**THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

**THE GRADUATE CENTER**

**WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES – SPRING 2025**

**WGS 71601 / WSCP 81601: TOPICS IN WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES**

**GENDER OUTLAWS AND OUTLAW GENRES: TRANS AND NONBINARY LITERATURE, PERFORMANCE, AND VISUAL ART**

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**Women’s and Gender Studies Program Description:** The Master of Arts in Women’s and Gender Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to graduate study in topics related to women’s and gender issues. The program aims to combine theory and practice, looking at gender and sexuality issues from an academic perspective, while at the same time giving students a grounding in real world concerns and the tools they need to think critically and creatively about women’s and gender issues. Students enrolled in the program will gain a broad understanding of gender and sexuality theories, writing, and movements, as well as develop special competence in their particular area of interest. This program is open to students from any relevant academic major, and/or working people seeking to return to school for a higher degree. Students completing this degree will be prepared to enter a wide range of government or private organizations that require gender expertise including social policy organizations, and/or to undertake further study at the Ph.D. level. Students will have access to diverse faculty and wide expertise as well as to the rich resources available in New York City. For more information, contact the Center for the Study of Women in Society, 365 5th Avenue, Room 5116 New York, New York, 10016 [csws@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:csws@gc.cuny.edu), 212-817-8895, the Director Prof. Dána-Ain Davis <https://centerforstudyofwomen.commons.gc.cuny.edu/masters-program/>

**Course Description:**

In this course, we will explore the categories of transgender and nonbinary as new configurations of identities, bodies, and families beyond binaries, kinships, and borders in culture and society. Trans and nonbinary offer alternatives to categories of knowledge in traditional genres and disciplines, evidenced in the fashionable and flourishing transdisciplinary canon of trans and nonbinary literature, performance, and visual art. The notion of *freedom* and attendant acts of *rebellion* will direct our exploration of the borderlands that divide hegemonic expectation and subaltern transgression. We will pay particular attention to what Kate Bornstein has termed “Gender Outlaws”––those identities and bodies that challenge gender binaries and social borders and transcend normative ways of being, as well as what Caren Kaplan has termed “Outlaw Genres”––those texts that transcend culturally acceptable scripts as a means of more accurately expressing and representing the self across or against genre, medium, and discipline. We will explore the intersecting identities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, ability, religion, and age in relation to politics of place. Of these we will ask, “How are personal, social, political, and cultural norms established?”; “How are disciplines and transdisciplines created and reproduced?”; “How do bodies and bodies of work transcend space?; “What is a rebel and how does one rebel?”; “What effect does form have on an argument?” For your class projects, you will design an analytical paper of your views on one of the class concepts in the cultural productions explored, such as what it means to be free, an outsider, a rebel, or a gender outlaw, and you also will design a multimodal memoir that illustrates a particular place, moment, or issue that has shaped you as an individual.

**Required Texts:**

• Bernstein Sycamore, Mattilda. *The Freezer Door*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2020.

• Horn, Lars. *Voice of the Fish: A Lyric Essay.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2022.

• Joukhadar, Zeyn. *Thirty Names of Night.* New York: Atria, 2020.

• *Orlando*, *My Political Autobiography*. Directed by Paul B. Preciado, [Les Films du Poisson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Films_du_Poisson), 2023.

• Reinhold, Shola Von. *Lote*. London: Jacaranda, 2020.

• Solomon, Rivers. *The Deep*. New York:**‎**S&S/Saga Press, 2019.

• Ulanday Barrett, Kay. *More Than Organs.* Little Rock: Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020.

• Whitehead, Joshua. *Making Love with the Land*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2022.

• Various Performance and Visual Art by Kiyan Williams, Cassils, Elektra KB, Kris Grey, Zanele Muholi, Salgu Wissmath, and Chris E. Vargas, among others.

**Course Objectives:**

• You will do close readings of texts, including summarizing and annotating, and understand social, political, cultural, and historical issues, contexts, and terms.

• You will create central arguments that include a clear topic, a solid stance, and provide support for your main ideas by quoting, paraphrasing, and analyzing passages from texts.

• You will recognize your writing processes, receive feedback from your peers, conference with me, and revise your major writing assignments.

• You will engage in rigorous discussion that fosters critical reflection about feminist theories in your lives, in the scholarship, in the world, and in the texts through collaborative interaction.

