

WTQS/HS 200 Gender, Sexuality and Health

Wells College, Fall 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:50 AM-12:05 PM

Main Campus: Zabriskie Hall, 105

Taught by: Dr. Jess River Vooris aka “Prof V” or “Dr. River”

Pronouns: they/them

Email: jrvooris@wells.edu

Office: 209 Zabriski Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:10-1 pm, Most Fridays 11-noon. Also by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION/REQUIREMENTS:

Gender, Sexuality, and Health builds an intentional bridge between Women’s and Gender Studies and Health Sciences to allow students to examine the deep interconnections between the two. Students will explore the complexities of gender and sexual diversity, as well as the differences between sex and gender. In addition, particular emphasis will be placed on the specific health issues and health disparities faced by women, transgender, gender non-binary, intersex individuals, and LGBTQ people. Students will develop their skills in critical reflexivity—that is—the work of critically analyzing their own social locations as they relate to their engagement with the world; they will also deepen their understandings of intersectionality—that is, the ways in which race, class, abilities, sexualities, gender, religion, age, immigrant status and other identities are interlocking categories of lived experience and directly impact access to healthcare. In doing so, students will deepen their professional competencies as future health professionals and community leaders. (lightly edited from course catalog description). Note: This course as taught by Prof. Vooris explicitly uses a disability justice frame-work to understand health and health-care.

This course will meet twice a week for a discussion-based class.

Please visit me during my office hours (virtual or in person when covid conditions allow) as I would love to learn more about what you are thinking and learning (in this class and at Wells more generally), and I 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, Ayu Saraswati, Heather Rellihan, and Barbara Shaw for your examples of feminist pedagogy, and thank-you to Rebecca Barrett-Fox and Mimi Khúc for your guidance around accessible teaching. This syllabus is developed in part from Mimi Khuc’s “Intro to Disability Justice in a Time of Covid” Fall 2022 syllabus.

Required Materials:

All required readings and course materials will be uploaded to Moodle.

How the course will be organized

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

Each week students should:

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

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 calendar, 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 an email to jrvooris@wells.edu if you have questions/comments about the course, readings, or want to make an appointment with me. It will be helpful if you include the course number and a relevant subject heading with your email. **Example:** WTQS 200, question about *The Gender Book* 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).

Classroom Policies

- In order to protect our classroom community, masks are required in class. Please purchase a pack for the semester. I will have some available if you forget it on the way to class.
- You are welcome to interact with the space in a way that best meets the needs of your body while also respecting others' needs. 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 limit eating or drinking in class due to covid precautions, while also respecting your body's needs.
- 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

10 % Active Engagement Points
20% Participation
20 % Letter
25% educational object/research project
25% learning analysis

10% Active Engagement Points: These are gained through a variety of ways—adding to the collective class notes, attending my office hours or the class TA's office hours, attending sexuality/gender-related campus events, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video that is related to class topics that you have found, having a conversation with a friend outside of class about class topics, and many more. I will list recommended readings/videos/songs/events/etc as AEP opportunities each week. You need to collect 10 AEP over the course of the semester—for each one you will write a short paragraph about what you did/watched/read. You will submit your first 5 AEP by mid-semester, and the other half at the end of the semester.

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.

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 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. Also, please chat with your

classmates about what you have missed, email me if you have specific questions about readings. If you miss more than two classes in a row, you need to contact me about meeting in person or virtually during my office hours to catch up on what you have missed.

20 % Manifesto/Letter: For this assignment you will choose something that you care about from the issues that we have covered in class so far, you will write a letter to someone explaining the issue and what can be done to create change. 2-4 pages. Due Sunday, October 16th

25% Educational Object/Research Project: As an individual, or in groups of 2-4 you will choose an LGBTQ issue, life-stage, or person to research, and then will create something (a book/zine/video/podcast/theatre play) to share what you have discovered with the rest of the class and to educate a wider public. We will host presentations to share your work December 1st and 6th.

25 % Learning Analysis: This will be a synthesis of the course, how you understand it to be constructed, what you see the argument of the course to be, what you learned from your readings, how you place yourself in the course, and overall what you have gained from taking this class. The assignment with full details and requirements will be posted on Moodle, but I will note here that the format of the assignment does not have to be a traditional paper; you can turn in a creative story, a poem, or something of your own choosing, as long as it includes the analysis of the course, answers all the questions required, and shows evidence of understanding key concepts. Written Essay: 4-5 pages. Other formats: Let's chat about length. Due Date: **Final Exam.**

Course Schedule (instructor reserves the right to change with prior notification).

