**CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

**BROOKLYN COLLEGE**

**WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM – FALL 2025**

**WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES 2100**

**KEY IDEAS IN LGBTQ**

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Pronouns: They/He

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**Women’s and Gender Studies Program**

According to the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, “Our interdisciplinary Women’s and Gender Studies Program will provide you the skills to examine and critique cultural, economic, historical, political, social, and sexual issues using feminist and queer philosophical paradigms. Aside from learning about a cross section of feminist and queer thinkers, places and events, you will explore ideas such as how one's gender affects access to power and whether or not the idea of power itself is an inherently problematic arrangement. You will also have the opportunity to study how other factors such as race, class, sexuality, and ability further impact one’s feminist identification. A degree in women’s and gender studies opens up the door for careers in activism, education, law, medicine, nonprofit, politics, psychology, and more. We also offer a minor in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) studies, which investigates many of the same issues from the perspectives of queer theory and queer thinkers.”

**Catalog Description**

3 hours; 3 credits Concepts, theories, and texts central to the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer experience: definitions of sex, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation; queer theory; intersections of sexuality, race, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and class; study of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) politics, communities, identities, and new social movements; representations of gender and sexuality in popular culture, religion, arts, literature, and visual culture; examination of different disciplinary and methodological approaches. Prerequisite: Core Curriculum 1230 or WGST 1001 or permission of the coordinator.

**Required Texts**

All texts are on online, except the following text:

Imbler, Sabrina. *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2022 (any version/format and at Bookstore).

**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 gender in your lives, the world, and the texts through collaborative interaction.

• You will write grammatically and mechanically correct papers and cite in MLA (or some other academic) format.

**Requirements**

• A creative project/ multimodal memoir that illustrates a particular place, moment, or issue that has shaped you as an individual and totals 5-7 pages

•An individual or group presentation/ handout on a text of approximately 10-12 minutes, which should introduce information about the text and pose questions for discussion

• Class attendance, freewrites, participation, and conferences

•All written assignments should be handed into me and posted on Blackboard

**Grade Distribution:**

Creative Project 60%

Presentation 20%

Participation (Discussions, Freewrites, Conferences, & Open Mic) 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 essays 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 essays after your initial grade is recorded so long as you discuss your writing in informal conferences with me. 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 essays will not raise grades.

• You will be given ample feedback on each essay before the next essay is due. This feedback will allow you to learn from the comments and apply the comments to the next essay.

**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. (Being respectful also includes turning off cell phones and refraining from other disrespectful behaviors, such as sleeping, doing homework, and leaving class for food, coffee, or phone calls.) You will be expected to turn off your cell phones.

•Those of you who are not prepared, not engaged, and/or not respectful will be asked to leave class.

**Gender Pronoun and Name**

I affirm all forms of gender 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 on your preferred gender pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Attendance**

Attendance and participation are also inextricably linked. In order to participate, you need to attend class. Attending class is imperative, for that is when much of the discussing, writing, and critiquing will take place. Please come to class and participate. Participation is part of your grade. If you must be absent, please email me.

**Academic Integrity**

According to the Academic Integrity Policy, “The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for policy implementation can be found at www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.”

**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.”

**Sexual and Gender-based Harassment, Discrimination, and Title IX**

According to Sexual and Gender-based Harassment, Discrimination, and Title IX, “Brooklyn College is committed to fostering a safe, equitable and productive learning environment. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment on or off campus can find information about the reporting process, their rights, specific details about confidentiality of information, and reporting obligations of Brooklyn College employees on the Office of Diversity and Equity Programs website. Reports of sexual misconduct or discrimination may be made to Public Safety (719.951.5511), the New York City Police Department (911 or a local NYPD precinct), Patricio Jimenez, Senior Investigator and Title IX Coordinator (718.951.5000, ext. 3602), or Michelle Vargas, Assistant Director of Judicial Affairs, Division of Student Affairs (718.951.5352).” For more information please visit:

**Disability Services**

According to Disability Services, “In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at (718) 951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.”

**Bereavement**

According to the Student Bereavement Policy, “Upon approval from the Division of Student Affairs, the student is allowed one week, commencing from the day of the death of the loved one, of excused absence. Should the student feel that he or she needs additional days, these should be discussed with individual course instructors and/or the Division of Student Affairs. The Division of Student Affairs will contact the student's faculty and academic staff of the student's courses. Faculty and academic staff will be advised that extensions must be granted to the student for the period of one week of excused absence. Further extensions may be negotiated with the student when he or she returns to campus. Students are encouraged to discuss options with their instructors.”

**Religious Observances**

According to Consideration of Religious Observances, “Please bear in mind that due to religious holidays and related religious observances, a number of students will not be able to attend classes or take examinations. New York State Education Law (Title I, Article 5, Section 224-a) requires that we “make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his [or her] religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which he [or she] may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.”

**Student Wellness and Welfare**

*Personal Counseling Center* (0203 James Hall) provides individual and group counseling, emergency support, and other services to all Brooklyn College students. Call 718.951.5363 or email BCPersonalCounseling@gmail.com.

