

RTF 331R unique # 06853 -- An ACTLab New Media courseTRANS

Dangerous Border Violations

www.actlab.utexas.edu/trans

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Class meets in the ACTLab Tue 2:00-5:00

Summary:

This course is an exploration into the media and technologies of identity, with emphasis on transgender and transsexuality across cultures and throughout history. We will: conduct a global historical survey of the practices of transsexual and transgendered people from antiquity to the present; review changes in scientific perspectives on the design and significance of the male/female body as well as intersexed and transsexual bodies; discuss gender, prosthetics, cyborgs, and the relation of the posthuman to media production; and explore the function of the transsexual figure in films, pulp fiction, and popular culture. You will produce physical and/ or digital projects, including video and film, as well as research papers, in line with the ACTLab emphasis on making.

Class is in studio and discussion format. This means that your active participation is a requirement of the course. During the semester I expect you to contribute your own ideas and arguments to the discussions, and to be willing to take the risks such contributions imply.

There are no written exams. Instead you will use the theories and tools you acquire during the semester to make stuff about some aspect of Trans. What you make can be in any form: sound, installation, film, video, computer animation, digital-fu, collage, sculpture, assemblage, performance -- you name it. You will do this in stages, starting with simple projects and moving to more complex ones, using humor, irony, uncommon approaches, and bizarre techniques.

You will make a total of three projects: two relatively small projects and one larger final project. They are due at roughly four week intervals during the semester.

Take risks! Amaze us! In ACTLab New Media courses we assume a high level of motivation on your part and your willingness to self-start, set your own goals, think independently, collaborate with others, seek help when you need it, and take risks. Let's make it an interesting semester!

Readings and Resources:

The following books are required for the course, and available through Amazon.com. You will have plenty of time for them to arrive before we start using them.

Leslie Feinberg: Stone Butch Blues

Michel Foucault: Herculine Barbin

Judith Halberstam: Female Masculinity

Ann Fausto-Sterling: Sexing the Body

Alice Donurat Dreger: Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex

Graduate students should read these additional books:

Deleuze and Guattari: A Thousand Plateaux

Michel Foucault: Birth of the Clinic

There will also be two packets of xeroxed readings. Packet 1 will be available from Longhorn Copies by Friday, January 23. It contains the readings for the first two class meetings. Packet 2 contains the readings for the remainder of the semester. It will be available at Longhorn Copies in early February.

Also, remember your best resource is always your own curiosity, and Google or Dogpile or AltaVista are your best tools. Experiment with keywords and see what happens. When you find something interesting, share it, either in person or via the Trans mailing list, trans@actlab.utexas.edu.

Mailing list: Outside of class time we keep in touch via the Trans class mailing list. Use it to swap ideas, ask questions, get and give alerts of schedule changes, share weird urls, and whatever else you can think of. Be sure to give us your email address on the first day of class.

Things we supply: In addition to the usual video and sound equipment, the ACTLab New Media digital equipment (in cmb 4.110) is there for you to use, play with, and experiment with. A lot of it is state-of-the-art. Don't waste the opportunity to stretch your creative skills in the digital domain. We have computers, DJ turntables, quadraphonic sound system, and other stuff. We'll try to help you locate odd and exotic items you may think of during the semester that you'd like to use. We also have some gear that we've never used yet, and we invite you to play with it and see what you can make it do.

Things you'll need:

Scissors, glue, construction paper or board (for class date TBA). Anything else you stumble on or think might be useful to make evocative objects about Trans. Loose clothing that you can get dirty. If we do narrative or sound work in the dark, remember the ACTLab floor is hard; so if you decide to listen while lying down on the floor, bring something soft to lie on.

The following six things are required for you to receive a grade:

1. Attendance at all classes.
2. Reading all assignments and coming to class prepared.
3. Participation in discussion.
4. Successful completion of two mini-projects and one final project.
5. Successful completion of documentation webpage.

Your webpage must be on the ACTLab server, nowhere else.

All links, rollovers, animations, streaming video/audio, etc., must work.

6. Full cleanup of the ACTLab following final presentations. Leave it the way you found it -- no better, no worse.

What I expect you to do for a reading assignment:

1. Do the reading!
2. When you come to something that intrigues or excites you, make a note about it.
3. When you come to something that puzzles you, make a note about it.
4. When you come to something that drives you up the wall, make a note about it.

After the first class meeting: If you've been admitted but haven't received any mail from the class mailing list, sign up by surfing to the Trans list maintenance page, <http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/mailman/admindb/trans> .