WEEK ONE: Introductory Concepts

Tuesday, August 30

- Syllabus and Class Intro

Thursday, September 1

- Zena Sharman "Queer Alchemy" from *The Care We Dream Of* (20 pages)

WEEK TWO: Gender/Sex

Tuesday, September 6

- *The Gender Book* (39 pages in comic form)
- Dean Spade, "Purportedly Gendered Body Parts" (2 pgs)
- Kai Green, "Navigating Masculinity as a Black Trans Man" (6 pages)

Thursday, September 8

- Emily Martin's "Egg and Sperm" (6 pgs)
- Anne-Fausto Sterling Chapters 1-3 (21 pages)

- In class: Raising an Intersex Child (NBC) (7 mins) and Fertilization Video

AEP: “The Gender Reveal Party” by Jack Astri

WEEK THREE: **Disability Justice**

Tuesday, September 13

- Eli Clare “Stolen Bodies/Reclaimed Bodies: Queerness and Disability”
- Christine Miserandino “Spoon Theory”
- TL Lewis [“Working Definition of Ableism”](#)

Thursday, September 15

- Sins Invalid, “SKIN, TOOTH, AND BONE The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer” (50 pages)

AEP: Crip Camp (documentary on Netflix)

WEEK FOUR: **Crip Time and Claiming Ourselves**

Tuesday, September 20

- Ellen Samuels, “Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time” (5 pages) [\(linked here\)](#)
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, “So Much Time Spent in Bed” from *Care Work* (7 pages)

Thursday, September 22

- Eli Clare, Intro to *Brilliant Imperfection* (2 pages) [\(linked here\)](#)
- Eli Clare, excerpt from *Brilliant Imperfection* “Moving Through Cure” (17 pages)

AEP: Ellen Samuels and Elizabeth Freeman, “Intro to Crip Temporalities,” Johanna Hedva, Sick Woman Theory (9 pages), Mia Mingus, “Access Intimacy, Interdependence, and Disability Justice”

WEEK FIVE: **CLASS CHECK-INS**

- NO CLASS, just individual check-ins with Prof V. [Please sign up here.](#)

WEEK SIX: SPORTS

Tuesday, October 4th

- Kimberly Dark, "**Bodies In Motion: The Complicated Relationship Between Fatness & Athleticism**" (4 pages, [link](#))
- Dorothy Allison, Karate essay, excerpt from "Two or Three Things I Know For Sure" (4 pages)
- Katherine Switzer: First Woman to Run Boston Marathon (video, 3 minutes long) **video**
- S. Mahomed et al, "Global Injustice in Sport: The Caster Semenya ordeal – prejudice, discrimination and racial bias" (7 pages)

Thursday, October 6th

- Sheree Bekker, "**On the history of (the segregation of) women's sport.**" (originally a twitter thread--original [here](#))
- trailer to "Changing the Game" "**Changing the Game**"
- **Sports Ban Map**
- Io Dodds, "Critics accuse trans swimming star Lia Thomas of having an unfair advantage. The data tells a different story"

AEP:

- "unwarranted and invasive scrutiny: Caster Semenya, sex-gender testing and the production of woman in 'women's' track and field" by Aaron Paster
- NCLR "On the Team: Equal Opportunities for Transgender Student Athletes"
- any of the links/references in the above readings!
- Changing the Game (Hulu doc)

WEEK SEVEN: Fatness and The Body

Tuesday, October 11:

FALL BREAK

AEP: Self-care exercise. Take 15-20 minutes to intentionally practice some self-care. Step away from school-work, from social media, from whatever usually keeps you busy, and do something that makes you feel good/relaxed. This will look different to everyone but things to consider: go for a walk, take a luxurious bath, read a book for fun, write in a journal, write some poetry, play with a pet, meditate, call a friend you haven't talked to in a while, do some coloring, work on a puzzle. Then write a sentence about what you did and post it in the AEP assignment.

