

**Transgender Issues**  
**Macaulay Honors College, CUNY**  
**Fall 2015**

Professor Elizabeth Reis

Office Hours: Mondays 11:30-1:00 and Wednesdays, 3:00-4:30

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**Course Website**

<http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/reis15/>

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This lecture and discussion course introduces students to the new interdisciplinary field of transgender studies. Using transgender history, politics, and identity as a lens, the course explores how sexuality and gender have been configured throughout American history. "Transgender" will be defined broadly, encompassing a range of cross-dressing, gender-bending, and transsexual experiences and identities. We will consider transgender issues as the products of specific historical, political, and cultural circumstances (including our current cultural fascination with transgender celebrities), and we will explore the various meanings of "gender" embedded in constructions (both scientific and personal) of transgender.

We will also examine the links between transsexual and intersex surgeries, identities, and politics. Twentieth-century medical advances made sex-change (gender reassignment) surgeries an option for many trans people; we will look at the development of the medical field and the concomitant redefinition and inscription of "the transsexual." Finally, we will explore violence against trans people and the relationship between lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, and transgender identity politics.

**RULES AND REGULATIONS**

You are expected to come to class on time and stay until the end. If you are going to be late or you need to leave early, please send me an email to let me know. Please respect your classmates; this means you should be actively listening to the lectures and discussions, as opposed to reading the paper, or writing notes to your friends. Unless we are looking at one of the readings online, computers, tablets, and cell phones will not be allowed in class. If you have a documented disability, please see me about accommodations.

**Attendance:** Because this will be a discussion-oriented class, you have to be here to benefit. I cannot recreate the class discussion for you if you have to miss class. Absences (as well as arriving late or leaving early) will negatively affect your final grade.

I expect students to attend every class, complete the assigned reading, participate fully in class discussions, and hand each assignment in on time. In addition, I expect every one of you to respect other students in all of our discussions. Some of you may have some anxieties about the specific course content; others may have concerns about transphobia. I have these same concerns. My goal is to create a hospitable space for you to cultivate your growing understandings of gender issues without fear and to receive respect from me and from the rest of the class.

**Plagiarism:** All work completed for this class must be your own. If you cheat (hand in your friend's work or copy directly from the internet or a book, etc.) you will (at the very least) fail the

class and your name will be registered with the University. For guidelines and the Macaulay Honors pledge, see: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/community/handbook/policies/honors-integrity/>

### **Students with Disabilities**

I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible.

### Books:

Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (NY: South End Press, 2011)

S. Bear Bergman, *The Nearest Exit May be Behind You* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010)

Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Emeryville, CA: 2007)

Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008)

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008)

Daphne Scholinski, *The Last Time I Wore a Dress* (NY: Riverhead Books, 1998)

### Course Requirements and Expectations

Weekly Journals (50%)

Final Project (25%)

Class Participation (25%)

Weekly Journals should be uploaded to the “journals” section on Wednesdays by noon. Of course you can upload them earlier if you’re ready. They will not public entries.

There are 13 weeks of journal submissions. If you do a beautiful job, incorporate all the reading, and thoroughly contemplate and address the study questions, you will get full credit. If you complete all the journal entries and receive full credit, you will get an A on this part of the course. If you only submit and get credit for 12 you will receive an A- for this part of the course; 11, a B+; 10, a B; 9, a B-; 8 a C+, 7 a C and less than that a D or lower. If you submit fewer than 5, you will not pass the class at all.

The quality of the submission counts too! In other words, this is your opportunity to grapple with the readings, to question, to connect one week to the next, and to raise issues that you’d like to see discussed in class. The journals aren’t formally graded, but I still want complete sentences, though you don’t have to worry about making an argument, having smooth transitions, and the like. If you only write about one of the readings or you write about your opinions with no reference to the readings at all, you won’t get credit that week (though I may award partial credit.) I don’t have a page limit, but I expect you’ll submit roughly 500-750 words. More is fine.

**Final Paper/Project:** I will have a separate handout for this assignment, due during finals week. Each student will present their project during the last few weeks of the semester.

**Pronouns and Names:** Please let the class know what name you’d like to go by in this class and your preferred pronouns, if it matters to you.

**Additional Movie Nights:** I’d like us to watch the entire Amazon Prime series, “Transparent,” together, and so I’m hoping we can agree on three nights to watch all ten episodes.

