Sex/ual and Gender Identity in a Transhistorical and Transcultural Perspective

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Course Description:

Not every man who doesn't act “manly” is a homosexual. After all, how do we even know that a man is a man? And what about a feminine woman; is she always already heterosexual? The first part of this course will explore a variety of philosophical, social, cultural, medical, and scientific ideas that have shaped our understanding of the concepts woman, men, femininities, and masculinities, as well as our categories of sexuality. We will consider how race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and national affiliations have informed our understanding of these concepts and categories, and whether or how they change in different geographical and temporal contexts. This broadly conceived course will enable us to ask not only how we know that someone is a man or a woman, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or straight but also whether our modern categories of homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, or even queer even exist.

Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation (25%): This course is organized as a seminar, which means that in order for it to be successful, everyone must come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. Preparation for discussion includes identifying puzzling aspects of the text, highlighting passages for analysis, and raising questions for debate. I recognize that people have very different styles of participation and different levels of comfort with speaking in class. The portion of your grade based on class participation will reflect not only how many times you speak in class, but how you share in developing a lively and respectful conversation. Sometimes holding back a comment for a more appropriate moment can be as important as speaking. Class attendance is required, so please let me know if you have to miss a class. Any unexcused absence will lower your grade.

2. Reading responses (20%): Everyone is required to do 4 short reading responses (ONLY ONE response per class meeting @ 5% each response). These can be a mix of questions, critical comments, and reactions to the readings, but in all cases, they should be well-written, and thoughtful. The responses should be anywhere from a few sentences to a paragraph in length. The mode of delivery will be determined during our first class meeting.

3. Midterm paper (25%): An essay of 4-5 pages (Times New Roman, 12 font, double spaced). Your paper can be based on one of your earlier reading responses, allowing you to develop one or two ideas that you have already identified as particularly interesting, troubling, or compelling. Alternatively, I will hand out paper topics. Please be sure to tell me NO LATER than October 24 which option you would prefer. You are required to submit a paper topic and tentative bibliography by 5pm October 31 and submit your midterm paper – in hardcopy - on November 10 in class. Late paper policy: Please note that if you fail to submit your paper topic, your midterm paper grade will be reduced by 50%. If you fail to submit your midterm paper, you will lose ½ grade per each day your paper is late.

4. Final paper (30%). Your final paper should expand and elaborate on your midterm paper. The paper should 9-10 pages (Times New Roman, 12 font, double spaced), and should
explore in depth a topic of your choosing. You are required to submit your final paper – in hardcopy - on December 8 in class. Late paper policy: Please note that no late papers will be accepted.

N.B. When citing your sources, you may use any standard citation format (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago) but please be consistent. Please contact me if you are unsure or have any questions about how to cite your sources. Please also proofread your papers for typos, spelling and grammatical errors.

Class Schedule

Week 2 – September 29 – **Introductions; Social Construction/Essentialism**

Reading:


Week 4 – October 13 - **Creating Woman, Creating Man**

Reading:

1. Ludmilla Jordanova, “Body Image and Sex Roles,” 43-65 in *Sexual Visions* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1993);


Week 6 – October 27 – **Masculinities x Femininities** *Midterm paper outlines and tentative bibliography due at 5pm Oct 31*

Reading:


Recommended:

1. Antonia Young, “The ‘Kanun’ Laws of Honour and Hospitality,” 41-54; and “Who are the Sworn Virgins,”55-68 in *Women who Become Men* (Berg, 2000);


Week 8 – November 10 – **Sexualities and Sexual Fluidity** *Midterm papers due*

Reading:


4. Don Bellew “Male Sexual Fluidity, A Memoir” (@wildeoats.com)

5. Lisa Diamond, interview.

Week 10 – November 24 – **Drag**

Reading:


Week 12 – December 8 – **Gender Theory, Queer Practice: What Does It All Mean?** *Final papers due*

Reading:

TBA.
1. “Burly rugby player has a stroke after freak gym accident… wakes up gay and becomes a hairdresser” http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2058921/Chris-Birch-stroke-Rugby-player-wakes-gay-freak-gym-accident.html#ixzz1dj25FDvu (Nov 14, 2011);