

WGSS 290: Trans Representations

Fall 2021: M/W 7:00-8:30 pm
JSC 152

Taught by: Dr. Jess River Vooris AKA "Prof V" or "Dr. River"
Pronouns: they/them [\[learn more here\]](#)
Email: jessicavooris@depauw.edu

Office: Asbury Hall 205C
Zoom Office: ID: 440 702 2754
Office Hours: 9 am-noon on Mondays/Wednesdays and 4-6 pm on Thursdays.

COURSE DESCRIPTION/REQUIREMENTS:

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 historical archives, the fields of sexology and 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 (virtual or in person) as I would love to learn more about what you are thinking and learning, and am happy to answer any question you have about class and class materials.

Be sure to let me know during office hours or via email if you need support, or any specific accommodations, the sooner the better. Students with disabilities or who need time from class to observe religious holidays, please contact me as soon as you can to make any arrangements necessary.

Acknowledgements: Thank-you, Katie King for your examples of feminist pedagogy, and for teaching me about the importance of playing around and taking risks when learning. Thank-you also to Rebecca Barrett-Fox and Mimi Khúc for your guidance around accessible teaching, and Lydia Wilson Marshall for Depauw-specific resources.

Class Materials:

We will be reading from three books, one you are required to buy/borrow, the other two are recommended as we will only be reading selections and PDFs will be available for those chapters without you needing to purchase or borrow them yourselves. Feel free to choose the format that works best for you for these texts: print, kindle, or audio, all are fine. Other course readings will be available on Moodle.

Required:

- Callender, Kacen. *Felix Ever After*. Balzer and Bray, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-0062820266

Recommended:

- Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness*. 2014. ISBN-13: 978-1476709130
- Feinberg, Leslie. *Stonebutch Blues*. 1993. NOTE: a PDF is available for free at <https://www.lesliefeinberg.net/> Print copy also available through lulu.com. And used copies are available on various sites online (although some of them are expensive!). We will only be reading selections of this text, but it might be worth getting a print version if you have a hard time reading a lot of text online.

You will also need to access the following movies/tv shows. If you will have difficulty accessing any of these, please let me know ASAP.

- Major! Directed by Annalise Ophelian. 2015. [Available for rent on Amazon for \$2.99]
- Paris is Burning. Directed by Jennie Livingston. 1990 [Available for free thru DePauw's Kanopy account]
- Disclosure. Directed by Sam Feder. 2020. [Streaming on Netflix]
- Pose. Created by Ryan Murphy et al. [Streaming on Netflix]

How the course will be organized

- This is a discussion course that meets on campus twice a week

Each week students should:

- Carefully read/watch/listen to the class materials and take notes on them
- Come to class prepared to talk and share your thoughts with others

This course is unique because

- There is usually a mix of students from different years, majors, backgrounds
- Some folks already have knowledge about LGBTQ identities and communities, and others don't know much about LGBTQ people and history
- Together we will create an open community where we can learn from each other

Creating a community of learning means we must:

- Build a space where each member of the class feels comfortable about sharing their thoughts.
- Understand that we may not always agree, but that disagreement can be a positive, productive part of learning
- Listen carefully to each other and treat each other kindly and with respect.
- Remember that we all have something to contribute, every one of us is learning (including me!) and it is okay to ask questions.
- Understand that learning means taking risks, trying new things, playing around,

guessing at times, making mistakes and recognizing that sometimes we won't get it right the first time.

Note: Part of my role as a professor is to guide your learning. I may interrupt if someone is using outdated language or saying something harmful, and I may suggest a way of re-wording a question or statement to be more inclusive. Please take these moments as an opportunity to grow and learn—hopefully this is one reason you are in this course!

Communication for the Course

Moodle: Class readings, an updated syllabus, course schedule, and announcements will be kept on Moodle.

Note: Moodle keeps track of when you log in, what links you click, and how long you keep any part of the Moodle open. This means I can tell if you haven't logged in for a week, or if you never opened a particular file.

Email: Please send email to jessicavooris@depauw.edu if you have questions/comments about the course, readings, or want to make an appointment to meet with me. Please include the course number and a relevant subject heading with your email. **Example:** WGSS 290A, question about Susan Stryker reading

Note: 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! (If you email after 7 pm on Friday, I may not reply until Monday morning).

