COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to engage in Critical Trans Studies? While both a distinct discipline within the academy as well as a particular approach to, and understanding of, knowledge production, this course will provide students with a concrete foundational understanding of the emergence of transgender studies and the main themes that make up its discipline. From its emergence and development as an academic discipline as distinct from Queer and Feminist Studies to its cross-disciplinary discursive investments and overlap with other scholarly disciplines (Feminist and Queer Studies, Medical Science, Law & Political Science, Indigenous Studies, Critical Race Studies, Disability/Mad Studies, Legal Studies, Creative Arts…) we will explore the development of contemporary critical trans discourse, the associated historical medical literature, texts that historicize “transgender,” recent critical analysis of the contemporary biomedical discourse and grass roots organization. Throughout the course, we will look to art, activism and cultural production to help illustrate the content of the readings while also bringing attention to knowledge, and theory production outside of the academy. While the course structure reflects how information has been organized into disciplines, our discussions will draw attention to themes and concerns which exceed the scope of disciplines and characterize the interdisciplinary nature of the material more broadly: passing, visibility, the

I remember when someone threw a Molotov cocktail, I thought “My god, the revolution is here. The revolution is finally here!”—Sylvia Rivera

gender is the poetry each of us makes out of the language we are taught - Leslie Feinberg
conditioning and violence of the gaze, power, the social and relational construction of identity, complicity, agency, disciplinary decadence, single-issue politics and multi-issue activism.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To develop a profound understanding of what is meant by “Critical Trans Studies” as a discipline as well as a discursive mode of production and analysis.

- Understand how Critical Transgender Studies emerged and evolved into a discipline from within (and from without) the academy. This will involve learning, in broad strokes, about its relationship to the history of feminisms and sexuality studies, the history of the medical/psychiatric creation of the category “transgender” and how gender is discursively constructed within academic scholarship and contemporary mainstream culture.

- Learn and apply key words and concepts, the contribution of key figures, and contemporary debates that are taken up in Critical Transgender Studies.

- Recognize that while Critical Transgender Studies is a field that is organized around a particular phenomenon and “community,” it is ultimately a field that concerns everyone and an analytic approach with varying and dynamic discursive, ideological structures and voices.

**APPLIED SKILLS**

- Engage and assist in leading, generating and contributing to respectful and critical discussion that demonstrates a sensitive, self-reflexive relationship to the course material and fellow students.

- Develop, research and formulate an argument about a cultural text or phenomenon. While one has the option to focus on something that has literal “transgender content” you could also think about your analysis in terms of a trans methodological approach, a “transing” of something that might not, in a traditional sense read as “transgender.” Ultimately students will acquire the ability to interpret and critically analyze a text/phenomenon while bringing it into conversation with key concepts/texts covered in class.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multi-modal, interdisciplinary nature of Critical Transgender Studies and its observance of modes of analysis that move across/through categories and work to center queer, trans, indigenous, black, and people of color’s voices and concerns.

**WELCOMING CLASSROOM**

In this classroom you are invited to co-create a space where everyone is safe enough to be present, explore and share in new ideas and processes of discursive production. Language or behaviour that does not contribute to this spirit of collegiality is not accepted. That said, “Political correctness” can prevent us for doing the necessary work of excavating and deconstructing internalized oppression and/or oppressive behaviour and language use. Learning new material that has historically been
stigmatized can result in tense exchanges. As a learning environment, care will be taken to address/redress unintentional breaches of the sensitive nature of our space-making. Where necessary and possible we will work through difficult ideas and relationships on the spot or I may address it out of class. As this is a course that fundamentally arises through complex and rich relationships to one’s self, each other and society, it is a primary concern that we approach each other with respect and work to maintain each other’s integrity and presence.

I encourage you to question your discomfort and reflect if something stirs. Discomfort is often a sign of something that warrants attention and consideration and can lead to learning and growth. I encourage you to be engaged, critical, aware and sensitive to your surroundings and the realities of others. Let’s collectively produce a space that prioritizes thoughtful and considerate dialogue but not at the cost of harming others.

ATTENDANCE

I expect you to attend every class meeting prepared to discuss any reading assigned for the class.

PARTICIPATION

As a seminar course, your attendance and participation is important. The more you are able to contribute and engage with class content, the richer an environment we will be able to cultivate for each other. Learning and participation look differently for everyone. If you tend to speak a lot and wander far afield or if you tend to talk too little I will ask that you monitor yourselves and work on your listening skills or challenge yourself to contribute to conversation. Should certain assignments or expectations of participation present challenges for you I am available to work with you to find creative and dynamic ways for you to contribute and engage. I am committed to helping you develop your communication and interpersonal skills and will work with you to find ways to intentionally articulate your engagement strategies.

