

GSWS 2274 Course Syllabus
Intro to Trans Studies
Winter 2023

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Office hours: TBD (in-person)
or by appointment (Zoom)



Course Description

With Time magazine declaring the "Transgender Tipping Point" back in 2014, the recent wave of "parent's rights" rallies and the attack on a gender studies class in Waterloo show the trans question remains hotly contested. To counter current public attitudes towards transgender and gender non-conforming people, we will not only read scholarly texts written by trans people, but also watch films, listen to music, read comics, memoirs, and magazines to theorize trans lives from the lived experience of trans people themselves, centering the experience of the most marginalized within the community: Black, Indigenous, trans women of color (BITWOC) and intersex peoples. From this standpoint, we will take a critical and interdisciplinary look at trans studies across the fields of anthropology, linguistics, evolutionary biology, history, theory, politics, and the arts, culminating in a capstone project that engages with the trans community at large.

Antirequisite(s): Women's Studies 4460F/G if taught in Winter 2013; Women's Studies 3343F/G if taught in Fall 2015. Prerequisite(s): GSWS 1020E or 1.0 from 1021F/G, 1022F/G, 1023F/G and 1024F/G.

Course Objectives

Develop a working understanding of the fields within trans studies from an interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective, centering knowledge production from the most marginalized within trans communities.

Approach the subject matter with humility geared towards listening and learning grounded in standpoint theory. Acknowledge the limits of our own knowledge (professor included) and build appreciation of illegibility, uncertainty, and ambiguity.

Utilize modes of inquiry that are both critical and creative to generate solutions and sustain action-oriented projects within this field of research or equivalent advanced scholarship. Communicate information and analyses orally and in writing to both academic and lay audiences.

Work on various established rhetorical techniques concerning critical evaluation of arguments and abstract concepts, providing context and frameworks for new information as it is received, and mobilizing primary and secondary sources to develop unique thought.

Learning Outcomes

After completing the course, students should have ability to...

1. Sketch an outline of trans studies as a discipline and how it has developed over time, centering Black, Indigenous, transfeminine WOC and intersex thought.
2. Initiate and undertake critical evaluations of arguments for the purpose of proposing creative solutions and intersectional coalition-building.
3. Mobilize trans theory by bringing theory to the real world.

Required Course Materials (Weekly readings are available through OWL):0

cardenas, micha, and Jian Neo Chen, editors. *Transgender Studies Quarterly: Trans Futures*. 4th ed., vol. 6, Duke University Press, 2019.

Mac, Amos, et al., editors. *OP Original Plumbing: The Best of Ten Years of Trans Male Culture*. First Feminist Press edition, Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2019.

Optional Materials:

Arai, Shō. *At 30 I Realized I Had No Gender: Life Lessons from a 50-Year-Old after Two Decades of Self-Discovery*. Translated by Massiel Gutierrez, TokyoPop Inc., 2023.

Sullivan, Lou. *We Both Laughed in Pleasure: The Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan, 1961-1991*. Edited by Ellis Martin and Zach Ozma, First edition, Nightboat Books, 2019.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings	Themes	In Class	Due
1 1/11	What is Transness? Intro to Course	1. C. Jacob Hale: "Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals..." [1pg] 2. Susan Stryker, "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin" [5 pages]	Trans 101 Trans Studies	Gender Aptitude Test	
2 1/18	The Question of Biology	1. Joan Roughgarden, <i>Evolution's Rainbow</i> [excerpts] 2. Fausto-Sterling, Ann: "The Five Sexes" [5pg]	Evo. Biology Gametes Intersex		Forum Post
3 1/25	Indigenous Pasts and Present	1. Evan Towle and Lynne Morgan, "Romancing the Transgender Native" [24pg]	Two-Spirit Anthropology Indigeneity Linguistics	-Trans Masc Studies zine collection	Forum Post

