

Professor Jackie Orr  
Maxwell 310C  
Office Hours: Tues. 11:30-1:30  
Ph: 443-5758 (o)  
jtorr@maxwell.syr.edu

T.A. Tre Wentling  
Maxwell 321  
Wed. 12-2:00

tlwentli@maxwell.syr.edu

**SEXUALITIES, GENDERS, BODIES**  
FALL 2010  
LGBT Studies/QSX112



Hannah Hoch, *Equilibre* (1925)

Course description: This course explores sexualities and genders as central to understanding the complexity of our embodied experiences, and the intimate workings of power and desire in our everyday lives. We will analyze how people have creatively struggled to give name to the enormous range of experiences and embodiments that get

connected to ‘gender’ (and its transformations) and ‘sexuality’ (and its elaborations). We will examine some of the many ‘body languages’—poetry, theory, film, history—that have been built to celebrate, refuse, or understand the stories of sexuality and gender that we inhabit, and that inhabit us. We will attend to the powerful cultural and historical forces that shape what gets to count as a ‘normal’ body (or gender, or sexuality), and what gets discounted and disciplined as ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant.’ And we will develop a critical understanding of how a social constructionist perspective can be useful in thinking about genders and sexualities as *produced by* complex webs of cultural, institutional, and historical relationships which can—and do—transform over time.

Throughout the intellectual and embodied journey of this class, we will try to encourage and teach each other to be as curious, as passionate, and as thoughtful as we can be about issues that are sometimes difficult, and sometimes exhilarating, to examine in an academic setting.

Some key questions the course will address include:

- How do race, class, and dis/ability intersect with experiences of genders and sexualities?
- What happens to our imaginations and our embodied experience if we move beyond—or deconstruct—binary and dualistic conceptions of sex (male/female), gender (masculine/feminine), and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual)?
- How do gender and sexual differences get transformed into social inequalities and differential access to belonging and empowerment?
- Can human bodies and desires really be classified as either ‘normal’ or ‘deviant’ in relation to sexualities and genders? What ideologies inform these languages of classification and the practices of naming?
- What are the strengths and the limits of our attempts to create individual or collective ‘identities’ around genders and sexualities?

This course, together with QSX 111 (Queer Histories, Communities, and Politics), is a required course for all LGBT Studies minors. The class is designed for LGBT Studies minors as well as interested students who may or may not identify as LGBTQ students and who may or may not have a background in LGBTQ studies. It is our collective task to create a classroom experience that serves each of us in ways that are meaningful, provocative, and useful!

Required texts: Two books for the course will be available at the SU Bookstore in the Schine Center:

1. **Required text:** Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Press, 2004.
2. **Optional text:** Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999.

All other readings will be available electronically to students via Blackboard@SU. Readings on Blackboard are marked in the syllabus with **[BB]**

Course Expectations & Assignments: Your sustained engagement and participation in class is of course critical! That engagement begins outside the classroom, as you study and read the assigned texts. Please come to each class having carefully read all assigned material, prepared to question, critique, discuss, and think out loud about them.

Course assignments include two short essays, an in-class exam, a public engagement exercise, and a group project. Clear guidelines for each of these assignments will be handed out in class. Students must complete all five assignments in order to pass the course.

Assignment due dates and weightings in your final grade:

**September 27** – Essay #1 due **(15%)**

**October 18** – Essay #2 due **(20%)**

**November 10 (or earlier)** – Public Engagement assignment due **(5%)**

**November 17** – In-class exam **(25%)**

**December 6 & 8** – Collaborative group projects presented **(20%)**

Class participation and attendance **(15%)**

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes; attendance will be taken each class period. It is impossible to seriously engage with course materials without being present in class! You are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. More than six unexcused absences, and you risk failing the course. Student athletes must present documentation in advance of athletic activities requiring that you miss a class.

## **WEEK #1    QUESTIONS OF DESIRE**

You were born queer with the dream  
of flying  
from an attic with a trap  
door    opening

--Cherrie Moraga  
*Loving in the War Years*

### **Mon., August 30**

Openings and Introductions to the course

### **Wed., September 1**

Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (1984). Reprinted in Abelove, Barale, Halperin, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 339-343 [BB].

Boots Potential, "Monster Trans" in Morty Diamond, ed., *From the Inside Out: Radical Gender Transformation, FTM and Beyond*. San Francisco: Manic D Press, pp. 32-39 [BB].

Stephen Pfohl, "My First Confession," in Arthur and Marilouse Kroker, eds., *The Hysterical Male: New Feminist Theory*. New York: Macmillan, 1991, p. 187 [BB].

Eric Stanley, "Race Haunted, Otherwise," in *Nobody Passes*, op. cit., pp. 208-217 [BB].

Riki Anne Wilchins, "Eroticism: On the Uses of Difference" in *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1997, pp. 159-172 [BB].

## **WEEK #2    QUESTIONS OF POWER**

We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power; on the contrary...It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim...to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges...

--Michel Foucault  
*History of Sexuality, Vol. I*

### **Mon., September 6 – no class – Labor Day!**

### **Wed., September 8**

Riki Anne Wilchins, "Changing the Subject" in Nestle, Howell, Wilchins, eds., *GenderQueer: Voices From Beyond the Sexual Binary*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2002, pp. 47-54 [BB].

Steven Seidman, "In the Closet" in *Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life*. NY: Routledge, 2002, pp. 25-59 [BB].

### **WEEKS #3 - BODY LANGUAGES**

[O]ur bodies are not merely blank slates upon which the powers-that-be write their lessons....[T]here was a knowing that resided in my bones, in the stretch of my legs and the arch of my back, in the stones lying against my skin, a knowing that whispered, "not girl, not boy."

