

## **WGSS 351/FMSC 320: Representations of Trans Identities**

Spring 2020

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Office hours: Mondays 3-4:30 pm; Tuesday 10:30-11:45;  
Wednesday 10:30-12:30 pm; and by appointment

### **Course Description**

It is said that we have reached a "transgender tipping" point regarding trans representation in the media over the last ten years, as trans people in the United States and around the world have become increasingly visible to a public audience. This course challenges the idea that trans people are a "new" twenty-first century phenomenon and introduces students to examples of gender non-conformity and transgender identities across time and cultures. The first half of the course examines representations of trans people within sexology, psychology, the medical archive, and the mainstream media, while the second half delves more deeply into material created by trans people themselves. We will read memoirs and comics, watch films, and listen to podcasts produced for, by, and about trans people.

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.

### **Required Reading:**

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stonebutch Blues*. 1993. (PDF available at <https://www.lesliefeinberg.net/> Used copies available on various sites online. Bookstore also will have a limited number of printed copies).

Tobia, Jacob. *Sissy: A Gender Coming of Age Story*. 2019 **ISBN-13:** 978-0735218826. (NOTE the paperback version is coming out March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we won't read this text till after Spring Break if you want to wait for the paperback to come out).

Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness*. 2014. **ISBN-13:** 978-1476709130

Recommended: *The Gender Book*, found at TheGenderbook.com.

Additional readings will be included on Moodle.

You do not have to buy the books, but you are responsible for reading them. You are welcome to share texts, or borrow from the library. I am open to you purchasing E-copies of the texts, as I know that the e-texts are often much cheaper than print, and you are welcome to bring in a laptop or e-reader if you are reading the text there, as long as you are not distracting yourself or others with inappropriate use of your device. Please do your best to have a copy of the text during class time.

### **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 your thoughts on the topic and texts. While class is primarily discussion-based, I will also lead mini-lectures, and students will participate in a variety of interactive games, dialogues, improv role-playing, and art-based activities.

Creating a community of learning means that we must be respectful of each other and build 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, and this can be a positive, productive part of learning! However, we must always be open to listening carefully to each other and we treat each other kindly and with respect.

This course is unique because there is usually a mix of students—some who already have some knowledge about trans identities, and others who don't know much at all, and want to learn. Remember that we all have something to contribute, every one of us is learning (even me!), and it is okay to ask questions. Together we can create a 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**

For any immediate concerns, I am available after class and during my office hours. For something less urgent, or which occurs to you at a later date, you can email me at [voorisj@dickinson.edu](mailto:voorisj@dickinson.edu).

*Moodle:* An updated syllabus, and course assignments will be kept on Moodle. Most of the readings will be from your textbook with the exception of some additional texts.

*Email:* Please send email to [voorisj@dickinson.edu](mailto:voorisj@dickinson.edu) if you have questions/comments about the course, readings, or want to make an appointment with me. Please only email me using your Dickinson email address. It will be helpful if you include the course number and a relevant subject heading with your email. **Example:** WGSS 351, question about Fausto-Sterling reading

Note that email sent after 7 pm may not be responded to until the morning, and I will not be checking email frequently on the weekends. Please give me at least 24 hours to respond, however, **if you don't hear from me in 48 hours, do send a reminder email!** (Note: if you email after 7 pm on Friday, I may not reply until Monday morning).

## **Electronic Policy—Let's Have a Conversation About It**

Laptops/phones/tablets can be useful for taking notes, especially for students with difficulty writing by hand. They can also be used to look up information on google during class discussions. And, it saves trees and money to read E-texts and PDFs.

However, they are also a source of distraction, and it is worth noting that some studies (<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>) shows that many 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 distract and affect the learning of other students.

For these reasons, I ask that students think carefully about their use of laptops/electronics in class. It is easier for us all to be present in the room with each other if we do not have screens

distracting us. However, I understand that laptops can be a necessary, even vital, part of learning for students, and I am open to their presence. At the beginning of the semester we will have a conversation as a class about the use of electronics and make a class policy about them.

## **Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to [www.dickinson.edu/access](http://www.dickinson.edu/access), email [access@dickinson.edu](mailto:access@dickinson.edu), call (717)245-1734, or go to ADS in Old West (lower level), Room 005.

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your Blue Forms. If you will need test proctoring from ADS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice.

## **Graded Assignments**

15 % Class Discussion/Attendance

5% Active Engagement Points

20 % Personal Reflection Essay

20 % Analytical Essay

40% Group Curation Project

## **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 Moodle.

## **Graded Assignments**

**15% 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 through 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, meaning you do not have to even let me know why you have missed and it will not affect your participation grade. Otherwise, please let me know in writing why you are missing class (sickness, family emergency, and religious holidays are excused). If you miss 2 or more classes in a row, please set up a meeting with me to discuss how you will catch up. 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.

**5% Active Engagement Points:** These are gained through a variety of ways—coming to talk with me during my office hours, attending trans-related events on campus or in Carlisle/Harrisburg, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video, etc.

**20 % Personal Narrative Essay:** In this essay you will pick a specific experience/memory related to your gender or sexuality, and analyze it using class texts. If you do not feel comfortable writing about yourself, you can analyze an event or experience in the life of a famous trans person. If you decide to do this option, come talk to me about what that might look like. 3-5 pages. Due: Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm

**20% Media Analysis Essay:** You will choose a piece of media or literature which features transgender people, and/or is created by trans people, and write an analytical essay that examines the narratives and representations about gender and trans identities within this piece of media/literature. 4-5 pages.