If meeting the criteria for this class presents any obstacles for you in terms of attending class, completing your assignments or readings, please do not hesitate to email or phone me.

ASSIGNMENTS:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>KEYWORD PRESENTATION AND REFLECTION</td>
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<td>SEMINAR PRESENTATION</td>
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<td>RESEARCH PROPOSAL</td>
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<td>RESEARCH PRESENTATION</td>
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<td>FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
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<td>PARTICIPATION/WEEKLY QUESTIONS</td>
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While everyone is encouraged to read both the assigned and recommended readings, graduate students are expected to read all of the assigned material. Additionally, please note the difference in assignment length for your final research project.
## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/texts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 24</td>
<td>FOUNDATIONS: A Passing Fancy</td>
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<td>Ware, Syrus Marcus. “All Power to All People?” <em>Transgender Studies Quarterly</em>. Vol 4, Number 2 (May 2017): 170-180. (7 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Oct 1</th>
<th>FOUNDATIONS II: Site Under Construction...Beware live power lines</th>
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<td>MEDICALIZATION PART I: Gender ... There’s a pill for that?</td>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>MEDICALIZATION PART II: A Bitter Pill to Swallow</th>
<th>Research proposals</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Latham, J.R. “Axiomatic Constituting ‘transexuality’ and trans sexualities in medicine.” <em>Sexualities</em> Special Issue Article (0)0, 2018: 1-18.</td>
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<td>Ashley, Florence. “Gatekeeping Hormone Replacement Therapy for Transgender Patients is Dehumanizing” <em>J Med Ethics</em>, 2019: 480-482</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>SOLIDARITIES PART II</td>
<td>Seminar Presentations</td>
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**Nov 12**

**RIGHTS & REGULATIONS: Transformative or Transnormative?**


**Recommended:**


**Seminar Presentations**

1.
2.

**Individual meetings**

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**Nov 19**

**Art, Activism, Affinity….**


**Recommended:**


Lee, Frances (ed.) *Toward an Ethics of Activism*  
ASSIGMENTS

TSQ KEYWORDS PRESENTATION AND RESPONSE
5-10 minute presentation + 1 page of reflection writing

The purpose of this assignment is to collectively build a foundation upon which we can structure our conversations over the course of the semester. While some keywords may seem self-evident or may already be known to you, I encourage you to use this space to discover new information, push beyond what you are already know. You have 5-10 minutes in which to present a brief summary of the article(s), offer a reflection and link the article(s) to a relevant illustrative example. As these definitions were written over 5 years ago and language continually evolves, you might ask yourself if they are still relevant today. Have the ideas notably shifted or expanded in new directions? While some of the words will be familiar to you, others offer definitions of complex ideas – you are not expected to fully grasp the breadth of some of the weightier concepts however you are expected to demonstrate that you have engaged with them in meaningful ways. Should you find yourself struggling with a particular concept or definition I encourage you to bring that process into your presentation, raise questions, concerns and invite your colleagues into productive conversation where we can work towards clarity. The written reflection piece is due in class.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION 30%
Each week selected students will serve as the key discussants for the readings and offer a critical presentation on one of the assigned readings. You can assume that your classmates have read the materials.

You are to prepare a high quality, carefully crafted presentation. Come prepared with a text or extended outline of your presentation (powerpoint, handouts, props optional). I highly recommend practising and timing your presentation. Please try to avoid reading as this is meant to stimulate discussion and is not an academic conference presentation.

Please consider the author’s purpose – why have they written this text? How have they written the text? What are the primary claims of the text and what larger discourses does it draw from and/or respond to? What evidence do they offer to support their claims? In order to fully explore a text it can
be helpful to “read around” the text – this might mean reading reviews of the text, exploring the works that the author is citing, reading critiques of the text. Who is this author in conversation with? Take your time to analyze the text and perform a close reading of significant ideas or passages that allow us to open discussion. Please also consider how the text itself performs – where and when was it published? Who is its intended audience. What and how does it perform?

Following your presentation, please be prepared to engage your classmates in discussion. While they have been asked to come prepared with questions, you should also prepare some questions designed to stimulate discussion. Alternately, you might consider bringing in a cultural text (video, song, poem...) that illustrates an aspect of the text and have us collectively experience and analyze it, apply the text to it.