		2. Kai Pyle, “Naming and Claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language” [13pg]		- El Museo Travesti (web archive)	
4 2/1	The Medical Model	1. Sandy Stone, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” [16pg] 2. Jules Gill-Peterson: <i>Histories of the Transgender Child</i> excerpts [~15pg] 3. Mary Maggic, “Open Source Estrogen” [link]	Trans History Medical Model Plasticity		Personal Essay
5 2/8	Trans History	1. Susan Stryker, Ch 2 <i>Transgender History</i> [30pg]	Crossdressing Transvestism	<i>Happy Birthday, Marsha!</i> (15min)	Forum Post
6 2/15	Trans Herstory	1. <i>Paris is Burning</i> (1990, 78min) 2. <i>STAR Manifesto</i> [2pg]	Drag Ballroom Realness	Concept Map Workshop	Forum Post
2/22	No Class	READING WEEK			
7 2/29	Trans Femininities	1. Sean Baker (dir.), <i>Tangerine</i> (2015, 88min) 2. Julia Serano, <i>Whipping Girl</i> Chapter 10: Experiential Gender [10pg]	Transfemininity MTF Estrogen Transmisogyny	- SOPHIE song lyrics activity - Concept Map Sharing	Concept Map
8 3/7	Masc Continuums	1. Lou Sullivan, <i>We Both Laughed in Pleasure</i> [excerpts] 2. Selections from <i>Original Plumbing: The Best of Ten Years of Trans Male Culture</i>	Butch, FTM Trans-masculinity Testosterone	- YouTube Clip viewing	Lead
9 3/14	Visibility & Passing	1. S Bear Bergman, “Passing the Word” [4pg] 2. Toshio Meronek, “Cautious Living Black Trans Women and the Politics of Documentation” [13pg] 3. Carta Monir, “Stealth Mechanic” [link] Recommended: Matti Brice, <i>Mainichi</i> [game] [Windows only]	Passing Stealth Visibility TDOV		Forum Post
10 3/21	Beyond Binaries	1. Mari Wrobi, “Life at the Trans-Intersex Intersection” [7pg] 2. Shou Arai, <i>At 30 I Realized I Had No Gender</i> [excerpts]	Non-Binary Agender Gender Nihilism	<i>What is Gender Nihilism Reader</i> excerpts	Forum Post
11 3/28	Trans Futures	Selections from TSQ Vol 6 Issue 4: <i>Trans Futures</i>			Lead
12 4/4	Conclusion			Final Project Presentations	Present
	No Class	EXAMS			Final Project

Final Grade Breakdown

In-Class Freewriting: 10%

OWL Forum Posts: 30%

Assignments: 30%

Final Project: 30%

All assignments generated for this class will be discussed during class itself. In-class freewriting, forum posts, assignments, and even your final project will be shared with your peers. In this way, none of the work you produce will be created in a vacuum, as it all has an audience of the other students in this class. This helps with engaging the course material critically, and should clarify any questions you have, as the work you bring in will be the germ for class discussion. Since most of the assignments are individual work, sharing with the group will be necessary in order to test your ideas out before your final project. Much of the work generated is low-stakes or graded credit/no credit in order to encourage creativity, experimentation, and most of all, participation.

In-Class Freewriting: 10% (x12/1.2% each)

At the beginning of every class will open with a 5- to 10-minute freewrite to get our juices flowing before we delve into class discussion. You can reflect further on the personal response you posted to the Canvas discussion for the week (see next paragraph), answer responses from other students (which will be projected at the start of class), reflect on how you felt about the readings, jot down further questions if anything was unclear, or really any remarks concerning the readings or the course material at large. This is just an exercise to help get you into a critical mindset before going straight into dissecting the readings via discussion. Ideally, what you generate in the freewrite acts as a jumping-off point for group discussion. Grading for these will merely be based on whether you show up and do it, thus the content of your responses will not be graded (unless you don't write anything, or if your response is unrelated).

OWL Forum Posts: 30% (x6/5% each)

On OWL, prompts and questions will be posted that address that week's general topic and/or reading assignment at six points across the term. As a rule of thumb, any week you have a regular assignment due, there will be no forum post due; conversely, every week you do not have an assignment due, a forum post is due instead. Posts should be submitted at least 2 hours before class each week so that we may refer to them during class discussion and respond to each other's comments and lines of questioning. Please respond in paragraph form in a critical fashion in as little as 4 sentences and topping out at 250 words (2 paragraphs). Posts can be replies to a classmate's comments. Posts may also be formatted as a series of questions to be taken up in class (but written in good faith; see class ethos section). These posts will be credit/no credit, so as long as the post is something remotely relevant, it will receive full marks.