On Campus Classroom Policies

- Per Depauw policy, masks are required in class.
- Please respect physical distancing as much as possible, while also interacting with the space in a way that best meets the needs of your body. You are welcome to sit on the floor if you need to, stand up to stretch, or take a brief break from class by stepping outside.
- Please do not eat or drink in class due to covid precautions (you can leave the class to drink/eat if you need to tend to your body in that way)
- Technology: computers/phones are useful tools for learning, but can also be distracting to others. Please be thoughtful and intentional about your use of computers/phones during discussion
- You are welcome to knit, draw, play with (quiet) fidgets, again just be mindful of others

Graded Assignments

20% Class Attendance/Participation

10 % Active Engagement Points

5 % Class Community Points

10% Trans Media Object Report/Presentation

20% Analytical Essay

35% Art/Media Show-case

Grades

A 94 and higher

A- 90-93

B + 87-89

B 84-86

B - 80-83

C + 77-79

C 74-76

C - 70-73

See DePauw's website for more info on [grading scales](#).

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

20% Class Attendance/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.

Important: If you are sick, I want you to prioritize your health (and the health of your classmates) over coming to class. Please stay home and rest if you need to, just communicate with me about why you are missing class. Then, please chat with your classmates about what you have missed, email me if you have specific questions about readings, and/or come visit me during office hours to make up for missed class time. You may also come visit me in my office hours if you are concerned about your participation due to anxiety, neurodivergence, or any other reason.

10% Active Engagement Points These are gained through a variety of ways—the first one is filling out the access survey sent at the start of the semester. Other ways include attending my office hours, attending sexuality/gender-related events on campus, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video that is related to class topics that you have found, or by having a conversation with a friend outside of class about class topics. You will see opportunities for “AEP” listed almost every week on the syllabus. **Due: ½ by Spring Break, rest by finals.**

5% Class Community Points: These are similar to Active Engagement Points and are gained in a variety of ways, but specifically are related to being part of a class community, and taking on an active role in supporting other folks’ learning. This includes annotating the syllabus the first week of class, volunteering to be the class note-taker for students who miss class, being a time-keeper for in-class activities, or catching up students who had to miss class on a particular day, contributing to the class glossary. **Due: End of the semester**

10% Trans Media Report: Over the course of the semester you will be required to analyze a piece of media (of your choice) about trans people or with trans themes. You will fill out a “media report” form that I have posted on Moodle, and share your observations at the start of class. **Due: various dates**, I will post a sign-up sheet on Moodle.

20 % Reflection/Analytical Essay: Option One: In this essay you will pick a specific experience/memory related to your gender or sexuality, and analyze it using class texts. Option Two: You will choose a piece of media about trans/non-binary/gender nonconforming folks, and analyze it using class texts. 3-5 pages. Due mid-March.

35% Final: Art/Media Showcase: Working as individuals or in small groups, you will create an end of the semester project that show-cases original art created by you, or that curates the work of trans artists/creators/writers. The exact shape/form of the project will be up to you! You will also write a 3-5 page paper to accompany the project to explain your artistic choices and to explain how your work connects with class texts and themes. Due Finals Week.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week One: Introductions

Monday, January 31, 2022

- Introduction to the syllabus and class

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

- *The Gender Book* (up to page 41 in the PDF. up to page 18, by the book's number system).

AEP: The second half of *The Gender Book*

Week Two: Thinking Sex/Gender

Monday, February 7, 2022

- "Purportedly [Gendered Body Parts](#)", Dean Spade (2 pages)
- Excerpts from *Evolution's Rainbow*, Joan Roughgarden (8 pages)
- Animal Transsex by Myra Hird (9 pages)

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

- Dismantling Cissexual Privilege by Julia Serano (33 pages)
- [Navigating Masculinity as a Black Trans Man](#), by Kai Green (6 pages)

AEP: Toward a Theory of Gender, McKenna and Kessler, *Sex/Gender* by Anne Fausto-Sterling

Week Three: The Trans/Cis Binary, Trans Histories

Monday, February 14, 2022

- The Education of Little Cis by A. Finn Enke (11 pages)
- [The Performance of Trans Inclusion](#) by Jen Manion (5 pages)
- [Why We Need Pronoun Go-Around](#), Dean Spade (4 pages)

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

- Towards a Transgender Archaeology, Mary Weismantel (13 pages)
- Extermination of the Joyas, Deborah A. Miranda (27 pages)

AEP: Are Lesbians Women? By Jacob Hale

Week Four: Histories Continued

Monday, February 21, 2022

- Chapter 2 of Trans History by Susan Stryker (27 pages)
- The Good Transsexual by Emily Skidmore

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

- Chapter 3 of *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker
- Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s, Finn Enke

AEP: Beyond Community by Emily Skidmore, Gay History Episode about Magnus Hirshfeld