What I expect from you during discussion:

1. Ask or talk about the parts of the text that you made notes about.
2. Participate. Talk. Ask. Argue. Laugh. (some of the readings are ludicrous.) None of this stuff is holy, none of the opinions are cast in concrete.
3. Bring in stuff -- maybe text, maybe just stuff -- that you feel relates to the reading. Throw it on the table, say why it's there, and see what happens.
4. My main job during discussion is to listen. My role is to make an opening or framing statement to start from. I'll guide when necessary, and clarify tough points. Discussion time gives me my best sense of how you're thinking about the theoretical part of our work together.

Participation is one of the keys to success in this class. You can't participate in discussion in a real way unless you've done the reading. Consequently Rule Number One is: Do The Reading!

Experienced Labbies say: One of the worst mistakes you can make is to leave the documentation for the last minute! Start thinking about your web site from the very first class day. Keep notes about your ideas for it, so you'll have a good supply as you build the page.

Films: We see films and excerpts from films in class, but only a few are scheduled here. We'll choose the rest in class, based on what we think would be useful or interesting or fun or all of the above.

Extra Credit items: There are two. One is the class web page; the other is the final presentations poster. You can volunteer to do these, on a first-come-first-served basis. If successfully completed, each one raises your final grade by one half a grade, i.e., a B+ to an A. If you volunteer and fail to complete what you said you'd do, it will lower your final grade by one half a grade.

Grading:

Participation in discussion 15%

First mini-project 15%

Second mini-project 20%

Final project 25%

Documentation 25%

Total 100%

How to get an A: Shortly there will be a link from the class web page called How to get an A. It spells out, as clearly as I could manage, what the ACTLab emphasis is, because what I expect of you may be different from what you're used to having professors want you to do. Re-read "How to get an A" as often as you need to.

Course Schedule

Jan 22: Introduce ourselves. Discussion of what's at stake. Here's a list of things to think about. In a very general way, they are the workpoints we'll be bouncing off and around during the semester:

A) What is SEXUALITY?

B) What is TRANS?

C) Communicating the Transsexual Body: Transmedia

1) Performing the body

a) Trans in Pre-Christian Tribal Rituals

b) Contemporary Art by Transpersons

c) The Trans Body as Living Architecture

2) The Transsexual Body Performed

a) Transfigures in Literary History

b) Transfigures in Cinema

D) Bodies In Time: History, Communities, and the Globalization of Trans

a) Building International Networks

b) The Packaging of Trans

Jan 29: TRANSBEINGS IN TIMESPACE I

Location Location Location! Where were we?

A historical survey of the changing perspectives of the sexual body in Western culture from the Greeks to Modernism.

Reading: All of Packet 1

Feb 5: TRANSBEINGS IN TIMESPACE II

Location Location Location! Where are we?

- 1) Transgender and Transsexuality in the early to mid 20th Century
- 2) Transsexuality in a modern global context
 - a) Chapters 3-5 of Transgender Warriors
 - b) Sections from The Spirit and the Flesh
 - c) Section from Boy Wives and Female Husbands
 - d) Sections from Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations

(Grad students: Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10 and the Introduction to Third Sex/Third Gender.)

First project equipment requests: If you need equipment, make sure you coordinate with Chris no later than Feb 6.

Feb 12: TRANS AS SEEN BY FEMINISM, GENDER STUDIES, AND QUEER THEORY

- A) Excerpt from Kate Bornstein's Gender Outlaw
- B) Photocopy from Raymond's The Transsexual Empire
- C) Stone, The Empire Strikes Back
- D) Portions of Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto.

Grad students: Judith Butler, "What is Woman", in Gender Trouble.

**attention*vorsicht*aviso*wichtig*obs!* Feb 26 reading assignment is heavy. Start reading now. Read or bleed!*

Feb 19: FIRST MINI-PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Feb 26: TECHNOLOGY AND BECOMING

HEAVY READING CLASS

A) Clinic vs. Chora: weird science, the space of invention, and the antiseptic womb

Readings for 1st 1/2 of class:

Benjamin, excerpts from "The Transsexual Phenomenon"

Money, excerpts from "Lovemaps"

Stone, "Posttranssexual Manifesto"

Plato's "Timeaus" (or was it Symposium?)

Graduates: Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic

B) The 21st Century Laboratory of Being: the rhizomatic body, the cyborg, and the monster.

Readings for 2nd 1/2 of class:

Deleuze/Guattari, "Becoming Woman: The Tenth Plateau"

(We will also discuss Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto.")