Assignments: 30%

#1 Personal Essay 5% (x1 1-2 pages)

Write an expository essay on your own personal relationship with gender. This can be an expansion of the personal reflection paragraph written for the Gender Aptitude Test as taken in the first week of class. Topics include:

-Growing up as a certain gender

- Feelings of gender alignment or misalignment
- Thoughts about gender roles
- First time you met a queer or trans person
- Coming out as queer or trans (either you or a friend or relative)
- Where your interest in trans studies comes from

Goals for this assignment include:

- Getting comfortable talking about gender and using your own relationship with gender as a jumping-off point for the research you will engage in during the course.
- Get to know yourself and what you would like to become more knowledgeable about over the course of your studies.
- Writing as healing so that you can come into class with fresh eyes open to understanding gender in new ways.
- Letting go of preconceived notions surrounding gender so that you can assess the readings with fresh eyes.

#2: Concept Map 10% (x1 11x17 page)

In week 7, students will turn in a concept map, figured on one single-sided 11x17 page to be posted in the classroom. Students will pick one key concept from the previous 6 weeks of material, which can also be pulled from the syllabus “theme” column, and create a visual map including a focus question that links the term chosen to other terms in the course. These ideas can be linked hierarchically, thematically, rhizomatically, or otherwise, but must be portrayed visually, whether by hand, digitally, or as a collage. Further directions for this assignment and examples will be shared in class during the “Concept Map Workshop” in week 6 (see schedule). Terms will be chosen in class during week 6.

Goals for this assignment include:

- Linking concepts across readings
- Deeper understanding of one field of inquiry relevant to student’s personal interests and studies
- Engage visual and tactile learning to apply ideas in a hands-on format, then share what was learned with peers

#3: Discussion Lead 15% (x2/7.5% each)

In weeks 8 and 11, each student gets to choose a reading to focus on from two anthologies: first, the Original Plumbing magazine anthology, then the Transgender Studies Quarterly *Trans Futures* issue. If numbers allow, students can form groups to present certain readings together, but the goal is to cover the whole volume as a group.

The discussion lead itself is rather casual. Students will take a few minutes to summarize the content and connect with other readings in the course or to other readings within the volume. Then students will lead a 10-minute discussion on their findings, ideally engaging the whole group. The professor might step in as well to help stimulate discussion if the other students aren’t biting.

The only thing to turn in for this segment is an outline of the reading that you will bring to class. Throughout the first part of the term, the professor will be modeling how to create an outline for each reading we cover, so by week 8 students should have a good idea of how to create theirs and what to include.

Goals for this assignment include:

- Facilitating open conversation with peers and professor as a fellow theorist
- Fostering critical thinking when considering other's ideas, both a writer's or your peers and professor
- Gaining experience in leadership and public speaking

Final Project: 30%

Option 1

Go out in the world and use what you have learned in our class to make connections either locally in London or with trans scholars across the globe, then report what you experienced and learned back to the class. The last week of class, students will present their projects to the group via a research poster akin to what one would present at a conference. Prepare an informal "pitch" to introduce what your project was and what you learned to passers-by. If you have an idea for a final project that isn't on the topic list, please e-mail me to approve your idea before moving forward with your project.

Here are some activities you can engage in:

- Visit the Pride Library
- Attend a drag show
- Attend an event organized or promoted by HALO, AWOL (Adventurous Women of London), or Pride USC
- Interview the organizer of Camp Wendake or Pride London
- Go to a Forest City Derby Girls or London Middlesex Roller Derby game
- Go to a performance of the Pride Men's Chorus London
- Interview the DJ of Rainbow Radio on 94.9 Radio Western
- Go to a meeting of CCLC-LGBTQ Social/Support Group, Coming Out Over Coffee, Forest City Men's Group, Forest City Queerios, Rainbow Optimist Club, Trans* London
- Interview someone who works for Intersex London or Rainbow Health Ontario
- Plan your own drag show or queer meetup
- Volunteer for PFLAG, HIV/AIDS Connection
- Interview a trans artist (whether a filmmaker, drag queen or king, weaver, etc)

Goals for the Final Project:

- Gain new comfort surrounding discussions of transness outside of the seminar
- Engage with the public in order to share what you learned in the seminar
- Learn more about trans culture in a hands-on way and relate lessons surrounding trans liberation to your own life

Option 2: Creative

Make a comic, manifesto, short film, short story, podcast, video essay, zine, performance piece, pop-up book, or some other form of creative work inspired by the themes of the course. You could make a work about some gender feels™ you may have had, expand an idea from a canvas post into a longer artistic meditation, record a conversation with another student in class, etc, etc. The last week of class, students will present their projects to the group via a research poster akin to what one would present at a conference. Prepare an informal “pitch” to introduce what your project was and what you learned to passers-by. If you have an idea for a final project that isn’t on the above list, please e-mail me to approve your idea before moving forward with your project.