Week Five: Stone Butch Blues

Monday, February 28, 2022

- Selected excerpts

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

- Selected excerpts

AEP: Of Catamites and Kings, Gayle Ruben

Week Six: Medicalization of Trans Identities

Monday, March 7, 2022

- Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies: On Queerness and Disability, Eli Clare (5 pages)
- Mutilating Gender, Dean Spade

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

- Romance of the Amazing Scalpel, Aren Z. Aizura
- Untranslatable Subjects: Travesti Access to Public Health Care in Brazil, Alvaro Jarrín

AEP: Psychopathia Sexualis, Richard Von Kraft-Ebing

Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an intersexed person, Garfinkle

Sunday, March 13th: Essay Due

Week Seven: Trans Visibility and Cultural Production

Monday, March 14, 2022

- The Known Unknowns, Introduction to *Trap Door* edited by Reina Gossett et al. (14 pages)
- Julia Serano, In Lipstick and Heels
- Gawking, Gaping, Staring, by Eli Clare (6 pages)
- Trans Girl Next Door, [The Media](#) (comic)

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

- *Disclosure* on Netflix (100 minutes)

AEP: The Empire Strikes Back, Sandy Stone

WEEK EIGHT: Trans Children and Youth

Monday, March 21, 2022

- “A Place in the Middle” documentary (24 minutes)
- “Raising Ryland” documentary (13 minutes)
- In class: children’s Books: Julian is a Mermaid, I am Jazz, Call Me Max, etc in class.

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

- *Excerpts from Redefining Realness* by Janet Mock

AEP: The movie “Tomboy” on Kanopy, “How to Raise A Girl” Podcast and the [Trans and Non-Binary Kids’ Songs](#) Mix

Week Nine: SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 28, 2022

- NO CLASS

Wednesday, March 30, 2022

- NO CLASS

Week Ten: Narratives of Violence and Survival

Monday, April 4, 2022

- Cautious Living, Black Trans Women & the Politics of Documentation, from *Trap Door*
- The Calculus of Pain, from Imagining Transgender, David Valentine
- Transsexual Necropolitics, Jin Haritaworn and C. Riley Snorton

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

- Major! (movie) (CN: mention of sexual assault, police brutality, suicide)

AEP: Cece McDonald's Prison Letters "Go Beyond Our Natural Selves" *Trans Studies Quarterly* May 2017. (23 pages)

Week Eleven: Creating Our Own Spaces and Representations

Monday, April 11, 2022

- *Paris is Burning* (movie on Kanopy)

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

- 2 episodes of *Pose* (on Netflix)

Week Twelve: Creating Our Own Families: Relationships and Parenting

Monday, April 18, 2022

Readings TBA

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Readings TBA

Week Thirteen: Navigating School and Social Media and More!

Monday, April 25, 2022

Felix Ever After

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Felix Ever After

Week Fourteen: Trans Joy and Resilience

Monday, May 2, 2022

Felix Ever After

Wednesday, May 4, 2022

Felix Ever After

Week Fifteen: Class Wrap-Up

Monday, May 9, 2022

- Queer and Trans Ecologies: Photography by Shooglet and Queer Nature

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

- Final Class Wrap-Up

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES:

Citations:

It is important as scholars and writers that we respect the work of others, and that we make sure to cite our sources. I like to think about citations as a way to give credit, as a way to guide a reader to more information, and as a way to be a part of a community conversation.

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 talk with me.

Access Statement (words by Mimi Khúc):

"Everyone's access needs matter, and we will try collectively to meet them as they arise. Access needs are needs that when met enable participation in the course to the fullest--therefore they are wide-ranging and can be met in wide-ranging, creative ways. I am committed to making participation as accessible as possible. Please let me know if anything comes up that makes participation feel hard. Perhaps you are unused to thinking about access needs--no worries, that's what this course is supposed to help you develop. We are taught not to have needs, that needs mean we are "weak"; resist this impulse. That is the biggest lesson I want you to take away from this class."

"Access, as Aimi Hamraie has taught me, is relational. This means that creating access and accessibility is something we do together, in relationship and community. It requires a shared commitment to each other's wellbeing and participation in the community space, and requires communication and negotiation and flexibility. We learn each other's needs and try to meet them as best we can, so that we can all participate as much as possible in this classroom space. Everyone has access needs, and these needs change over time. I will try to anticipate as much as possible but I cannot know everyone's needs at all times. When you become aware of your access needs, please communicate them to me. I do not require any documentation or working with any university support services--I believe you, and will work with you to generate structures to meet your needs as much as possible. I repeat: I believe you."