Thursday, October 13

Aubrey Gordon, excerpts from *What We Don't Talk about When We Talk about Fat* (2020)

- Chapter 2 "Becoming an Epidemic" 25 pages
- Chapter 7 "First, Do No Harm" 12 pages

AEP:

- Intro to Gordon's Book (12 pages)
- any episode of the podcast "**Maintenance Phase**"

WEEK EIGHT: Sex, Relationships, and Asexuality

Tuesday, October 18

- Hanne Blank, "The Love That Could Not Speak Its Name" from *Straight: A Surprisingly Short History* (20 pages)
- Gina De Vries "Unsuitable for Children" (5 pages)

In class: review of different books about reproduction and sex

Thursday, October 20

- Caleb Luna, "Romantic Love is Killing Us" (5 pages)
- Angela Chen, Chapter 2 of *Ace* (15 pages)

AEP:

- [Sexuality and Disability TED Talk](#)
- K.A. "[I am Not Voldemort: An Essay on Love and Amonormativity](#)"

WEEK NINE: Reproductive Justice

Tuesday, October 25

- [The Abortion Underground](#) (18 pages) (audio version available via link, PDF on moodle)
- ["The Problem with Justifying Abortion Care"](#) (8 pages)
- Summary of TurnAway Study (5 pages)

Thursday, October 27

- ["Expectant Black mothers, facing higher mortality rates, turn to doulas and midwives for support"](#) ABC News article (read and watch video at top)
- Jessica Shaw "The Medicalization of Birth and Midwifery as Resistance" (12 pages)

- Natalie Gontcharova, "Please Stop Saying "Natural" when Discussing Childbirth" (4 pages)
- "Trans People Say Medical System isn't Set Up for Their Pregnancies" (approximately ten pages)

AEP:

- This Land Podcast, Season Two, about the Indian Child Welfare Act
- The [Resurgence of the Abortion Underground](#) podcast episode
- How to Build a Three-Parent Family by Angela Chen

WEEK TEN: Environmentalism/Eco-Feminisms and Research Workshop

Tuesday, November 1

- Research Workshop held in library

Thursday, November 3

- ["Expectant Black mothers, facing higher mortality rates, turn to doulas and midwives for support"](#) ABC News article (read and watch video at top)
- Jessica Shaw "The Medicalization of Birth and Midwifery as Resistance" (12 pages)
- Natalie Gontcharova, "Please Stop Saying "Natural" when Discussing Childbirth" (4 pages)
- "Trans People Say Medical System isn't Set Up for Their Pregnancies" (approximately ten pages)
- Reading from *And Baby Makes More*

WEEK ELEVEN: Queer Nature and Mindfulness/Wellness Outdoors and Accessibility

Tuesday, November 8

- Joni Seager, "Rachel Carson Died of Breast Cancer"
- Syren Nagakyrie "Disability is Natural," from *Nature is a Human Right* (10 pages)
- Eli Clare's "The Mountain" from *Exile and Pride* (13 pages)

Thursday, November 10

- Sophia "So" Sinopoulos-Lloyd "Restor(y)ing Place: Tracking and the Necessity of Ecological Intimacy" from *Nature is a Human Right* (8 pages)
- Qing Li, "The Secret Power of the Forest: From a Feeling to a Science" from *Nature is a Human Right* (12 pages)

- Podcast on nature sounds (see Moodle)

AEP:

- *How to Survive the End of the World Podcast*, “Tactical Hope: Interview with Queer Nature” and “The OODA Loop” Interview with Queer Nature
- Leah Lakshmi Piepsna-Samarinha, “Wanting To Run Like Hell, but Leave No-One Behind
- Asters and Goldenrod by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- “When Seeing the World as Alive is Madness” by Pinar Ates Sinopoulos Lloyd

WEEK TWELVE: ACT UP and the AIDS epidemic

Tuesday, November 15

- AIDS documentary (TBD)

Thursday, November 17

- [Pulse and the Power of Queer Grief](#)
- Poems by Ron Mohring

WEEK THIRTEEN: Food and Wellness

Tuesday, November 22

- Lesbian Potluck article
- Podcast: “Ginko Love”
- Vegan essay

Thursday, November 24: THANKSGIVING

WEEK FOURTEEN: Research Presentations

Tuesday, November 29

- Research workshop day

Thursday, December 1

- Research Presentations

WEEK FIFTEEN: CLASS WRAP-UP

Tuesday, December 6

Research Presentations

Thursday, December 8

FINALS:

- Last Day of Classes: Friday, December 9
- Study Period: Dec 10-11th
- Final Due Date for this class: Tuesday, December 13th at noon. (there is no sit-down exam, turn in your final on Moodle by noon).

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 Covid, 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.