Constraints:

- 3-5 pages of comics
- 5-10 pages of writing (creative or non-fiction)
- 3-5 minutes of video or sound-based art

Goals for the Final Project:

- Use course materials as a jumping-off point for your own practice
- Synthesize themes/ideas from other artists and theorists using your own voice
- Using the energy generated from the writings you did throughout the semester to power your creative thought process

Class Expectations

Every week we will meet starting at 4:30PM on Thursdays and close at 7:20PM. We will open the first 10 minutes of class with a freewrite based on a prompt, typically aligning with the week’s content and/or online discussion. Paper will be provided, but it is suggested you bring your own pen or pencil (however, I always bring pens in case anyone forgets). Most freewrites encourage writing in a casual style and from a first-person perspective, unlike our other formal assignments, and should be approached with a spirit of creativity and self-discovery. These freewrites will be timed and completed after 10 minutes, but will only be marked for completion and will not be shared. Class attendance is taken via the freewrite. If you don’t turn in a freewrite, then you will take a percentage hit. Freewrites will be turned in to me at the end of class.

After the freewrite, we will typically have a combination of lecture and activities typically accompanied by some kind of screening. Most days, one part of lecture will be sharing our results from the assignment due that week or discussing questions raised on OWL through the forum function. The other part will be a detailed breakdown of the reading for that week where we will go over the arguments made and create an outline together.

Every week I will upload the slides from lecture after class for you to review at your leisure. At the end of the day, what you get out of class time is what you make of it, so I want to keep as open a classroom policy as possible to make room for all types of learners.

Email Policy

I typically respond to emails within 1 week of receiving (most of that time is spent considering how to respond, for I read on delivery). If you want a right-away answer, talk to me after class. Alternatively, type “URGENT” in the subject box so I can prioritize replying sooner. Also, if you don’t hear back from me after a week, feel free to email me again in case I missed it.

Make-up Work Policy

Please shoot me an email or come talk to me after class, ideally *before* the assignment is due. No need to fabricate an elaborate excuse: I generally will allow a resubmit no questions asked. Additionally, students will not be penalized for late work. The only makeup work I won’t take are OWL forum posts, since they are meant to generate discussion and not be read in a vacuum. The rule of thumb is to not use my magnanimity as an excuse to procrastinate or shirk your duties as a student, but instead see it as a show of respect towards your other obligations and life outside of this class.

Plagiarism Policy

Considering for many this will not be your first college-level class, by now you should understand the pressures of higher education and that juggling a big courseload may create issues in time management. We will take time in class to start working on new assignments to brainstorm ideas or start an outline, so if you foresee issues with an assignment, please let me know and we can work out alternate deadlines. We can discuss this during my office hours or via email. If you still need time beyond what is given to finish an assignment, that can be solved without resorting to cheating. Working with a writing tutor through the school (see above “Resources” section), talking with an academic counsellor for personal issues or an academic advisor for program-related ones, dropping a class, or, the easiest option, simply asking for an extension are all alternatives to cheating that retain your integrity while alleviating your workload.

