studies). The certificate in LGBT Studies is a 21-credit

interdisciplinary course of study comprised of 15 required and 6 elective credits designed to complement any student's major field of study. The minor in LGBT Studies is a 15-credit interdisciplinary course of study comprised of 12 required and 3 elective credits. We encourage current UMD undergraduates interested in any of these five programs of study to contact the Department of Women's Studies. Women's Studies provides excellent preparation for a variety of humanities and social science graduate programs, as well as professional schools. I am happy to speak to anyone who wants to discuss these different options for study. You might also wish to talk with the Women's Studies/LGBT Studies Academic Advisor, JV Sapinoso (sapinoso@umd.edu).

## **Required Readings**

Please purchase the texts below in print or e-book form, or rent/borrow them. (We will not read 100 percent of this text--it is acceptable to photocopy/share the book)

Bechdel, Alison. *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0618968800

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A Biomythography*.

Additional readings will all be uploaded onto the Canvas Site or found through umaryland.worldcat.org.

## **How the course will be organized**

We will meet two times a week for a discussion-based class. In order to have a productive learning environment students need to come to class having read the material, and be prepared to talk and share with others. Creating a community of learning means that we must be respectful of each other and create a space where each member of the class feels comfortable about sharing their thoughts. This does not mean that we will always agree, and in fact we may often disagree with each other, but we must always be open to hearing each other and treating each other kindly and with respect. This course is unique because there is always a mix of students—some who already have some knowledge about LGBTQ identities and communities, and others who don't know much about gender and sexuality, but everyone is here to learn. Together we can create a learning community where dialogue is encouraged, we understand that mistakes happen, and that communication and understanding can be difficult across differences. Learning means taking risks, trying new things, playing around, guessing at times, and recognizing that sometimes we won't get it right the first time.

## **Communication for the Course**

ELMS/Canvas : You will find course readings, and the syllabus on Canvas (elms.umd.edu). All assignments will be uploaded to Canvas unless otherwise specified, and I will use ELMS announcements and the message center to contact the class. You can also use Canvas to message me, or email me directly at [jvooris@umd.edu](mailto:jvooris@umd.edu).

Please set your ELMS notifications so that you get an email when I send out any class announcements, as I will use these to keep you informed about changes to the syllabus or in the case of weather-delays. Also be sure to check your email every few days, and to have the correct email listed on testudo. These are class requirements.

If you have any difficulties getting access to these resources (email/canvas) come and talk to me as soon as possible. To get help go to OIT's Help Desk at the Computer and Space Sciences Building, Rm. 1400, or checkout the help desk webpage at:  
<http://www.helpdesk.umd.edu/>

Email: Faculty and advisors use email to convey important information, and students are responsible for keeping their email address up to date, and must ensure that forwarding to another address functions properly. Failure to check email, errors in forwarding, and returned email are the responsibility of the student, and do not constitute an excuse for missing announcements or deadlines.

In your emails to me, please be sure to include LGBT 448, [your name], [topic of email] in the subject line. I receive a lot of email and without adequate subject headings your email may get lost in my inbox and/or will not sort to the correct folder. I am not responsible for emails getting lost if they are incorrectly labeled. Also, please don't start an email with "hey." You are not writing to a close friend. Dear Jessica, Dr. Vooris or Good morning/ Hello/Hi/Good afternoon are more professional and respectful. I will attempt to answer all emails within 24 hours, although this may not be feasible at particularly busy times of the semester.

### **Electronic Policy**

While laptops can be useful for taking notes, looking up information on google, or referring to the readings, they are also a source of distraction. It may be worth noting that recent studies shows that students learn more when taking notes by hand, rather than through electronic means. Other studies have shown that a student who chooses to dis-engage with class via facebook, etc, will also distract and affect the learning of other students. I encourage you to print out your readings, or take copious hand-written notes.

However, given that most of your readings are electronic, and not all of you have access to a printer, I will permit laptops/tablets in class. However, this is a privilege, not a right, and I reserve the right to change this policy at any-time. It will be up to you to show that you are engaged with class discussion.

### **Graded Assignments**

10 % Class Discussion/Attendance  
15% Reading Responses  
20% Personal Reflection Essay  
20 % Research Paper  
25% Group Project  
10% Learning Analysis

## Academic Integrity:

“The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures.” (see <http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/integrity.html>).

If you are unsure of how to properly cite your information and how to avoid plagiarism please refer to online guides on MLA, APA and Chicago Style formatting. I do not have a preference for which one you use, but please pick one and use that consistently throughout an assignment. If you still need help with citations, please set up an appointment to meet with me.