I encourage you to be creative and use these guidelines as a basis from which to develop your seminar presentation. Standard oral presentation style is most welcome however I encourage you to find ways to intervene on this format - maybe you want to engage us in an activity that allows us to build upon and experience the reading in productive and innovative ways. For example: perhaps you want to bring us on a critical walk to analyze spatial/architectural dynamics in a particular way, maybe you want to hold class in the art gallery or in an alternative space, maybe you want to run a short creative workshop... Should you want to take your seminar presentation in a non-traditional and creative direction, please be considerate of your classmates and create safe, inclusive and accessible frameworks for participation. I am more than happy to consult and advise in this regard.

RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

In no more than 2 pages (double-spaced) please provide a succinct description of the subject you wish to develop you research around. Given that you have a limited amount of time in which to conduct your research, I recommend that you locate a “site” or particular set of theoretical concerns to focus upon (object text, social/political movement, controversy, event)- the idea being that through your research, you enter into productive conversation with some of the concepts we will cover throughout the semester. Your proposal should include a brief context for your research, your guiding research question(s), the literature you intend to engage and the methodological approach your study will take and what your research and analysis hopes to uncover.

Things to consider:
-what is your relationship to the material?
-what can you bring to this subject? (new way of researching/articulating? Addressing a gap? Providing analysis on a current situation/site?)
-Why this? Why now?
-How are you going to answer your research question (methodology – reading? interviews? Field work? Trip to an archive/art gallery?) Given the time constraints there are limits to what can be accomplished here so please be realistic about your ability to engage a particular topic.
-What will you do interrogate your information?

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

This is an opportunity to present the research you have been doing all throughout the semester as you work towards completing your final project. Given the time constraints I ask that you time and practice your presentation – you will have 15 minutes to present your research followed by a 10 minute period for discussion. Please prepare approx. 2000 words of written prose. This is an
opportunity to workshop your research and get feedback from the class. One week prior to your presentation, please provide material for your classmates to consider so they can come prepared to engage your topic. This could be a short text (aim for no more than 10 pages), a video, article, etc. Given the nature of your research, you may need to be creative in how you share your materials. E-mail me and I will help distribute the material either through email or by uploading it to CULearn.

**RESEARCH PROJECT/PAPER (undergraduates 10-15, graduate 15-20)**
This is the final version of your workshoped research. I encourage you to think about form and content in whatever way best suits your individual project. While you are welcome to produce a standard critical academic essay, you are also welcome to push beyond the boundaries of what might be considered traditional academic literary forms and to incorporate alternative modes of knowledge creation and production. Veering away from traditional academic formatting can be richly productive, dynamic and exciting however it requires thoughtful consideration and often practice and experimentation to achieve clarity of expression (your research presentation is a good space to workshop/experiment). I will schedule individual meetings with each of you mid semester to ensure that your project is consistent with the course objectives and that you have the resources and support necessary to execute what you set out to do.

**PARTICIPATION & WEEKLY QUESTIONS – 10%**
As a seminar course, the experience of the classroom will be significantly enriched by student contribution to discussion. I expect you to come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss them. In order to help stimulate conversation I ask that each week, in response to one or all the readings, you bring a well-crafted question – this might be a passage or concept that you found challenging and want to explore through discussion, or a perhaps you want to critically question the text and prompt us to work through different interpretations we might bring forward. I will not regularly be checking that you are bringing written questions to class but rather will gauge this based on your overall engagement with course content. If speaking up poses a challenge for you and you would like to submit the question to me via email so I can bring it into our conversation please let me know at the beginning of the semester so we can work on finding strategies that allow you to participate and engage with the classroom experience.

**Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD),
chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website: https://carleton.ca/pmc/ for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

PLAGIARISM
The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence, which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

Read more about academic integrity here:

https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/
Extended Bibliography

**If you are not already familiar with them, I highly recommend exploring both The Transgender Studies Reader and The Transgender Studies Reader II as well as acquainting yourself with Transgender Studies Quarterly.


https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.0.0099.


https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v32i61.22414.


Latham, J.R. Axiomatic Constituting ‘transexuality’ and trans sexualities in medicine.


—. “‘A New Hope’: The Psychic Life of Passing.” *Hypatia*. Vol. 24, No. 3 Transgender Studies and Feminism: Theory, Politics, andGendered Realities (Summer, 2009), pp. 77-92


World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People. 7th version.