### **Week 1, Wed., Sept 2: Introduction: Gender, Sex, and Definitions**

In class we will look through these websites:

1. <http://genderfork.com/>
2. <http://www.wikihow.com/Respect-a-Transgender-Person>
3. <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/list-of-cisgender-privileges/>

In class film: “No Dumb Questions”

“My Genderation” youtube films:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byz4U51tJX8&index=35&list=PLbeZBtR\\_FvDH-IXWdP5IO6-srPj6hG2u9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byz4U51tJX8&index=35&list=PLbeZBtR_FvDH-IXWdP5IO6-srPj6hG2u9)

### **Week 2, Wed., Sept. 9: What Does it Mean to be Trans?**

In class film: “Three to Infinity: Beyond Two Genders”

1. Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl*, 11-34
2. Riki Anne Wilchins, *The Transgender Reader*, in *The Transgender Reader* 547-551 (online)
3. Dean Spade, *Normal Life*: 19-42
4. [“Gender Identity Conversation Comes Out of the Closet”](#)
5. Watch: Dean Spade online manifesto: <http://sfonline.barnard.edu/gender-justice-and-neoliberal-transformations/impossibility-now/>

### **Week 3, Wed., Sept. 16: Crossdressing, Intersex, and Trans Possibilities in Early America**

In class film: “Two Spirit People”

1. Elizabeth Reis, “Hermaphrodites and Same-Sex Sex in Early America” (online)
2. read Sabine Lang introduction to *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*. Click “excerpts” and browse the book with Google preview, pp. 3-16 <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/excerpts/exlanmen.html#ex1>
3. “The Man Who Thought Himself a Woman,” *New York Knickerbocker* (1857) (online)
4. Elizabeth Reis, “Transgender Identity at a Crossroads: A Close Reading of a ‘Queer’ Story from 1857,” *Early American Studies*, Special issue: Beyond the Binaries: Critical Approaches to Sex and Gender in Early America (Fall, 2014), 652-65.
5. Jen Manion, “19<sup>th</sup> Century Narratives of Transgender Experience and the History of Possibility,” unpublished paper (online)

### **Week 4: class cancelled for Yom Kippur, Sept. 23**

### **Week 5, Wed., Sept. 30: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Changes**

In class film: “Screaming Queens”

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 31-120

Krafft-Ebing excerpts (online)

Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America’s Frontier Past* excerpt (online)

Joanne Meyerowitz, “Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930-1955” (online)

### **Week 6, Wed., October 7: Trans Identities and Gatekeeping**

In class film: “She’s a Boy I Knew”

“The Aggressives”: Documentary about NYC’s predominantly African-American lesbian drag balls.

Susan Stryker, “Transgender Rage Against the Psychiatric Establishment”:

<http://www.spunk.org/texts/pubs/cf/sp000562.txt>

Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl*, 65-160

Dean Spade, “Mutilating Gender,” <http://makezine.enoughenough.org/mutilate.html>

**WATCH:** start here and watch some youtube videos on transitioning:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLvpFh4vyQE&feature=related>

Tobias Raun, "Screen-Births: Exploring the Transformative Potential in Trans Video Blogs on YouTube," *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 7:2 (December 2010), 113-130. (Online)

### **Week 7, Wed., October 14: Whose Body? Whose Decisions?**

In class film: "Diagnosing Difference"

Read through this website about GID Reform and the DSM: <http://www.gidreform.org/>

Arlene Istar Lev, "Gender Dysphoria: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back," *J. Clinical Social Work* (July 2013) [Online]

Daphne Scholinski, *The Last Time I Wore a Dress*

S. Bear Bergman, *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You*, pp. 105-127

### **Week 8, Wed., October 21: Medical Ethics, Surgery, and Pregnancy**

In class: Film clip of MTF surgical procedures

Carl Elliot, "A New Way to be Mad," *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (December 2000) (Online)

Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein, Above the Village of Chamounix:

Performing Transgender Rage," *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 244-256 (online)

Arthur Robinson Williams, "Transgender Considerations: A Clinical Primer for the Generalist Working with Trans and LGB Patients," [Online]

Eric Plemons, "[How Sex Reassignment Surgery Works in America](#)," *The Feminist Wire* (May 11, 2015)

