

## PHIL 399: Transgender Philosophy Syllabus

**Instructor:** Amy Billingsley

**E-mail:** [amarvin@uoregon.edu](mailto:amarvin@uoregon.edu)

**Office Hours:** Thursday from 12-2pm in Susan Campbell Hall 158  
(talk to me if you'd like to meet at another time)

**Classes:** Tuesday and Thursday from 10-11:50am in 255 LIL

*“What I say may be in a language incomprehensible, but there is a time for that, and it is right now, because this is a monster's creed. It is for the cobbled-together, the sewn-up, the grafted-on. It is for the golden, the under-the-earth, the foreign, the travels-by-night; the filthy ship-sinking cave-dwelling bone-cracking gorgeousness that says hell no, I am not tidy. I am not easy. I am not what you suppose me to be and until you listen to my voice and look me in my eyes, I will cling fast to this life no matter how far you drive me, how deep, with how many torches and pitchforks, biting back the whole way down. I will not give you my suicide. I will not give you my surrender.”* – Rose Sims

### Course Description

Recent attention to trans people in popular culture has found this time period proclaimed as a “transgender tipping point,” framed as a uniquely potent move towards awareness of trans lives and experiences. At the same time, debates over the use of public facilities by trans people has also received widespread attention, and 2015 already has one of the highest rates of death for trans women of color ever recorded. As philosophy teaches us, it is crucial for us to examine the ideas, practices, and institutions which influence the current state of our world. But as people who also live in this world, it is also important for us to consider both our own assumptions and the material effects of our own practices.

To that end, this course will consider a variety of perspectives about the past, present, and future of trans lives. First, we will look at changes in formulations of trans identity over time by science, feminism, and trans people to track the emergence of transgender studies as an area of inquiry with its own space. The emergence of transgender studies has also involved extensive discussions about representations of trans people in society, which will be the second topic of the course. Finally, we will look at institutions, practices, and actions that affect trans lives, ranging from violence and criminalization to new opportunities for trans expression on the Internet and in print. Through this examination, this course aims to empower students for future engagements with transgender studies and philosophy, and hopefully substantially transform their understanding of trans issues through a realization of the depth and breadth of perspectives that transgender studies offers.

**Conference:**

This May there will be a Trans\* Experience in Philosophy Conference on campus (<http://philevents.org/event/show/18132>) during the Spring term. While the final project will be submitted after the conference due date (Dec. 1st), it is possible to expand upon your Academic Essays based on comments and submit them to the conference.

**Philosophy Learning Outcomes:**

This course fulfills Philosophy Department learning outcomes, as students will be able to:

- 1) Understand key concepts in transgender studies as contemporary philosophy, preparing them for further scholarship in the area.
- 2) Read a variety of materials on the subject of transgender studies and philosophy, ranging from scholarly articles to literature and poetry. Students will also practice philosophical writing, discussion, and have an opportunity to shape their own project at the end.
- 3) Consider the importance of discussing race and class in the context of trans lives.
- 4) Compare, contrast, and critique various approaches to transgender studies and philosophy from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives that were formed in a particular historical context.
- 5) Study a range of topics, including three overarching considerations of identity, representation, and action, as well as many organized subtopics.
- 6) Understand the scope of transgender philosophy in relation to the larger field.

**Amy's Approach to the Classroom:**

My approach to the classroom is to try to find a happy medium between what I think is important from the readings and what you want to talk about. To that end, having a great term is very much on you as it is on me, especially in the efforts of avoiding a quiet, awkward classroom.

Learn to ask questions and request clarifications when you are confused (or when I am confusing), and take advantage of office hours, where you are always welcome. I will respond to e-mails, but they can only go so far.

**Course Expectations:**

Be respectful of your classmates, including their preferred pronouns (including if they change over the course of the term). Additionally, please refrain from making statements or using language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic. As a warning, we will be discussing transphobic texts in the beginning of the course, but it is expected that we will do so with a critical eye.

Do the readings and bring them to class. Not doing this will affect your attendance and participation grade, even if I don't call you out on it.

Feel free to call me out if I make a mistake or you can't read my handwriting on the board. I can take it.

**Course Readings:**

All course readings will be available on our course Canvas site.

If you want all the readings to be collected together in a physical copy so they aren't lying about, print them out and then have them bound either at UO Campus Copy or The Copy Shop. You will still spend much less than with a class that requires books to be purchased.

We will be looking at a lot of material found in *The Transgender Studies Reader 1 and 2*, so these may be worth purchasing if you plan to continue with transgender theory (or in general). Feel free to ask me for book and article recommendations.

**Grade Breakdown:**

- 20% Attendance and Participation
  - 15% - First Academic Essay
  - 20% - Second Academic Essay
- 15% Two short response essays (7.5% each)
- 30% - Final Academic and/or Action Project

**Assignment Descriptions:**

*Attendance and Participation:* This is based on your ability to show up to class prepared and positively contribute to our discussions. If you are shy, office hours can be a good opportunity to share your thoughts on the material as well. Students who miss over two weeks of the course without a written and approved excuse can expect to receive no higher than a C as their final course grade.

