

Prof. Margot Weiss**Office Phone:** 685-5754**Email:** mdweiss@wesleyan.edu**Office:** Center for the Americas 206 and Anthropology 26**Course Time:** Thursday 1:10 – 4:00pm**Office Hours:** Tuesday 4:30 - 5:30pm in ANTH 26 and Thursday 4:30-5:30pm in CAMS 206**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of trans studies. Although gender-variant identities have a long history in the United States, and while gender diversity has been recorded in many societies, trans and transgender are relatively new social categories. And, while many academic disciplines—including feminist studies, queer studies, anthropology, and history—have studied trans communities, subjects, and bodies, it is only very recently that the field has become institutionalized in the academy as a discipline.

This course is organized around trans studies as an emergent discipline. We will approach trans studies through six critical thematics: histories, categories, feminist politics, embodiment, cross-cultural studies, and activism. Our readings are interdisciplinary; we will read essays, articles and book-length examinations from a variety of disciplines (English, memoir, film, history, activism, legal studies, science studies, feminist and queer studies, and ethnography).

Thinking critically about the categories of knowledge organized under “Trans Studies” as an academic rubric, as well as the ways other disciplines have understood trans subjects and communities, we will ask, What are the foundational objects and methods of trans studies? What are the guiding questions and debates within the field? What forms of knowledge does the category “trans” enable? What are the problems and possibilities of using “trans” cross-culturally? How is trans studies marked as different from the studies that have come before? Is institutionalization seen as necessary to knowledge production? And, finally, what are the (activist/academic) politics of the field’s institutionalization?

Course Texts

1. Julia Serano, 2007. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seal Press.
2. Katrina Karkazis, 2008. *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority and Lived Experience*. Duke University Press.
3. Don Kulick, 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender and Culture Among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*. University of Chicago Press.

** not out yet: Gayle Salamon, 2010. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. Columbia University Press.

Optional:

- A. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, 2006. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge. (=TSR)
- B. Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Price Minter (eds.), 2006. *Transgender Rights*. University of Minnesota Press. (=TR)

Books are available at the Bookstore and also on reserve at the library. Articles are in the E-Reserve folder on Blackboard.

Course Assignments

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Discussion Leader – 10%

Class Project/Show and Tell – 20%

8 Reading Commentaries – 30%

Final Project – 30%

Attendance and Participation

This is an seminar course, so your active participation is crucial to its success. I expect you to come to class on time and prepared, and to contribute to our discussion in a positive, relevant, and respectful way. We will be reading and discussing material that advocates opposing viewpoints, and each of us has a different relationship to this material. Therefore, I ask that you come to class ready to ask questions as well as give your analysis, to understand what is at stake in these debates as well as to involve yourself. When responding to the material and each other, please aim to be generous, sympathetic, and supportive readers and listeners (take the time to try and understand where someone is coming from before launching into critique). Aim for a collective approach; our discussion should allow us each to think out loud, with each other.

You may miss one class without explanation or penalty. Unexcused absences after one will negatively impact your final grade. If you think you have a valid reason for missing class (emergency, health problem, etc), please contact your class dean/other relevant Wesleyan official and have that person contact me. Excused absences are **only** granted when a Wesleyan official contacts me on your behalf (**not when you send me an email**). If you like to take notes on your laptop, you may bring it to class; however, any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege.

Discussion Leader

Once during the semester, working with a partner, you will lead our class discussion. This is your chance to guide our discussion, and direct it to topics or issues you think are particularly important. Do not summarize - assume we have all done the reading. Focus on drawing out links between the readings and the overall theme.

As you think about the material – when you are presenting and not -- ask yourself: *What ideas did you find most crucial, controversial, enlightening, difficult to understand, provocative? How do these readings connect/disconnect to other texts we have read? What key terms or questions can you draw from these readings, and how might you use these ideas outside this particular context?*

You do not need to have worked out definitive answers to all of these questions. Instead, strive to illuminate key issues with **specifics and examples** from the readings, bringing relevant passages to the class's attention, or comparing different authors. Your goal is to prompt interesting class discussion, so highlight things in the readings *you* found illuminating, challenging, surprising, informative, unusual, etc. You may also want to bring in related material, hand-outs, or come with some key discussion questions.