S. Bear Bergman, *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You*, pp. 128-205

S. Bear Bergman, *Blood, Marriage, Wine, and Glitter*, pp. 13-20 (online)

Read about Thomas Beatie: [http://definenormal.com/PregnantMan/Legal\\_Update.html](http://definenormal.com/PregnantMan/Legal_Update.html)

### **Week 9, Wed., October 28: Trans Identities, Feminism, and Women's Colleges**

In class film: "Boy I Am"

Janice Raymond, "Sappho by Surgery," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 131-143 (Online)

Read these websites about the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Controversy:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp\\_Trans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Trans)

<http://eminism.org/michigan/faq-intro.html>

[http://www.fuah.org/MWFM\\_press-statement.html](http://www.fuah.org/MWFM_press-statement.html)

articles from forthcoming *Transgender Studies Quarterly* about feminism and trans issues

S. Bear Bergman, *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You*, pp. 11-104

Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Movement," *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 698-705 (online)

Ken Schneck, "Seriously Smith College?" [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-schneck-phd/seriously-smith-college-update-your-antiquated-definition-of-gender\\_b\\_3200315.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-schneck-phd/seriously-smith-college-update-your-antiquated-definition-of-gender_b_3200315.html)  
[Smith's new policy](#) and [Mt. Holyoke's policy](#)

### **Week 10, Wed., November 4: Trans Kids and their Parents**

In class film excerpt: *I'm Just Anneke*

Read through this website: <http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org/misson/>

Hannah Rosin, "A Boy's Life," *The Atlantic* (November 2008),

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/11/a-boy-apos-s-life/7059/>

Alice Dreger, "Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood: Inconclusive Advice to Parents," *Hastings Center Report* 39, no. 1 (2009): 26-29. (online)

Tey Meadow, "'Deep Down Where the Music Plays': How Parents Account for Childhood Gender Variance," *Sexualities* 14:6 (2011), 725-47 (online)

David Rosenberg, [“A Boys’ Camp to Redefine Gender”](#)

**Listen:** an NPR Program: Alix Spiegel, “Two Families Grapple with Sons’ Gender Identity” (this is a 2 part program)

<http://www.npr.org/2008/05/07/90247842/two-families-grapple-with-sons-gender-preferences?ps=rs>

### **Week 11, Wed., November 11: Intersex and Transgender Connections**

In class film “Intersexions” or “Mani’s Story”

Thea Hillman,

[http://www.ontheissuesmagazine.com/2009summer/2009summer\\_Hillman.php](http://www.ontheissuesmagazine.com/2009summer/2009summer_Hillman.php)

Judith Butler, “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality,” *TSR*, 183-192 (Online)

Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, 1-132

Read through web site: Intersex Society of America <http://www.isna.org/FAQ.html>

### **Week 12, Wed., November 18: Intersex Surgeries, Contemporary Controversies**

Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex*, 133-290

Elizabeth Reis, “Divergence or Disorders? The Politics of Naming Intersex,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* (Autumn 2007), 535-543 (online)

Personal Stories from *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics*, Fall 2015 (online)

Watch some of the Interface Project’s videos: <http://aiclegal.org/programs/interfaceproject/>

### **Week 13: No class, Happy Thanksgiving!**

### **Week 14, Wed., December 2: Transgender Politics**

In class film: “Cruel and Unusual”

Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, 79-93; 101-128; 137-162; 205-224

[“What Makes a Man \(or Woman\) in a Marriage License?”](#) NYT (May 26, 2011)

Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore, “‘We Won’t Know Who You Are’: Contesting Sex Designations in New York City Birth Certificates,” *Hypatia* 24:3 (Summer 2009), 113-135

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 121-153

Read through Transgender Law and Policy Institute website: <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>

What has to be done to make transition legal?:

<http://www.tsroadmap.com/reality/legalindex.html>

Student presentations

### **Week 15, Wed., December 9: The “Transgender Tipping Point”**

[Interview with Laverne Cox](#)

[Interview with Jill Soloway](#) and [virtual roundtable](#) on “Transparent”

Katy Steinmetz, “The Transgender Tipping Point,” *Time Magazine* (May 29, 2014) [online]

**Watch:** Oprah Winfrey and Janet Mock interview: <http://www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/Full-Episode-Oprah-and-Janet-Mock-Video>

In class: [Retro Report](#), “Beyond Caitlin Jenner Lies a Long Struggle by Transgender People,”

Clyde Haberman, *The New York Times* (June 14, 2015)

Student presentations