Mar 4: Lessons from the Intersexed, Part I: Pathology of the Other

A) "Corrective" / Normalizing technology on intersexed infants

B) Discussion of Gender Identity Disorder and "corrective surgeries"

Readings:

Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex

Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Human Sexuality

Graduate Students: Heidegger, "A Question Concerning Technology"

Video:

"Surgical Construction", a medical training video. Not for the faint of heart.

Lessons from the Intersexed, Part II: I Am Not a Disorder

Video:

Hermaphrodites Speak!

Mar 11: This and That

A) F2M

Transmen, Bois, Butches, and Kings

Readings:

Halberstam, Female Masculinity chapters 1-5

Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues

Video:

Southern Comfort

BREAK

B) M2F

Transwomen, Tranniegirls, Transgenderists, Crossdressers, and Drag Queens

Crossing over to the same side: Is transsexuality possible without transgender?

Femmes, Gay male butches, penis and breast implants, the body modification community

Readings:

Excerpts from Modcon: The Secret World of Extreme Body Modification.

Lewis, Leather Daddies, Bodybuilders, Strippers, Femmes, and Self-Identified 'Freaks': the issues of hypergendered performativity and non-gender transformative sexual surgery.

Second project equipment requests: If you need equipment, make sure you coordinate with Chris no later than Mar 12.

Mar 18: Spring Break: No class

Mar 25: SECOND MINI-PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Apr 1: Representing TransExperience

A) Pronoun Trouble: violence, language, and identity

Readings:

Secondary material: review of Jacques Lacan's ideas, to be handed out on March 25th.

Excerpts from S/he, Minnie Bruce Pratt

Derrida, Writing and Difference (Grad students should read it, undergrads should attempt it)

BREAK

The Narrative of Transsexuality: Visual, Oral, Textual

A) Trans in the context of narrative art, grand narratives, identity formation, and the history of 20th century confessional art (choose two narratives to read)

Readings:

Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues (re-read/review)

Jorgensen, The Christine Jorgensen Story (excerpts from)

Foucault, Herculine Barbin

Excerpts from Lyotard: The Postmodern Condition

Additionally, read one of the following...

Conn, Canary: The Story of a Transsexual

Morris, Conundrum

Apr 8: TRANSMEDIA

A) Drag royalty, performance art, and the aesthetics of self-invention

B) Performance art and transsexuality

Readings: Halberstam, Female Masculinity chapters 6-8

C) Transcinema

Videos: TBA

Holly's Handy Video List of TRANSCINEMA

D) Cybertrans

Readings:

Stone, The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age

Stelarc, Post-Human Manifesto

Final Presentation equipment requests: If you need equipment for your final presentation, make sure you coordinate with Chris no later than Apr 9.

Apr 15: THE FUTURE OF TRANSMEDIA, TRANSART, POSTTRANS, POSTPOSTTRANS, TRANSPOSTTRANS, TRANPTRANSPOST, TRANSTRANSTRANS... uh...

The Day of Digestion, class discussion, debate, students being showoffs

Apr 22: Studio time

Apr 29: Studio time

May 6: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Sunday, May 16: Drop Dead Date for documentation and web pages

May 19, 9:00 a.m.: Drop Dead Date for professors to submit grades. You know what that means.

The Fine Print:

This syllabus is V.1.1. May be updated as necessary.

Regarding Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>.

About services for students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

About the Undergraduate Writing Center: The Undergraduate Writing Center, located in the FAC 211, phone 471-6222, offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

Warning: This class may contain explicit descriptions of, or may advocate simulations of, one or more of the following: Nudity, satanism, suicide, sodomy, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, adultery, murder, morbid violence, paedophilia, bad grammar, deviate sexual conduct in a violent context, the use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or offensive behavior. But then again, it may not. Should your sensibilities be offended at any time, you are free to leave the classroom without penalty provided that you notify either the instructor or teaching assistant when you do so.

Caution: Fragile: Do not bend, fold, spindle or mutilate. May be hazardous to your health. Not recommended for children. Do not purchase if seal has been tampered with. Not responsible for direct, indirect, incidental or consequential damages resulting from any defect, error or failure to perform. May be too intense for some viewers. Batteries not included. For recreational use. An equal opportunity employer. Some settling of contents may occur during shipping. Use only as directed. No other warranty expressed or implied. No postage necessary if mailed in the United States. Substantial penalty for early withdrawal. Slightly higher in California. Keep away from fire or flame. Any rebroadcast, reproduction, or other use of this game without the express written consent of Major League Baseball is prohibited. Please keep your hands and arms inside the car while ride is in motion. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Contestants have been briefed before the show. Do not write below this line.

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