**40% GROUP PROJECT:** Together as a class, working in a coalition of small groups/individuals, you will create an end of the semester project that show-cases the work of trans artists/creators/writers. The exact shape/form of the project will be up to you, and you will receive a class grade, a group grade, and an individual grade.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE:

\*professor reserves the right to make changes with advance notice\*

#### **Week One: Introductions**

Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to the syllabus and class

Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>

Sandy Stone's "The Empire Strikes Back"

Eli Clare's "Disability and Queerness"

Gloria Anzaldua's "La Conciencia de La Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness"

Recommended: Cathy Cohen's "Punks, Bull-daggers and Welfare Queens"

## **Week Two: Thinking Sex/Gender and Trans/Cis**

Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>

Excerpts from *Evolution's Rainbow*, Joan Roughgarden  
Animal Transsex, Myra Hird  
*Sex/Gender*, Chapters 1-4, Anne Fausto-Sterling

Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>

*The Gender Book* excerpt  
Navigating Masculinity as a Black Trans Man, Kai Green  
The Education of Little Cis, A. Finn Enke

Recommended: Are Lesbians Women? By Jacob Hale  
Toward a Theory of Gender, McKenna and Kessler

## **Week Three: Histories**

Monday, February 3rd

Towards a Transgender Archaeology, Mary Weismantel  
Extermination of the Joyas, Deborah A. Miranda

Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>

Chapter 2 and 3 of *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker  
The Good Transsexual, Emily Skidmore

Art: [Know Your Trans History by Noah Grigni](#), and [Marsha P. Johnson](#) by Micah Bizant

Recommended: Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s, Finn Enke

## **Week Four: Stone Butch Blues (content note, sexual assault implied, police brutality)**

Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>

Stone Butch Blues part 1

Recommended: Of Catamites and Kings, Gayle Ruben

Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>

Stone Butch Blues Part 2

Personal Essay due: Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm

## **Week Five: Medicalization and Surgery**

Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>

Psychopathia Sexualis, Richard Von Kraft-Ebing

Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an intersexed person, Garfinkle  
Untranslatable Subjects: Travesti Access to Public Health Care in Brazil, Alvaro Jarrín

“And yet” by Eli Clare (poem to read in class)

Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>

Mutilating Gender, Dean Spade  
Spider City Sex, Eva Hayward

Romance of the Amazing Scalpel, Aren Z. Aizura

## **Week Six: Trans Visibility and Cultural Production**

Monday, February 24th

The Known Unknowns, Introduction to *Trap Door* edited by Reina Gossett et al.  
In Lipstick and Heels: Trans Women in the Media, Julia Serano, from *Whipping Girl*  
Look, No Don’t! The Politics of Visibility, Jamison Green  
Trans Girl Next Door, [The Media](#)

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

Cautious Living, Black Trans Women & the Politics of Documentation, from *Trap Door Major!* (movie) (CN: mention of sexual assault, police brutality, suicide)

Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:59 pm: Media Analysis Essay Due

## **Week Seven: Narratives of Violence \*CN: death, violence, police brutality\***

Monday, March 2<sup>rd</sup>

Transsexual Necropolitics, *Jin Haritaworn and C. Riley Snorton*  
The Calculus of Pain, from *Imagining Transgender*, David Valentine

Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>

Their Laws Will Not Make Us Safer, Dean Spade, *Against Equality*  
Cece McDonald’s Prison Letters “Go Beyond Our Natural Selves” *Trans Studies Quarterly* May 2017.

**Media Analysis Essay due: Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm**

**WEEK EIGHT: SPRING BREAK**

## **Week Nine: Telling Our Own Stories: Autobiography**

Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>

*Redefining Realness*

Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>

*Redefining Realness*

## **Week Ten: Autobiography Continued**

Monday March 23<sup>rd</sup>

*Sissy: A Coming of Age Story*

Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>

*Sissy: A Coming of Age Story*

## **Week Eleven: Creating Our Own Spaces: Ball Room Culture**

Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>

Paris is Burning (movie)

Article TBD

Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>

episode of Pose

Article TBD

## **Week Twelve: Trans Relationships**

Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>

Intimate Relationships, from *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*

Problematic Men: <http://transgirlnextdoor.tumblr.com/post/99672717489>  
Catcalling: <http://transgirlnextdoor.tumblr.com/post/95662262474>

Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>

Sexuality, from *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*

Sexuality: <http://www.transgirlnextdoor.com/post/132508357339>  
[How to Make Love to a Trans Person \(poem\)](#)

## **Week Thirteen: Trans Reproduction and Family**

Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

Beyond Mom 'n' Pop

“Donor Mom” by Tobi Hill-Myers

Yes, Trans Women Can Breastfeed, Here’s How.

"Breastfeeding, Bias, and Men Who Give Birth: Q&A With Trans Activist Trevor MacDonald

Recommended: How to Be a Girl Podcast: Maybe (Moodle)

Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>

TBD

**Week Fourteen: Queer and Trans Ecologies**

Monday, April 21st

Photography by queerquechua and queernature (photo and description)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BmTY5mShzPl/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bk8oLgfBxqZ/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BjzaC1uh2Nh/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BkIHd1HhJA3/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BsYG-B8h-Fi/>

Photography by Shoog McDaniel

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BpAIcBWF5my/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BmLq4HXlyf6/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BhCATYoF4PW/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BpMzf5jFusB/>

Recommended: Intro to *Emergent Strategy* by Adrienne Marie Brown

Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Eli Clare’s Interludes I-VI in *The Marrow’s Telling*  
Beyond Community, *True Sex*, by Emily Skidmore (MOODLE)

**Week Fifteen: Showcase and Class Wrap-Up**

Monday, April 27th

Class Show-case

Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>

Final Class Wrap-Up