*Academic Essays:* These essays (5 pages each) will give you a chance to write and receive feedback on a philosophical essay explaining and responding to course materials. More information about these essays will be provided in class.

*Response Essays:* These short essay responses (2-3 pages each) allow for me to see your thoughts on the subject outside of the more formal requirements of the academic essays, and may present your thoughts about the material, how your perspective has changed based on our discussions, or your thoughts on current issues related to the class (I will provide several ideas for approaches). The first response essay must be submitted between Weeks 2-5, while the second response will be due between Weeks 7-10. These will be graded based on the thoughtfulness of the response and the quality of its presentation, so do put work into them.

*Final Academic and/or Action Project:* This project will allow you to tailor this course more to your interest by undertaking a larger academic essay, engaging in and reflecting on activism, or creating and reflecting on a creative piece of your own. Details will be discussed later in the term.

### **Technology:**

You may use technology, but I will ban it if it becomes a distraction to you, me, or your classmates, and it will affect your attendance and participation grade harshly if you use it often for non-class purposes. Please let me know if someone is distracting you with technology (you don't have to say who it is specifically) and I will respond appropriately. Sometimes we might look stuff up online, or maybe even share videos or articles with each other (as long as they remain on-topic). Please don't *Yik Yak* during class, because that creates an uncomfortable environment to teach and learn in. Yes, I see you texting, but I might just mark it in my gradebook instead of calling you out.

### **Rules of Academic Honesty:**

Any acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, copying another's' work, fabrication, and cheating, will result in a failing grade for the course.

### **Accommodations:**

Please let me know during Week 1 of class if you require any accommodations to improve your learning experience, and feel free to notify me throughout the term if the material and discussions are bothering you in any way.

### **Resources:**

UO LGBT: <http://lgbt.uoregon.edu/>

ASUO Women's Center: <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/women/>

UO Multicultural Center: <http://inclusion.uoregon.edu/mcc>

UO Accessible Education Center: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

Transponder (meetings for Eugene and Springfield trans-identified and questioning folks):  
<http://lgbt.uoregon.edu/Home/tabid/38/ctl/Details/Mid/514/ItemID/523/Default.aspx?ContainerSrc=%5BG%5DContainers/default/No+Container&SkinSrc=%5BG%5DSkins/uolgbt/index>

Trans Lifeline: (877) 565-8860

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1 (800) 273-8255

## COURSE SCHEDULE

\*The Instructor may choose to alter the Schedule in class or via e-mail depending on the needs of the students or the requirements of the texts assigned.\*

### **Week 1 – Welcome & Approaching Transgender Philosophy**

**9/29** -- Listen to “On Cartographies and Dissection” by Rose Sims: <http://tinyurl.com/q479qcq>

"(De) Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies" by Susan Stryker

Course Introduction, Meet & Greet, and “Trans 101”

**10/1** – “Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans \_\_\_\_” by Jacob Hale

“Trans Identities and First Person Authority” by Talia Bettcher

RECOMMENDED: "Foreword" to *Transgender Studies Reader* by Stephen Whittle (xi-xv)

### **Topic I: Identity**

### **Week 2 – Trans and Identity in Public: Science and History**

**10/6** -- "Psychopathia Sexualis with Special Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: a Medico-Legal Study" by Richard von Krafft-Ebing

"The Transvestites: the Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress" by Magnus Hirschfeld

"Transsexualism and Transvestism as Psycho-Somatic and Somato- Psychic Syndromes" by Harry Benjamin

RECOMMENDED: “Autogynephilic and Homosexual Transsexuals: How to Tell Them Apart” by J. Michael Bailey (192-194)

**10/8** – Selections from Susan Stryker’s *Transgender History* on Christine Jorgensen and riots

“‘Still at the Back of the Bus:’ Sylvia Rivera’s Struggle” by Jessi Gan

### **Week 3 – Feminist Contestations over Trans Identity**

**10/13\*** – "Boundary Violation and the Frankenstein Phenomenon" from *Gyn/Ecology* by Mary Daly

Selections from the "Introduction to the 1994 Edition" of *The Transsexual Empire: the Making of the Shemale* by Janice Raymond

"Sappho by Surgery: the Transsexually Constructed Lesbian-Feminist" by Janice Raymond

\*An alternative (but equally long) set of readings can be provided to specific students ahead of time by request.