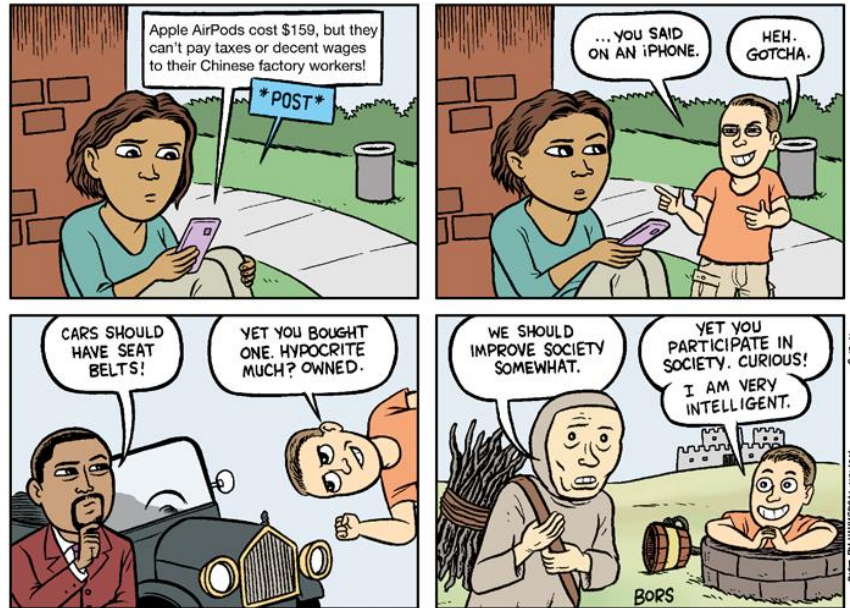
Use of machine-generated text is monitored using multiple software including those built into Turnitin on OWL. If I receive an assignment that may not be entirely written by a human, you will receive a zero, a warning, and an offer to revise and resubmit with no penalty (e.g., you can turn in a new essay and your marks for it will not be reduced as a form of punishment). For your second infraction, you will receive, sign, and return an Academic Offence Form that I will provide to you that describes the cheating scenario and acknowledges you have received a prior written warning. This form will go on your permanent record with the school. Again, your assignment will receive a zero, but this time there will be no offer to resubmit. For your third strike, you’re out. You fail the course. If you execute academic offences in other classes, your academic advisor and the director of your program decide whether you will be suspended or expelled altogether. Therefore, the consequences of plagiarism are quite serious, and should be avoided. Of course, alternatives are just one conversation away, whether with me, a colleague, your academic advisor, or otherwise.

Class Ethos

- If you don't think you belong here, or simply don't vibe with me as a prof, reach out to your academic advisor. I'd rather you drop the course after week 1 than be miserable the whole semester. I promise, I will not be offended.
- In class, pay attention and be respectful of my and your peer's time, whether you are taking up too much space or are a space cadet. If you're not attending class in good faith, simply don't come.
- Read your peers' input in the kindest light possible. The group will not have the same level of familiarity with correct terminology or language around these sensitive topics, and as we are learning together remember to leave your pitchforks online.
- If you think you're not understanding something, please speak up! Odds are if you are asking yourself a question, someone else in the class is wondering the same thing. That's not to say "there are no stupid questions" (see: devil's advocate policy below), but if you have a genuine question that is brought up in good faith it is always welcome.
- If you think you're the smartest person in the room, leave that attitude at the door. We all are at different levels of experience with the material, and we all have room to improve our understanding.
- We're all in this together. This is as much your course as it is my course. Any suggestions for improvements are encouraged, and most material and even deadlines are flexible if brought to my attention and posed to the group.
- Do the best you can in the time you have available. Submitting something that isn't perfect is better than submitting nothing; *some* effort is better than *no* effort. And, of course, it takes more effort to cheat than it does to just do your own work.

Prof Elk's Ground Rules

- Zero tolerance for sexism, racism, classism, xenophobia, islamophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, ableism, transphobia, et. al (includes talking over others/minimizing, playing devil's advocate, whataboutism [see cartoon below], or "it's just a joke" type behavior). This applies to your writing as well.



Matt Bors, “Mr Gotcha”, published on thenib.com (2016)

- Feel free to ask me or a peer to repeat or rephrase what we just said if you can’t hear or if you don’t understand. This applies if I use a term you don’t know; I’m happy to provide a definition, so please raise your hand and interrupt me.
- Feel free to leave the classroom to use the bathroom whenever; you don’t need my permission. That goes for any sort of personal issue that crops up during class that requires your absence like refilling a water bottle or taking a phone call. I won’t ask because it’s not my business. However, packing up and leaving while I’m actively lecturing is extremely distracting and I kindly ask that you refrain from doing so. If you know in advance you have to leave early, let me know before class so I’m not surprised. Ideally, you should sit next to the exit during class so other students aren’t distracted nor follow suit. If you spontaneously need to leave due to an unforeseen event or emergency, if possible, please wait for the break between lectures or an activity break to leave.
- Considering this class might be during your usual mealtime, if you need to eat something just step out for a minute or wait till the break so as to not distract other students.

Collective Ground Rules

Length of Break

Name/Pronoun Tags

Technology Policy (phones, laptops)

Call-ins

Raising Hands

Group Chat

Other Goals/Objectives/Concerns