## Grades:

A work is excellent, unusually creative and/or analytically striking

B is fine work of high quality, though not as skilled, ambitious, or carefully presented as A

C is average or usual work fulfilling the assignment; should not be hasty, or insufficiently collaborated

D work is below average or incomplete; shows many difficulties or cannot follow instructions

F work is not sufficient to pass; unwillingness to do the work, or so many difficulties unable to complete

I will explain in more detail what the expectations are for each assignment in the handouts and on Canvas.

## Grade Scale

A 94 – 100% A- 90 – 93%

B+ 87 – 89% B 83 – 86% B- 80 – 82%

C+ 77 – 79% C 73 – 76% C- 70 – 72%

D+ 67 – 69% D 63 – 66% D- 60 – 62%

## Graded Assignments

**10% Class Participation:** This is a discussion-based course, and your participation is important. You are expected to come to class having read and taken notes on the material, and to be ready to discuss the material. The success of the class will depend on everyone sharing their ideas and perspectives. If you are someone who has a hard time speaking up in class, note that you can show that you are actively participating through your listening, your reactions to what your classmates are saying, and your note-taking. Please visit me in my office hours if you are concerned about your participation due to anxiety, neurodivergence, or any other reason.

If you are not in class, you cannot receive participation points. Likewise, if you are in class, but are asleep or otherwise not paying attention, you will not receive participation points. I understand that people get sick, family emergencies happen, or you have an unforeseen circumstance that prevents your attendance. You may have one unexcused

absence during the course of the semester, otherwise, I follow the university guidelines for “excused absences.” In case of any absence you are responsible for the work that you have missed. Check your syllabus and connect up with classmates for notes and any information you need to know. Please do not email me asking what you missed, unless you have already talked to a classmate and still have questions.

**15 % Reading Responses:** Throughout the semester you will be required to turn in 3 reading responses which will answer a specific question for a particular day/week. You can decide which day you complete the reading response, but you must submit one for the month of February, one for the month of March and one for the month of April. These must be uploaded to ELMS the day the reading is due, BEFORE the start of class. You have the option of completing the assignment in written form, audio/video form, or in a visual/artististic form, as long as it fulfills the reading response requirements. See ELMS for a full description of the assignment.

**20% Personal Reflection Essay:** Drawing from texts that we have read so far on gender, and sexuality, you will pick a moment in your life to analyze. If you do not want to share a personal memory or story, you may choose a passage from a book or another type of media. If you choose this option, please verify with me what you will focus on. You do not have to identify as LGBTQ to write about YOUR experiences of gender/sexuality. 7-8 pages. More assignment details on ELMS. Due, Sunday, February 26th at 5 pm.

**20% Research Paper:** This will be a research paper on a topic of your choice that addresses a particular moment in a person's life. This may include looking in more detail at a topic from class, or could be something that we have not touched upon. 5-8 pages. See more assignment details on ELMS.

**20% Life Narratives Group Project:** In groups of 4-6, you will pick a topic, preferably based on one of the research topics that you picked, and you will create "something" (play/book/educational training/comedy skit/board game/research proposal/conference) addressing an LGBTQ issue.

**10% Learning Analysis:** 2 page analysis of what you learned over the course of the semester, key concepts/texts, what your specific journey/experience of the class was.

### **University Absence Policy:**

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. Consistent attendance offers students the most effective opportunity to gain command of course concepts and materials. Events that justify an excused absence include: religious observances; mandatory military obligation; illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member; participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., death in the family, required court appearance). Absences stemming from work duties other than military obligation (e.g., unexpected changes in shift assignments) and traffic/transit problems do not typically qualify for excused absence.

Students claiming an excused absence must notify the course instructor in a timely manner and provide appropriate documentation. The notification should be provided either prior to the absence or as soon afterwards as possible. In the case of religious observances, athletic events, and planned absences known at the beginning of the semester, the student must inform the instructor during the schedule adjustment period. All other absences must be reported as soon as is practical. The student must provide appropriate documentation (doctor's note for example) of the absence through email or in person in class.

### **Emergency Protocols:**

In the case of delays or cancellations due to weather or another campus emergency I will communicate with students through email and ELMS to discuss updated class plans or to post alternative assignments online.

### **Waitlist Policy:**

As per university policy, the first 5 students on the waitlist are given access to ELMS. If you are on the waitlist, I encourage you to attend class and do the readings, as this will ensure that you do not fall behind. Unfortunately, this does NOT guarantee you admittance to the class, and if you are not released from the waitlist, you will not be able to continue attending class the rest of the semester. If you choose not to attend class while on the waitlist and then are admitted, you will not be penalized for missing class, but you WILL be responsible for catching up on the readings, getting lecture notes from your classmates, and turning in any missing assignments.

