Transgender Lives WGSS/QS 473/573

Instructor: Brenda McComb, Dean, Graduate School, 300 Kerr Admin Building. Brenda.mccomb@oregonstate.edu

3 Credits. 12:00 pm - 1:20 pm, Tuesdays/Thursdays. Milam Hall 206

Suggested Prerequisite: QS/WGSS 262 or equivalent

Course description: Although many people in our western cultures perceive gender as bimodal and fixed from birth, individuals whose identify of self does not match the individual’s biological sex face significant social pressures to conform to gender norms. Transgender individuals have taken the step to express their gender consistent with their self-identity and in so doing often are confronted with challenges as they attempt to integrate into society. In this course, students will be introduced to the biological, social and cultural contexts for transgendered individuals.

Learning Outcomes:
- Undergraduate students will be able to understand and place themselves along a gender continuum
- Undergraduate students will be able to understand the social construction of gender
- Undergraduate students will understand the process of transitioning between genders
- Undergraduate students will understand the social issues facing transgendered people
- Graduate students will apply their knowledge of transgender peoples’ lives to development of a plan to improve inclusivity of transgender people in an academy, industry or agency of their choice.

In order to ensure that learning objectives are met, Tuesday classes will include an in-depth discussion session from 12:50-1:20 that includes bringing guests into class to share their stories and allow students to ask questions. Thursday class time from 12:50-1:20 will be focused on development of inclusivity plans being developed by graduate students, but all students participate in the discussion.

Learning Resources

It is imperative that you refer to materials on Blackboard each week. In addition to required participation in online discussion questions posted on the Discussion Board, I also post videos and other reference materials on weekly Assignments to assist you with learning the material. Each week I will pose a discussion question on the Discussion Board and I will expect you to respond to the question and also respond to a response by a classmate.
Textbooks


Assigned Readings


WPATH. 2011. Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender nonconforming People. World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Ver. 7.

Evaluation of student performance

Grading for this course is based entirely on a midterm oral exam, a take home final exam, and discussion both on the Blackboard Discussion site and in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading:</th>
<th>WGSS/QS 463 Points</th>
<th>WGSS/QS 563 Points</th>
<th>Grading Scale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Midterm Exam</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90-100 = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home final exam</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80-89 = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70-79 = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusivity Plan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60-69 = D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;=59 = F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Outline

  • Primary and secondary sex characteristics: are you a boy or a girl or a…
  • Intersexed individuals
  • Gender as a social construct: Are you a man or a woman or a…
  • Gender as a felt identity: I am a man or a woman or a…
  • The gender binary vs the gender continuum: think outside the box

  • The vocabulary of transgenderism: the alphabet soup of gender
  • DSM-IV and gender dysphoria: Mentally ill? Really?
  • Possible causes of transgenderism
  • Gender identity and sexual orientation – multiple continuua
  • Demographic characteristics of the trans community

  • Gender expressions in the US; what are the gender norms?
  • Gender segregation in our society; where do the rest of us fit?
  • Transgenderism in other cultures: Hirja, Two-spirit, Samoa, Argentina
  • Raising children in a gendered culture; forcing gender norms on kids

  • Breaking through social norms – shame, embarrassment, and realization of self-identity
  • The transition team; work with others or go it alone?
  • Therapy and psychosocial services; I didn’t learn THAT in college!
  • Support groups; Safe places with others; normalizing gender
  • Medical support – endocrinology, health care: I didn’t learn THAT in medical school!
  • Hair management; too much, too little, not in the right places.
  • Harry Benjamin Standards of care; doing it ‘right’ according to others

  • Coming out to family, friends and co-workers; shock and awe and mixed pronouns
  • The real life test; once required; euphoria punctuated by terror
  • Surgery – MTF; vaginoplasty (inverting the sock); breasts, face, tracheal shave, and more!
  • Surgery – FTM; phalloplasty (using spare parts); chest reconstruction, and more!

• Post-surgical care and issues; learning care for a new anatomy
• What insurance does and does not cover
• “Pre-existing conditions”
• Finding trans-knowledgeable health care
• What they did not teach you in medical school


• Name change; getting to pick your own can be empowering, but difficult in some states
• Changing sex/gender on documents; back to boxes again
• Social security and passports; travelling and working as transgendered
• Being declared mentally ill; gender dysphoria; Am I ‘cured’?
• Child custody issues; having the right to be a parent
• Marriage – now same sex? Fluidity of gender does not lend itself well to marriage being between a man and a woman.


• Finding a partner and what to reveal; and when; or if…
• Sexual relations after surgery; the plumbing works and so does the electricity!
• Staying in an existing relationship – Loving the ‘who’ and not the ‘what’
• Raising children as a trans parent; Mommies, daddies, maddies, and ?
• Job interviews; acceptance, rejection, and confidence.
• Workplace issues; of bathrooms and continued employment

**Week 9 – Discrimination.** Grant et al. (2011)

• Responses to discrimination – suicide, homelessness, substance abuse, depression. All reasons not to transition, but we do it anyway. A choice?
• Protected status in states, the US and the world. Gender identity and expression – where are the limits?
• Types of discrimination – bullying, job searches, inter-personal relationships, violence, health care, religious beliefs, and much much more.
• Discrimination in other cultures

**Week 10 – Building cultures of acceptance for trans-peoples:** Riley et al. (2011); Beemyn and Rankin (2011) Chapter 5.

• Dispelling myths and providing education; eliminating transphobia
• Meaningfully adding the T to LGB; politically necessary but, really?
• The good, the bad and the ugly of drag shows; stereotyping is not helpful.
• Focusing on people’s needs and not on sensationalist journalism
• Pulling trans-people into cultural norms; nuclei of safe communities from which acceptance can spread.
• Companies recruiting from the LGBT community. Putting brains to work in a workplace that embraces trans-people.
Services for Students with Disabilities: "Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at (541) 737-4098."

Expectations for Student Conduct: Student conduct is governed by the university’s policies, as explained in the Office of Student Conduct: information and regulations. In an academic community, students and faculty, and staff each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students, faculty, and staff have the responsibility to treat each other with understanding, dignity and respect.

For further legal information, refer to Oregon Administrative Rule 576-015-0015 (1) and the OSU Office of Student Conduct.

Academic Integrity: OSU Student Conduct Code lists university policies on civility and honesty. Descriptions and definitions of academic dishonesty are included: cheating, fabrication, assisting, tampering, and plagiarism. Students are expected to comply with all regulations pertaining to academic honesty, defined as: An intentional act of deception in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic work. For further information contact the office of Student Conduct and Mediation at 541-737-3656.