• You will write grammatically and mechanically correct papers and cite in academic format.

**Requirements:**

•A co-facilitation of a class based on an assigned reading, which includes an overview and discussion questions to lead a small group discussion of approximately 45 minutes

•An analytical paper of your views on one of the class concepts, such as what it means to be free, an outsider, a rebel, or a gender outlaw, which explores at least one of the texts and totals 10-15 pages

• A creative project/ multimodal memoir that illustrates a particular place, moment, or issue that has shaped you as an individual and totals 10-15 pages

• Class participation and discussion

•All written assignments should be posted on online

**Grade Distribution:**

Group Presentation 20%

Analytical Project 30%

Creative Project 30%

Participation (Discussion and Peer Review) 20%

**Writing Procedures:**

• You will engage in a process of composing (i.e., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading) for all writing assignments.

• You will receive a wealth of feedback on your essay from your peers. You also will conference with me. Before you submit your final drafts, you will produce several drafts for each essay, including for peer review and professor review. You will present your papers to the class during writing workshops once during the semester for feedback.

• You will have the opportunity to revise your essay after your initial grade is recorded so long as you consider my feedback and submit within one week. Revisions have the possibility of replacing the previous grade, but only if substantial improvement is evident. In other words, simply changing mechanical errors (i.e., commas) in your essay will not raise grades.

• You will be given ample feedback. This feedback will allow you to learn from the comments and apply the comments in your future writing projects.

**Discussion Procedures:**

• You will be well-prepared for all class discussions by doing all the assigned reading and writing.

• You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of the readings by being fully engaged in class discussions.

• You will be respectful of your peers’ ideas and my ideas.

**Civility:**

The Graduate Center is committed to the highest standards of academic and ethical integrity, acknowledging that respect for yourself and others is the foundation of educational excellence. Civility in the classroom and respect for diversity and the opinions of others are very important in an academic environment. It is likely you may not agree with everything said or discussed in the classroom, yet courteous behavior and responses are expected. Acts of harassment and discrimination based on matters of race, ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexuality, religion, and/ or ability, etc., are not acceptable. I promote strict enforcement of these rules. All students, faculty, or staff have a right to be in a safe environment, free of disturbance, and civil in all aspects of human relations.

**Names and Pronouns:** I affirm all forms of gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to inform me of your pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more information, please visit <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/equal-opportunity-and-non-discrimination-policy/and> <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2017/02/24/protecting-the-rights-of-transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-students/>​

**Artificial Intelligence/ Chat GPT**

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is strictly prohibited in all coursework and assignments. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of AI-generated text, speech, or images, as well as the use of AI tools or software to complete any portion of a project or assignment. Any violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including a failing grade for the assignment or course. Our goal is to encourage critical thinking and creativity, and the use of AI detracts from this objective. Students are expected to use their own knowledge, research and analysis to complete coursework.

If you are not yet familiar with ChatGPT or its capabilities, you are now: this policy statement was generated by the ChatGPT AI engine based on the prompt “write a syllabus policy statement forbidding the use of AI.”

**Accommodations:**

CUNY Policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. The Graduate Center provides adaptive technologies and services for qualifying students. For more information, please see the section “Student Disability Services” on the page <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Student-Life/Resources>. In addition, please consult with me if I can help meet your need for accommodations in this area.

\*I wanted to check in about course accessibility and about health precautions specifically, especially considering the current illness surge. Our classroom will be equipped with a HEPA air purifier, and we will have K/N95 masks available for free. While there is no mask mandate at CUNY, for everyone’s sake, and particularly for our more vulnerable participants, I propose that we mask in class, and I urge you to stay home if you have a contagious airborne infection. We will have a Zoom in option for anyone who cannot make it in person. If you have other accessibility requirements, or requests, please reach out. I want to make sure the class works for everyone.

**Participation:**

The class will meet in person for seminars, but flexibility for remote participation is available to students who have reached out and need accomodations. Active participation in seminar discussions includes: finish reading assigned readings, being prepared to raise questions, comments, observations, analyses of connections and discontinuities in/between the texts at hand and readings from earlier classes.