### **Prompt for First Academic Essay Handed Out**

**10/15** - Selections from *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler

"The Cyborg Manifesto" by Donna Haraway

RECOMMENDED: "An Ethics of Transsexual Difference: Luce Irigaray and the Place of Sexual Undecidability" by Gayle Salamon

## **Topic II: Representation**

### **Week 4 - Transgender Studies Perspectives on Identity and Representation**

**10/20** - "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" by Sandy Stone (221-232)

"My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix" by Susan Stryker (244-254)

RECOMMENDED: "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come" by Leslie Feinberg

RECOMMENDED: "Gender Terror, Gender Rage" by Kate Bornstein

**10/22** - "Look! No, Don't!: The Visibility Dilemma for Transsexual Men" by Jamison Green

"Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels" by Julia Serano

RECOMMENDED: "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance" by Talia Bettcher

**\*FIRST ACADEMIC ESSAY DUE FRIDAY VIA E-MAIL BY 3PM\***

**Week 5 - Trans Representation in Feminism (Revisited)**

**10/27** - “Changing Race, Changing Sex: The Ethics of Self-Transformation” by Cressida Heyes

“Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory: The Case of Transgender” by Cressida Heyes

**10/29** - “Undoing Theory: The “Transgender Question” and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory” by Viviane Namaste

**\*LAST DAY TO TURN IN FIRST RESPONSE ESSAY\***

**Week 6 - Who Represents Trans People?**

**11/3** - “Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate” by Emi Koyama

“Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalization” by Katrina Roen

**Prompt for Second Academic Essay Handed Out**

**11/5** - “Retelling Racialized Violence, Remaking White Innocence: The Politics of Interlocking Oppressions in Transgender Day of Remembrance” by Sarah Lamble

“Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection On Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife” by C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn

**Topic III: Action**

**Week 7 - Navigating Everyday Life**

**11/10** - “‘A New Hope:’ The Psychic Life of Passing” by C. Riley Snorton

“When Will You Be Having the Surgery?” by S. Bear Bergman

“What Does it Cost to Tell the Truth?” by Riki Anne Wilchins

**11/12** - “Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transsexual Body as Productive” by Dan Irving

“Tracing This Body: Transsexuality, Pharmaceuticals, and Capitalism” by Michelle O’Brien

**\*FIRST ACADEMIC ESSAY DUE FRIDAY VIA E-MAIL BY 3PM\***

**Week 8 - Violence and Structural Inequality**

11/17 - “Genderbashing: Sexuality, Gender, and the Regulation of Public Space” by Viviane Namaste

RECOMMENDED: “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey,” 2011

[http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf)

11/19 - Look at Trans Day of Remembrance Website

“Evil Deceivers and Make Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion” by Talia Bettcher

11/20 - Transgender Day of Remembrance

**Week 9 - Imprisonment and Criminalization**

11/23 - “Rounding up Homosexuals: The Impact of Juvenile Court on Queer and Trans/Gender-Non-Conforming Youth” by Wesley Ware

“My Story” by Paula Rae Witherspoon

“Building an Abolitionist Trans & Queer Movement with Everything We’ve Got” by Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade

We will discuss Jennicet Gutiérrez’s activism and Victoria Arellano’s death in class

11/26 - THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Week 10 - Trans on the Web and at the Printing Press\***

12/1 - Selections from *Black Feminist Thought* by Patricia Hill Collins on subjugated knowledge

“The Seam of Skin and Scales” by Rose Sims (<http://takingsteps.blogspot.com/2007/01/seam-of-skin-and-scales.html>)

Browse the comments on “The Seam of Skin and Scales” (especially beginning with 17/1/07 18:41 and 17/1/07 18:41 - you can ctrl-f for these)

Watch: “LEAKED: 2013 Philadelphia Trans Health Conference Orientation Video” by Red Durkin ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02Yp\\_Y596ak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02Yp_Y596ak))

“Introduction,” “Intermission,” and “Epilogue” (273-275) to *Gender Outlaws: the Next Generation* by Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman

RECOMMENDED: “You Are Triggering Me! The Neo-Liberal Rhetoric of Harm, Danger and Trauma” by Jack Halberstam (<https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2014/07/05/you-are-triggering-me-the-neo-liberal-rhetoric-of-harm-danger-and-trauma/>)

RECOMMENDED: “Can the 'Other' of Philosophy Speak?” by Judith Butler

ALSO NOTE: [Due date for Trans Experience in Philosophy Conference at UO](#)

**12/3** - “Other Women” by Casey Plett (*A Safe Girl to Love*, 2015 Lambda Literary Award)

and pick 1 other story:

-“To Do List” by Stephen Ira

-“To the New World” by Ryka Aoki

-”Power Out” by Adam Halwitz

We will look at poetry by Lilith Latini and Charles Theonia in class.

RECOMMENDED: “Winning” by Casey Plett (Takes place in Eugene!)

RECOMMENDED: *Nevada* by Imogen Binnie

\**Topside Press* has made several of their books available to download online, with permission of the authors. I will provide you the link for this if you are interested.

**\*LAST DAY TO TURN IN SECOND RESPONSE ESSAY\***

**Final Academic and/or Action Project due by 3pm on Wed., December 9 at the Philosophy Office in 211 Susan Campbell Hall (do not turn in projects during their lunch break)**