**Course Outline** \*Instructor reserves the right to change course outline at any time, with prior warning. An updated syllabus will be maintained on ELMS\*

### **Week One-Introduction to Class**

*Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup>*

- syllabus
- “How to Read” and “Listening” (handed out in class)
- get to know you activities

### **Week Two-Gender & Sexuality/Conception and Fetal Development**

*Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>*

- The Gender Book (ELMS)
- Emily Martin's “Egg and Sperm” article

*Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>*

- Anne Fausto-Sterling Chapters 1-4, 6 (ELMS)

--Dean Spade's "Purportedly Gendered Body Parts" (online)

### **Week Three- Babies and Childhood**

Reading Response Question (due Friday by noon): Do you agree with the choice that the Witterick family made for baby Storm? Why or why not? Be sure to refer to texts that we read last week about gender/sex/sexuality, and consider the role of gender socialization, gender identity, and the different between sex/gender.

OR

What is the queer child? How can the concept of the queer child help us understand children's gender and sexuality?

*Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>*

--[Parents' Keep Baby's Gender a Secret \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (online)

--[Boy or Girl? It's a Secret and an International Controversy \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (online)

[Remember Storm? \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (online)

--["Get Your Gender Binary Off My Childhood!" \(Links to an external site.\)](#) by Jane Ward (online)

Recommended: ["Baby Shower Sex Reveal" \(Links to an external site.\)](#) from Raising My Rainbow (online)

*Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>*

The Queer Child by Kathryn Bond Stockton (pgs 1-36) (ELMS)

[How to Be a Girl video \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (six minutes) (new link with transcript underneath)

["In Her Words" \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and "[My Son Does Not Need to Prove Anything \(Links to an external site.\)](#)"

"To the Queer Black Kids" (ELMS)

Recommended: [the blog "GenderMom" \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

### **Week Four-High-School and Questions of Identity**

Reading Response Question (due Thurs before class): How does heterosexism, cissexism and/or sexism shape adolescents' experiences of their gender and sexuality in high-school? (You may include your own experiences, along with class texts to answer this question).

*Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>*

"Dude, You're A Fag" CJ Pascoe (ELMS)

"The Other Kind of Coming Out" Lal Zimman (ELMS)

Heterosexual Questionnaire (in class)

Recommended: Compulsory Heterosexuality—Adrienne Rich ([link to PDF](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#))

*Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>*

Intro and Chapter 4 from Out in the Country by Mary Gray (ELMS)

Recommended: Chapter 5 (mediating identities online) from Out in the Country

## **Week Five- Puberty, Hormones and Sex Education**

Reading Response Question (due Thurs before class): How would you change the sex education and/or health curriculum in middle-school and high-school to address trans youths' experiences of puberty, and LGBTQ youths' needs in regards to comprehensive sex education? (Answer may take the form of an actual lesson plan, or could be more of a summary). (Use texts in class from this week and/or past weeks to answer)

*Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>*

Vrouenraets et al ""Early Medical Treatment of Children and Adolescents with Gender Dysphoria: an Empirical Ethical Study." (2015) (ELMS)

excerpt from "Beyond Magenta" (ELMS)

Chapter 8 from Janet Mock's Memoir

Optional: Additional chapter by Janet Mock

*Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>*

"Unsuitable for Children" (ELMS)

["We don't play with our Vulvas at the Table" \(\[Links to an external site.\]\(#\)\)](#)(online)  
[Myths about Asexuality \(\[Links to an external site.\]\(#\)\)](#)(comic, online)

**Gender and Sexuality Reflection Paper Due:** Sunday, February 26th at 5 pm

## **Week Six- Sex and Relationships**

Reading Response: (Due Thursday before class--turn in a physical copy or upload a scanned version onto ELMS) Make a zine/podcast/comic which includes information about and celebrates lgbtqa + forms of sexual intimacy and/or relationships. (Must refer in some way to at least two readings in class).

*Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>*

[Audre Lorde, Uses of the Erotic \(\[Links to an external site.\]\(#\)\)](#)(link to PDF)  
[How to Make Love to a Trans Person \(\[Links to an external site.\]\(#\)\)](#) poem (online)

In class: The artwork of Tee Corinne, including The Cunt Coloring Book

*Thursday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Mia McKenzie: "[Love, QTPOC style](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) (online) and "Resistance is the Secret of Queer Joy" (ELMS)

"[Is Romantic Love Killing Us?](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) (online)

"[Navigating a Sexual Relationship as an Asexual Person](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) (online)

Recommended: If you do not have a solid understanding of [Polyamory](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)); If you want more info on asexuality, [this is a good post.](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)) And if you like Dean Spade's writing and want his take on our dependence on romance, and his thoughts on polyamory: "[For Lovers and Fighters](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#))

## **Week Seven-Families We Choose and Marriage**

Reading Response (due Thursday before class): What are alternative ways we might think about "family" in society in ways that doesn't depend on blood/genetic kinship? Do you have "chosen" family? (answer can be written as an essay or an annotated family tree).

*Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>*

Kath Weston "Families We Choose" Ch 3 and 5 (preface and intro optional)

Tacit Subjects Chapter 2 "Moving Portraits"

Watch Paris is Burning clip (in class)

*Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>*

Dykes to Watch Out For (DTWOF): 17-18, 26, 49-50, 55-56, 69-98,

"Calling in a Queer Debt" (ELMS)

"I Do" by Andrea Gibson (watch in class) ([lyrics](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))) ([video](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#))

Recommended:

DTWOF: Cartoonist Introduction (gives info about Alison Bechdel, and the historical context for the book)

[Is Kinship Always Heterosexual? –Judith Butler](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)) (link to PDF)

## **Week Eight – Queer Reproduction**

Reading response (due before class Thursday): Create a children's book/zine/podcast/comic/art piece that explores different types of queer reproduction and pushes back against heterosexist assumptions about how families are made. (must reference readings/concepts from class)

*Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>*

"To Bi or Not to Bi: Bisexuality and Disclosure in the Adoption System" (ELMS)

[Beyond Mom 'n' Pop \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (online)

Daddies and Papas 2B (ELMS)

Recommended: No Futures, Lee Edelman (ELMS)

*Thursday, March 16<sup>th</sup>*

"donor mom" by Tobi Hill-Meyers (ELMS)

DTWOF: 109-115, 123, 147-180, recommended: 119, 125-128,

Recommended: "[Breastfeeding, Bias, and Men Who Give Birth: Q&A With Trans Activist Trevor MacDonald \(Links to an external site.\)](#)" (online)

**Week Nine SPRING BREAK**

**Week Ten: Life Narratives**

*Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>*

Attend the presentation by [Dr. Salvador Vidal-Ortiz \(Links to an external site.\)](#) who will discuss **The Feminist Racial Justice Project of Queer Brown Voices (Links to an external site.)**. **March 28, 2017, 12-1:30 pm.** Maryland Room, Marie Mount Hall.

(Let me know if you are not able to get there at noon!)

*Thursday, March 30th:*

DTWOF: 184, 191, 197-199, 207, 219, 223, 230, 232, 244-245, 261, 263, 267, 271, 275-280, 290-291,

Recommended: 184-291

**Week Eleven-Life Narratives**

*Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>*

No Class –Time to meet with your groups

*Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>*

Research discussion day

Sunday, April 9th--Research Papers Due

## **Week Twelve –Zami**

*Tuesday, April 11th*

Zami

*Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>*

Zami

## **Week Thirteen- Queer Loss: AIDS and Orlando**

Reading Response (due Thursday before class): What is queer grief and how has it shaped our communities, identities, and lives? (Essay/podcast/zine/poem--any of these formats is welcome)

*Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>*

Chapter 4 of Moving Politics by Deborah Gould (ELMS) (note this is long!)

Poetry: Survivable World by Ron Mohring (ELMS)

In class: discussion of TDOR and poem by Essex Hemphill

Recommended: There are two supplemental readings that I recommend for folks who have not taken LGBT 200 or who do not know a lot about the AIDS epidemic, which give the historical context of the AIDS crisis. (The Reed chapter is long--but the first few pages give the most important info).

*Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>*

[Pulse, Beat, Rhythm, Cry: Orlando and the queer and trans necropolitics of loss and mourning \(Links to an external site.\)](#)(online)

[Before Orlando: Histories of Violence \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (online)

[Pulse and the Power of Queer Grief \(Links to an external site.\)](#)(online)

## **Week Fourteen-Growing Older/In Sickness and Health**

Reading Response: How might we organize society differently in order to attend to the needs of folks with disabilities, elders, and folks who are chronically ill? (Can be essay form, or a more creative form)

*Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>*

Eli Clare, Disability and Queerness

DTWOF: 290-308, 312

Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>

[The Challenge of Being Transgender in a Nursing Home \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (Slate, online)

[LGBTQ Seniors Face Discrimination \(Links to an external site.\)](#)(online)  
[To Survive on this Shore \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (portrait project)

## **Week Fifteen--Legacies and Presentations**

Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> Queer Futures

Page 1 of Jose Munoz's "Cruising Utopia" (I uploaded the whole chapter, but only page one is required for class) (ELMS)

World-Making and Everyday Interventions--intro for QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking (ELMS)

Recommended: Donna Haraway's "Sowing Worlds" (ELMS)

Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>

Group Presentations

## **Week Sixteen- Presentations and Wrap Up**

Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>

Group Presentations

Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>

Last Day of classes