Each seminar meeting will loosely follow this agenda:

1. Welcome (Prof. Washburn) (5 min)

2. Upcoming deadlines and readings (Prof. Washburn) (5 min)

3. Announcements (Seminar participants) (5 min)

4. Overview of Assigned Reading (Prof. Washburn) (10 min)

5. Presentations and Group Discussions (Co-facilitators, Prof. Washburn) (40-45 min)

6. Report Back (Co-facilitators, Seminar participants) (30-40 min)

7. Closing (Seminar participants) (5 min)

**Co-Facilitation**:

Once during the semester, each student will submit a facilitation overview and discussion

questions to share with the class for one week of the seminar. Each student’s overview and discussion questions will be due online by 2pm on Mondays (one day before the scheduled seminar meeting). You can post your overview and discussion questions earlier than then, too. During the online seminar meeting, you will give a presentation/facilitate and a group discussion. You will use at least one of your discussion questions to engage fellow seminar participants in discussing the assigned reading for the day. You can facilitate the seminar with your co-facilitator using the discussion questions and overview that you have prepared.

\*Because this class is overtallied, you will be doing presentations in groups of at least three people.

**Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged (intentionally or unintentionally) use of summary, paraphrase, direct quotation, language, statistics, or ideas from articles or other information sources, including the Internet. For further information about avoiding plagiarism please review *Avoiding and Detecting Plagiarism: A Guide for Graduate Students with Examples*: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf>. The Graduate Center is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity. You must cite according to MLA, Chicago, ASA, APA, or some other academic format. Cite in whatever style you choose (footnotes, end notes, in-text parenthetical citations), but you must cite your work. If you plagiarize all or part of a writing assignment, you will automatically receive an F on it, and it cannot be revised. If you repeat the offense, you will fail the course. You also may be subject to other disciplinary measures. The Graduate College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty.

**Schedule of Assignments:**

**Please note:** The following schedule is tentative and may change based on the needs of the class. Please read to contribute to our dicussions.

**Week One (1/28): Introductions and Trans Studies**

**Week Two (2/4):** **Zeyn Joukhadar’s *Thirty Names of Night***

**Interview with Red Washburn**

**Week Three (2/11): Lars Horn’s *Voice of the Fish***

**Interview with Red Washburn**

**Paper Topic and Sources Due**

**\*No class 2/18**

**Week Four (2/25): Shola Von Reinhold’s *Lote***

**Week Five (3/4): Shola Von Reinhold’s *Lote***

**Week Six (3/11): Kay Ulanday Barrett’s *More Than Organs***

**Interview with Red Washburn**

**Week Seven (3/18): Rivers Solomon’s *The Deep***

**Week Eight (3/25): Joshua Whitehead’s *Making Love with the Land***

**\*Rough Draft of Analytical Project Due**

**Peer Review - Online**

**Week Nine (4/1): Spoken Word, Performance, Visual Art, and Guest Speaker**

**Kiyan Williams, Cassils, Elektra KB, Kris Grey, Alok Vaid-Menon, Zanele Muholi, and Salgu Wissmath AND *Trans Hirstory in 99 Objects*, eds.** [**David Evans Frantz**](https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/author/F/D/au208662359.html)**,**[**Christina Linden**](https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/author/L/C/au208662361.html)**, and Chris E. Vargas (Blackboard)**