On the day you present, please turn in a short (one paragraph) summary of your presentation (what you expect/hope to cover in class).

Class Project/Show and Tell

Once during the semester, you will attend an event (a lecture, a film, a conference, etc.), speak with an organization (academic, political, etc.) or do some independent research (archival, community, etc.) on a trans topic or issue. Events might include the Transgender Lives

conference at UCONN (April 17th), the Transgender Clinical Symposium at NYU (February 20th), or Wesleyan's David Henry Hwang discussion (March 3rd); organizations might include the Connecticut TransAdvocacy Coalition or the Silvia Rivera Law Project (in NYC); and research might include internet communities, 'zines, or Wesleyan Library's LGBTQ archival collection. These are just ideas; you are strongly encouraged to do a project on something that interests you, so be creative (come talk to me if you aren't sure your idea will work). I will post announcements for upcoming events on Blackboard and you are encouraged to share, via email, any additional announcements or resources with your classmates.

This project has two components. The first, a 3 double-spaced page paper, will describe your project and link it to our course material. Bring the paper to class on the day you present. The second is an in-class "show and tell." Come to class ready to describe your project (you may want to bring in material to share) and what you found most interesting or important about it. Following a short (5 minutes or so) description, we will open the floor to your classmates for audience Q&A.

On the day you wish to present, let me know, via email, at least 2 hours before class that you plan to present that day (you may be rescheduled if we have too many "show and tells").

Reading Commentaries

Eight times during the semester (your choice), you will turn in a reading commentary – a 1-1½ (double-spaced) page analysis of the readings for that week. Your commentary should be a generous, engaged and critical reflection on the readings. Do not use outside readings for these papers; they are intended to help you process and analyze your reactions to the course materials.

As you think about the reading commentary, ask yourself: 1) what are the overarching thematics, politics, categories, debates, or issues in this (set of) readings? And 2) what, within that, did you find particularly interesting, compelling, surprising, or problematic? Answering these two questions should keep your paper focused on a single key issue or topic.

These commentaries are informal – no introductions or conclusions are needed, you may use personal pronouns, and you do not need to formally cite (instead, e.g., say "As Gayle Rubin argues in 'Thinking Sex,' sex practices are hierarchically organized"). You may choose to include some personal reflection, but the papers need to be centrally about the readings – they are, primarily, *reading* commentaries.

Papers will be graded with a check system: √+ plus for truly outstanding work/effort, √ for good work/effort, and √- for poor work/effort. All commentaries are due at the start of our class.

Extra credit

You have two options for extra credit: 1) you may write two extra reading commentaries or 2) you may do an additional show and tell project. Both of these options should be completed within the above guidelines.

Final Paper/Project

Your final assignment is a project on the aspect of Trans Studies of your choice. You might choose to do a more traditional research paper, or you might choose to do something more creative, such as a memoir. The project should be the equivalent of a 15-page research paper, and should link up to the course materials in some way. Be on the lookout throughout the semester for something you want to examine, and be sure to meet with me early on if you are having trouble coming up with a topic.

Please note: for those of you taking this course as an FGSS “Research Option,” you will complete a semester-long research paper in lieu of other writing assignments. If you are taking the course Research Option, please let me know asap.

Final papers are due 5/12 at 5pm (in my office or in my mailbox in CAMS).

Class Policies

Late papers will not be accepted. Seriously.

You are strongly encouraged to come to see me in office hours if there is any course material you do not understand, or if you need guidance on my expectations for papers, presentations or any other aspect of this course.

Students with Disabilities:

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>.

Honor Code:

All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the Writing Workshop: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/>

SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 21: Introduction: Constructing Trans Knowledge

In-class: Jacob Hale, "Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals ..."