--Eli Clare

#### **Mon., September 13**

Riki Wilchins, "Derrida and the Politics of Meaning" ch. 4 in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*, Los Angeles: Alison Books, 2004, pp. 33-45.

#### **Wed., September 15**

Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999, pp. 1-13, 29-44 [BB].

#### **Mon., September 20**

Inga Muscio, *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1998, pp. 3-23 [BB].

Leslie Feinberg, "To Be Or Not To Be," in *Transgender Warriors: Making History of Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, pp. 101-107 [BB].

#### **Wed., September 22**

*TransEnough Lexicon* from Gender (Free) For All [<http://genderfreeforall.org>].

[http://www.genderfreeforall.org/projects/TransEnough\\_Lexicon.pdf](http://www.genderfreeforall.org/projects/TransEnough_Lexicon.pdf)

Please spend about 30 minutes looking through the lexicon.

**Guest Lecturer:** Avery Tompkins, Sociology Ph.D. student, SU

### **WEEKS #5-6-7**

### **THE TROUBLE WITH NORMAL**

Today, bodies function as powerful fields for staging passionate political demands....[B]odies have become sites of political struggles precisely over representation and over the meaning of what is normal and what is not.

--J. Terry and J. Urla

#### **Mon., September 27**

**Essay #1 due in class**

Essex Hemphill, "The Occupied Territories," in *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality*, p. 5 [BB].

Film: *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989)

**Wed., September 29**

Michael Warner, "What's Wrong With Normal?" in *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. NY: The Free Press, 1999, pp. 41-80 [BB].

**Mon., October 4**

Riki Wilchins, "Homosexuality: Foucault and the Politics of Self" and "Foucault and the Disciplinary Society," chs. 5 & 6 in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*, pp. 47-70.

**Wed., October 6**

Chyrs Ingraham, "Heterosexuality: It's Just Not Natural!" in Diane Richardson and Steven Seidman, eds., *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. London: Sage, 2002, pp. 73-81 [BB].

**Mon., October 11**

**No class today!**

Instead, students are required this week to attend the public lecture by Kenyon Farrow on **Thursday, October 14, at 7:30** [see below].

**Wed., October 13**

Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, op. cit., pp. 67-101, 123-138.

**Thurs., October 14**

7:30 p.m. Guifford Auditorium (HBC building)

Public lecture by Kenyon Farrow, Executive Director, **Queers for Economic Justice**, New York City.

**WEEKS #8-9-10-11    SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF SEXUALITIES, SEXES,  
AND GENDERS**

[S]exuality is constituted in society and history, not biologically ordained....The belly's hunger gives no clues as to the complexities of cuisine.

--Gayle Rubin

**Mon., October 18**

**Essay #2 due in class**

Film: *Transgeneration* (J. Simmons, 2005)

**Wed., October 20**

Abby Ferber, Kimberly Holcomb, and Tre Wentling, "Rethinking Foundations: Theorizing Sex, Gender, and Sexuality," Introduction to *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality: The New Basics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 1-3 [BB].

Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Dueling Dualisms" in *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality*, pp. 6-21 [BB].

**Mon., October 25**

Karen Yescavage and Jonathan Alexander, "Muddying the Waters: Constructions of Sexuality, Gender, and Sex in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality*, pp. 21-31 [BB].

**Wed., October 27**

Judith Halberstam, "Oh Bondage Up Yours: Female Masculinity and the Tomboy" in Matt Rottneck, ed., *Tomboys and Sissies: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood*. New York: NYU Press, 1999, pp. 153-179 [BB].

**Mon., November 1**

Riki Wilchins, "Can Sex Have Opposites?," ch. 8 in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*, pp. 83-95.

**Wed., November 3**

Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism," in Susan Stryker and Stephan Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader*. NY: Routledge, 2006, pp. 300-313 [BB].

**Mon., November 8**

Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*, pp. 21-47 [BB].

**Wed., November 10**

Susan Stryker, "The Current Wave," ch. 5 in *Transgender History*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008, pp. 121-153 [BB].

Avy Skolnik and Anonymous, "Privileges Held by Non-Trans People," in *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality*, pp. 300-301 [BB].

**Mon., November 15**

Abby L. Ferber, "Keeping Sex in Bounds: Sexuality and the (De)construction of Race and Gender" in *Sex, Gender, & Sexuality*, pp. 136-141 [BB].

**Wed., November 17**

**In-class exam on 'Social Constructions of Sexualities, Sexes, and Genders'**

**WEEK #12 POPULAR CULTURES**

As I sat in the living room with my parents, I marveled at the televisual spectacle of this young man and his father, both speaking a distinctly Cuban Spanish, on television, talking openly about AIDS, safe sex, and homosexuality. I was struck because this was something new...I imagined countless other living rooms within the range of this broadcast and I thought about the queer children who might be watching this program at home with their parents...Here is where I see the televisual spectacle leading to the possibility of new counterpublics [and] new spheres of possibility...

--Jose Munoz

**Mon., Nov. 22**

Jose Esteban Munoz, "Pedro Zamora's *Real World* of Counter-Publicity: Performing an Ethics of Self" in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 1999, pp. 143-160 [BB].

**Video clip: *The 'L' Word***

**Wed., Nov. 24**

**No class – Thanksgiving break**

**WEEKS #13-14**

**GROUP PROJECTS**

**Mon., November 29**

Group work on projects

**Wed., December 1**

Group work on projects

**Mon. & Wed., December 6 & 8**

Group presentations