**Interviews with Red Washburn**

**Guest Speaker Kris Grey**

**\*Final Draft of Analytical Project Due**

**Week Ten (4/8): Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore’s *The Freezer Door***

**Interview with Red Washburn**

**Spring Break 4/12-4/20**

**Week Eleven (4/22): Film**

**Paul Preciado’s *Orlando*, *My Political Autobiography***

**Week Twelve (4/29): Peer Review and Open Mic**

**\*Rough Draft of Creative Project Due**

**Week Thirteen (5/6): Peer Review**

**\*Revised Draft of Creative Project Due**

**Week Fourteen (5/13): Course Wrap-Up**

**\*Final Draft of Creative Project Due**

**Analytical Paper**

The purpose of analytical writing is to argue your interpretation, perspective, point of view, or slant on particular works. It should lure people to your way of thinking or, at the very least, to make them aware of your views. You should not include summaries or personal experiences. Instead, you should show your own critical understanding of the works—what you think of them. You should shape your subject matter in a sophisticated and persuasive way. You should consider subject, occasion, and point of view as readers and writers for a general audience. You should narrow down your topics by theme (e.g. rebellion, freedom, and outsider identities, etc.). Then you must make a solid argument that contains several main ideas that support your purpose. For instance, you might explore the theme of gender variability and freedom in Shola von Reinhold’s *Lote*. How does Shola von Reinhold discuss race, gender, and sexuality? How does freedom and gender variability help you discuss this text? Can you comment on the use of form, for example, the asterisk in “trans\*,” and relate to the role of the “white book” and academic resistance to it in the novel? That could be your focus and argument. However, then you must find specific passages from the text that show these themes. You must use specific textual evidence--to quote and paraphrase--to support your central arguments. You must explain and analyze why you are using the passages to build your arguments in all paragraphs. For this reason, you should not under-quote or over-quote material. All of your citations for passages should be cited according to MLA format (see the citation guide below for further assistance or use another academic citation format like Chicago or APA).You should organize your paper in a way that shows your introduction, purpose, point of view, audience, central argument and main ideas, forms of supporting evidence, and conclusion. You should check for coherence within and between paragraphs, and proofread your work for errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling. You should think hard, think deep, and write a critical analysis paper of approximately 10-15 pages that shows your interpretation of the works and your ideas about concepts in them. You may select any theme and passages from the texts that you want. You should submit all drafts and peer reviews. This paper comprises 30% of your grade. Your paper should be double-spaced, typed, have one inch margins all around, be 12 point Times New Roman font, and have a proper heading with your full name, my full name, the full course title and section, date, and a title. It should be 10-15 pages in length.

**Grading Checklist**

•You should write an introduction that has a strong hook or captivating opening (i.e., quote, anecdote, or question).

• You should synthesize your central arguments and main ideas, and allow room for other critical insights to emerge.

• You should work on rewriting in a professional tone by removing or revising personal experiences and reflections. Instead, you should focus on social and cultural commentary about the texts for your body and middle paragraphs.

• You should save passages from the texts you enjoyed, yet locate additional passages that further support your critical insights.

• You should explain and analyze why the passages you chose are important. You should support your claims by adding additional topic paragraphs.

• You should include a conclusion that neither summarizes your introduction nor includes topics that you did not discuss in your portfolio. It should focus on wrapping up your paper.

• You should revise your portfolio with a close eye on eliminating any grammatical and mechanical errors.

**Citation­­ Guide**

•Remember to include all drafts.

•Remember to include a proper heading.

•Remember to craft a creative title. (i.e., “Paper” or “*More than Organs* and *The Deep*” are not creative).

•Remember to do parenthetical references in some type of format. For instance, according to MLA format, all references for *Making Love with the Land* should have the author and the page from which you are citing in parentheses followed by a period. For instance, “. . .” (Whitehead 56). If “Whitehead” is in a sentence, just write the page number. For instance, Whitehead writes, “. . .” (56).

•Remember a passage that is more than four lines long needs to be indented.

•Remember that periods and commas always go in quotes and that only quotes within quotes have single quotes.

•Remember to do a Works Cited page. No secondary sources are required, but if you wish to use them, you can do so.

For a book, the citation is:

Brady, Evelyn et al. *In the Footsteps of Anne: Stories of Republican Women*

*Ex-Prisoners*. Belfast: Shanway Press, 2011.

For an article in a book, the citation is:

James, Joy. “Framing the Panther: Assata Shakur and Black Female

Agency.” *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. Ed. David F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 138-160.

For a journal article, the citation is:

Butler, Judith. “Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity.” *Critical Inquiry*. 35.4.

(Summer 2009): 773-795.

For a website, the citation is:

Goodman, Amy. “Deportations Continue Despite Review of Immigrants with

Family Ties.” *Democracy Now!* 7 June 2012. Headlines. <www.democracynow.org>.