Cisgender Privilege Check-list

Mona Mason, "Defining our Community"

Riki Anne Wilchins, "What Does it Cost to Tell the Truth?" in *Read My Lips*

Susan Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies" **TSR**

Thursday, January 28: Transgender and Transexual Histories

Susan Stryker, "A Hundred Years of Transgender History" in *Transgender History* **R**

Joanne Meyerowitz, "Sex Change" and "From Sex to Gender" in *How Sex Changed* **R**

In-class: Transgender Health Standards of Care; DSM-IV-TR Diagnostic Criteria; Sexology

Recommended: Joanne Meyerowitz, "A Fierce and Demanding Drive" **TSR**

Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender" **TSR**

Thursday, February 4: Categories: Gender, Sex and Intelligibility

GLQ, "Thinking Sex, Thinking Gender Forum": **R**

Annamarie Jagose and Don Kulick, "Thinking Sex/Thinking Gender: Introduction"

Susan Stryker, "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin"

David Valentine, "The Categories Themselves"

David Valentine, "I Know What I Am" in *Imagining Transgender* **R**

Judith Butler, "Doing Justice to Somebody" **TSR**

J. Bobby Noble, "Refusing to Make Sense: Mapping the In-Coherences of Trans" *Journal of Lesbian Studies* **R**

In-class: Gayle Rubin; Eve Sedgwick

Recommended: David Valentine, "We're 'Not about Gender'" *Out in Theory* **R**

Judith Butler, "Gender Regulations" in *Undoing Gender* **R**

Thursday, February 11: Radical and Trans Feminisms

Janice Raymond, "Sappho by Surgery" **TSR**

Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back" **TSR**

Max Wolf Valerio, "Now That You're A White Man..." in *This Bridge We Call Home* **R**

Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of Trans Debate" **TSR**

Recommended: Cressida J. Heyes, "Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory" *Signs* **R**

Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein..." **TSR**

In-class: Riki Wilchins, "The Menace Statement to Janice Raymond" *Read My Lips*

Thursday, February 18: TransFemininity

Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*

Thursday, February 25: Butch/FTM Border Wars

Judith Halberstam and C. Jacob Hale: "Butch/FTM Border Wars: A Note on Collaboration" **R**

Judith Halberstam "Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars & the Masculine Continuum" **R**

C. Jacob Hale "Consuming the Living, Dis(re)membering the Dead..." **R**

Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries" **TSR**

In-class film: Boy I Am (with "Sparking Difficult Dialogues")

Recommended: Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Bodies in Motion: Lesbian and Transsexual Histories" **TSR**

Judith Halberstam, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity" in *Lesbian Postmodern* **R**

Thursday, March 4: Intersex Experiences

Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority and Lived Experience*

Recommended: Suzanne Kessler, "Medical Construction of Gender" *Signs* **R**

Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude" **TSR**

Alice Dreger and April Herndon, "Progress and Politics in the Intersex Rights Movement" *GLQ* **R**

Spring Break

Thursday, March 25: Phenomenology of Embodiment

Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*

-- or --

Henry Rubin, "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies" in *GLQ* **R**

Jacob Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and their Daddies" *GLQ* **R**

Jay Prosser, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, the Transubstantiation of Sex" **TSR**

Gayle Salamon, "The Bodily Ego and the Contested Domain of the Material" *differences* **R**

Recommended: Sara Ahmed, "Sexual Orientation" in *Queer Phenomenology* **R**

Susan Stryker, "Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transsexual Sadomasochism" *parallax* **R**

Thursday, April 1: Cross-Cultural Problematics

Katrina Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalization" **TSR**

Evan Towel and Lynn Morgan, "Romancing the Transgender Native" **TSR**

Rosalind Morris, "Three Sexes and Four Sexualities: Redressing the Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Thailand" *Positions* **R**

Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Transing and Transpassing Across Sex-Gender Walls in Iran" *WSQ* **R**

In-class: Leslie Feinberg

Thursday, April 8: Travesti

Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender and Culture Among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*

Thursday, April 15: Trans Activism

Selection from Paisley Currah, Richard Juang, & Shannon Price Minter, *Transgender Rights* **TR**

Vi Namaste, "Against Transgender Rights: Understanding the Imperialism of Contemporary Transgender Politics" *Sex Change, Social Change* **R**

Alex Lee, "Nowhere to Go But Out: The Collision between Transgender and Gender-Variant Prisoners and the Gender Binary in America's Prisons" **R**

Rikke Mananzala and Dean Spade, "The Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Trans Resistance" in *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* **R**

Recommended Film: Screaming Queens

Thursday, April 22: Your Choice

Thursday, April 29: Your Choice

Final Project due: May 12th