*Immigrant Student Success Office* (117 Roosevelt Hall) provides immigrants and other first-generation students with immigration-informed academic and non-academic support and resources, including legal services, personal and career counseling. Call 718.951.5023 or email ISSO@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

*LGBTQ+ Resource Center* (219 Student Center) is both a welcoming space and supportive network for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and other LGBTQIA+ identities, and allied students, staff, and faculty at Brooklyn College. Call 718.951.5739 or email LGBTQCenter@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

*Women’s Center* (227 Ingersoll Hall Extension) expands on the conventional direct services approach of traditional women’s centers, which focuses on solving immediate crises through referrals and/or counseling, adopting a wide range of multidimensional needs-driven program activities that address the emotional, intellectual, physical and financial well-being of the whole person. Call 718.951.5777

**Schedule of Assignments:**

**Please note:** The following schedule is tentative and may change based on the needs of the class.

**Week One (8/26 & 8/28): Introductions; Desire and Survival**

T: Syllabus Distribution and Introductions

TH: “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” and “A Litany for Survival,” Audre Lorde

**Week Two (9/2 & 9/4):** **Terms, Words, and Acts**

T: “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix,” Susan Stryker

TH: “Introduction,” *Sex Is As Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity*, Paisley Currah

**Week Three (9/9 & 9/11): Inventions and Orientations**

T: “The Invention of Heterosexuality,” Jonathan Ned Katz

TH: “Sexual Orientation,” Sara Ahmed

**Week Four (9/16 & 9/18): Stonewall Biography and Poetry**

T: “Queens in Exile: The Forgotten Ones,” Sylvia Rivera and “The Stonewall Rioter,” excerpt from *Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson*, Tourmaline

TH: “Christopher Street Liberation Day, June 28, 1970” and “Eat Rice Have Faith in Women,” Fran Winant

**Week Five (9/23 & 9/25): Biography and Film**

T: No Class

TH: Film: *The Death and Life of Marsha P Johnson*, David France

**Week Six (9/30 & 10/2): Manifestos & Collectives**

T: “The Woman-Identified Woman,” Radicalesbians, “A Black Feminist Statement,”

The Combahee River Collective, “Femme Shark Manifesto” (QZAP), “What We Want, What We Believe,” Third World Gay Liberation, “The ‘Empire’ Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto,” Sandy Stone, and “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” Emi Koyama

TH: No Class

**Week Seven (10/7 & 10/9): Creative Nonfiction, Identity, and the Natural World**

T: “If You Flush a Goldfish,” “My Mother and the Starving Octopus,” and “My Grandmother and the Sturgeon” from *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*, Sabrina Imbler; Interview Sabrina Imbler, Red Washburn

TH: “How to Draw a Sperm Whale” and “Pure Life” from *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*, Sabrina Imbler

**Week Eight (10/14-10/16): Creative Nonfiction, Identity, and the Natural World, continued**

T: No Class

TH: “Beware the Sand Striker,” “Hybrids,” and “We Swarm” from *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*, Sabrina Imbler

**Week Nine (10/21 & 10/23): Creative Nonfiction, Identity, and the Natural World, continued**

T: No Class

TH: “Morphing Like a Cuttlefish,” and “Us Everlasting” from *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*, Sabrina Imbler

**Week Ten (10/28 & 10/30): LGBTQIAA+ Music**

T: Class LGBTQIAA+ Playlist

TH: Class LGBTQIAA+ Playlist

**Week Eleven (11/4 & 11/6): Spoken Word, Performance, and Visual Art**

T: Kiyan Williams, Cassils, Elektra KB, Kris Grey, Alok Vaid-Menon, Kay Ulanday Barrett, Zanele Muholi, and Salgu Wissmath

TH: Interview with Kris Grey, Cassils, and Salgu Wisssmath;

Trans Hirstory in 99 Objects, eds. David Evans Frantz, Christina Linden, and Chris E. Vargas

**Week Twelve (11/11 & 11/13): Imaginations and Utopias**

T: “Imagined Futures,” AlisonKafer

TH:“Feeling Utopia,” Jose Munoz

**Week Thirteen (11/18 & 11/20): Writing Workshop**

T: **Writing Workshop –** **Rough Draft of Creative Project Due**

TH: Writing Workshop – Peer and Professor Review

**Week Fourteen (11/25 & 11/27): Film and Utopias**

**Utopias and Orlandos**

T: “*Orlando*, *My Political Autobiography*, Paul Preciado

TH: No Class

**Week Fifteen (12/2 & 12/4): Writing Workshop**

T: **Writing Workshop –** **Revised Draft of Creative Project Due**

TH: Writing Workshop – Peer and Professor Review

**Week Sixteen (12/9 & 12/11): Open Mic & Course Wrap Up**

T: Open Mic **–** **Final Draft of Creative Project Due**

TH: Open Mic

**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 5-7 pages in length. It comprises 60% 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.**