**Creative Project**

Memoir is a sliver—or slice—of your life experience. (Memoir is not the story of your entire life—that would be autobiography.) This slice of life becomes the lens through which you tell a particular memoir story. At the heart of every memoir, beneath the surface story of events, is a deeper story truth. This deeper truth imbues the memoir with meaning as the author makes sense of her experience. Consider [Vivian Gornick](http://www.amazon.com/Situation-Story-Art-Personal-Narrative/dp/0374528586/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1426024013&sr=1-1&keywords=situation+and+story) on this point: “What happened to the writer is not what matters; what matters is the large sense that the writer is able to make of what happened.”If a book-length memoir is a slice of life, then a flash memoir is a moment. But that moment is not necessarily bound by time. It is, rather, a singular instance of insight—a “flash” or epiphany—that imbues even the shortest piece of memoir with meaning. In his preface to [*In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction*](http://www.amazon.com/Short-Collection-Brief-Creative-Nonfiction/dp/0393314928/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1426024097&sr=1-1&keywords=In+Short)edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, Bernard Cooper writes, “To write short nonfiction requires an alertness to detail, a quickening of the senses, a focusing of the literary lens, so to speak, until one has magnified some small aspect of what it means to be human.”

The flash in “flash memoir” refers to its brevity, yes, but it also—and more importantly—refers to its “flash” of insight into human experience. Like a book-length memoir, a flash memoir engages readers at an emotional level so that they come away changed by a new level of understanding, however subtle, into what it means to be human. See the work of Marilyn Bousquin: <https://writingwomenslives.com/flash-memoir-benefits-writing-short-memoir/> Your job is to identify a powerful moment in your autobiography and communicate how that particular moment impacted (and perhaps continues to impact) your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. This project may take the form of a written narrative, a series of illustrations, a short film, a choreographed dance, or any other appropriate representational form that you will share with the class for our open mic. It should total 10-15 pages in length. It comprises 30% of your grade.

\*This project was co-written in collaboration with Dr. Matt Schultz.

**Freewriting Ideas/ Exercises**

1. Any of the topics in the course text
2. Writing muse or demon
3. “Why I write”
4. Freewrite: about an image or an artifact or object that has significance for you.
5. A fragment a sense memory from childhood—or a fragment of a personal essay or memory that you have a start for
6. Freewrite: “Color my childhood….” Choose a color or series of colors
7. Earliest memories or early memories of home or family
8. Sense memories
9. Birth of consciousness
10. Moment of pain
11. Weird childhood obsession
12. Encounter with a stranger or strange encounter with a stranger
13. Defining moments
14. Close your eyes. Think of a year in your life—events—images that rise to the surface of consciousness
15. Think about a time in your life when your forgot something about yourself or your past—or tried to forget something about yourself or your past
16. Write about an event that you witness or experienced that led you to have negative associations with a place, person, or object
17. Write about death or loss
18. Lost places or lost people
19. Describe your childhood home—use your five senses
20. Food memories
21. Failed romance
22. Photograph and its significance/think about a movie scene or a photo or video that challenges you to figure out what is going on or you cannot figure out
23. Think of an incident in your life that happened and pretend that it didn’t happen
24. Describe a party—focus on one person and his/her backstory
25. Moment of moral choice
26. Experience of prejudice
27. Moment of fear
28. An unexpected event that caught you off guard
29. A holiday experience
30. A time you did not want to be part of your culture
31. Write about a time you were treated unfairly for your age
32. Write about a time an adult was too afraid or uncomfortable to do something, so you had to do it instead
33. Write about a sanctuary
34. Exploration of a deeper topic through a sense
35. Experience of a physical trauma that led to a psychological change
36. Flashback—pieces of regret—memories of regret
37. Unsent letters expressing what you would have liked to say to someone--write in the form of a letter
38. Describe a time when it meant more for someone to simply listen to what you had say, rather than engage in conversation.
39. Write about lost people or lost places
40. Write about a person who made a mark on your life
41. Write about your relationship with your body or your hair
42. Use this opening: “When I look in the mirror, I…
43. I fear … I release …
44. One thing I want my family to know about me is … One thing I wish I would

hear my family say is …

45. I feel the most joy when …

46. I feel the most pain when …

47. So here’s what happened …

48. The ways I identify include … Of these, I identify the most as/with …because...

49. One thing I never want to say is…

50. I am … I was … You are… You were…

51. I remember … I forgot…

52. I want … I desire…

53. If fear was not a factor, I would …

54. What is most important to me is …

55. I was taught to … but I defy that because …

56. I say… Society says…

57. If my life were a movie, the theme song would be …

58. The meaning of my life is …

59. I often wonder …

60. My truth is …

**\*This list was co-written in collaboration with Dr. Jan Zlotnik Schmidt.**