LATE POLICY:

I will always accept late work, however, I will not always have time to provide the same level of qualitative feedback on late-work as I provide on work that is turned in on time. Work turned in within 24 hours of the deadline will not be penalized. Work turned in after this 24 hour grace period will lose 10 percent of the full amount of points possible.

FERPA and Confidentiality

FERPA, the federal law that guards student privacy, prohibits me from discussing your performance in this class with anyone except you without your permission, which must be on file with the university, not simply told to me. To ensure compliance with this law, I will not respond to emails from students unless they originate from university email addresses. Out of respect for the privacy of your classmates, do not record or screenshot any part of this class for use outside of this class, even if you omit identifying information about the speaker or poster.

COVID Plans/Remote Teaching Considerations:

My plan is to teach this course in person when possible, while also being mindful of the seriousness of Omicron, and doing my best to prioritize the well-being of everyone in this class. If significant numbers of our class will not be able to attend in person, we will shift to a remote format. Please keep me informed as much as you can, about any missed classes, so I can plan accordingly.

At this point, I am not planning on teaching in a hybrid fashion (in person AND zoom), although I may re-evaluate if the technology in the classroom would allow this. I WILL be building in class note-taking and presentations, and ways for folks to catch up if they have to miss class, and I DO want you to prioritize your safety and health over attending in person. Folks can also Zoom into my office hours if they have specific questions, or want to go over what they missed from class.

Camera/Mic Policies If We Need to Shift to Zoom

- I encourage but do not require cameras to be on
- Please upload a photo or avatar on your zoom profile if possible
- Please mute your mic when not speaking
- Chat/Text is an excellent way to communicate

If possible, I would like for folks to have their cameras on during any video-conference class sessions. For me, personally, it is easier to engage if I can see people's faces on the screen, and this enables us to try to recreate the sense of being in person while connecting remotely.

However, I understand that there are many reasons someone might not want to, or be able to use their camera, therefore, I do not require cameras to be turned on. Likewise, it's lovely to hear your voices, but the chat is also an excellent way to communicate.

How to Get Help: There are different resources for different problems you may encounter. Be sure to contact the right resource to get help. If you contact the wrong person, this will delay getting your problem solved.

- For help understanding a concept from the course, contact me via email.
- For technical problems with Moodle, like not knowing how to upload an assignment, please contact moodle@depauw.edu for support.
- For all other technical problems with online systems at the university, like how to access your grades, contact our Tech Help at HelpDesk@depauw.edu or 765-658-4294.

- For help dropping or adding a course, contact your advisor or the registrar's office at 765-658-4141.
- For help locating resources for your history research project, contact a research librarian by phone at (765) 658-4444, email at library@depauw.edu, or via chat by going to the library's website: <https://libanswers.depauw.edu/>
- For help finding a peer tutor for this class, email acadpeer@depauw.edu for an appointment or sign up here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center/>
- To improve your writing, set up an on-campus or remote meeting with a writing tutor from our writing center. Sign up using the left-hand menu here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center>
- For support with presentations, public speaking, or even discussion skills, you can find a peer tutor through the S-Center: Sign up using the left-hand menu here: <https://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-resource-center>
- For help with food insecurity, there are a few options in Greencastle, including: Putnam County Emergency Food: 600 Tennessee St, Greencastle, IN 46135. Contact: [\(765\) 301-4431](tel:(765)301-4431)
- For an appointment with a mental health counselor, contact our campus counseling center. To schedule an appointment, please email counselingservices@depauw.edu or call 765-658-4268.
- If you would prefer to text someone regarding mental health, text NAMI to 741741. If you would like to talk to someone about domestic violence or sexual assault you can contact:
 - Elizabeth Gertz (Coordinator of Sexual Assault/Interpersonal Violence Prevention/Education, Phone: 765-658-1088, Email: elizabethgetz@depauw.edu)
 - Sarah Ryan, (director of the Women's Center) Phone: 765-658-4173, Email: sryan@depauw.edu.
 - **SASA (Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate) Support is available 24/7 at 765-658-4650.**

If you would like off-campus support: Family Support Services of West Indiana has DV programs: <https://fsswci.net/domestic-violence>. If you want to speak to someone anonymously you can call the National Domestic Violence hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Or RAINN's National Sexual Assualt Hotline: 1-800-656-4673 or chat: <https://hotline.rainn.org/online>

- If there are other resources you need but don't know where to find, please ask! Or if you have any additional resources that you think should be here—please leave info in a comment!