

Cáel M. Keegan—Sample syllabus (proposed)

This is a proposed syllabus for an advanced WGSS seminar.

Transfeminisms

Course Overview:

Description:

Recent gains in visibility and recognition for transgender people have reactivated long-standing arguments over whether feminism can or should support trans rights, and whether transgender people should be considered feminist subjects. Rather than re-staging this decades-long debate as a zero-sum game, this course traces how—far from eradicating each other—“trans” and “feminist” share a co-constitutive history, each requiring and evolving the other. To quote Jack Halberstam from his talk "Why We Need a Transfeminism" at UC Santa Cruz in 2002, “Transgender is the gender trouble that feminism has been talking about all along.” We will explore the unfolding of the transfeminist imaginary from its roots in gay liberation and woman of color feminisms, through the sex wars of the 1970s and 80s, and into the 21st century. Throughout, we will examine a number of key points in feminist discourse and politics at which the paradoxical formation “transfeminism” becomes legible as a framework, necessity, legacy, or impending future. We will uncover transfeminist histories and grapple with the complexity of transfeminist communities, activisms, and relations. We will explore transfeminist world-building and practice our own transfeminist visions for the world.

Required Text:

Transgender Studies Quarterly, “Trans/Feminisms.” Eds. Susan Stryker and Talia Mae Bettcher. 3.1-2 (May 2016).

The required text is available at the bookstore. All other readings are available via electronic reserve on Blackboard.

Required Films:

Films are on course reserve for viewing at the library. Some films are also available to stream (where noted). Films will be watched outside of class, unless otherwise noted.

1. *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria*
2. *Major!*
3. *Against a Trans Narrative*
4. *Free CeCe*
5. *We’ve Been Around* (selected shorts)
6. *Tales of the Waria*
7. *Transparent*, “Man on the Land”

Course Assignments and Rubric:

Participation	10% (10 points)
In-Class Journaling	27% (1 point per class)
Prompted Analytical Essays (2)	20% (10 points each)
Reading and Viewing Project	13% (7 points for write-up, 6 points for presentation)
Original Transfeminist Analysis	10% (10 points)
Transfeminist Activist/Research Project	20% (20 points)

Participation:

This is a discussion-based seminar-style course: Participation is highly valued and students are expected to contribute significantly to discussion each week by reading/viewing the assigned texts before class and speaking in ways that demonstrate effort toward comprehension. All students are expected to be active members of an inclusive community of learners in this course. You are responsible for being on time, completing assignments in and out of class, and for the materials covered in all class days, whether you are present or absent.

Assignments:

1. Journal: (in class)

At the beginning of each class, I will give you some time to write informally about the day's material. You should spend this time reflecting on what you think the most valuable concepts/ideas in the material were, and then asking related questions. What would you like to talk about in class, and how did the material bring up these questions for you? This should take under 10 minutes, so come to class with some ideas about what you will write. You will be evaluated on your accuracy and your critical thinking.

2. Analytical Essays:

Each of these 3 (double spaced, 4 page minimum) essays will ask you to reflect on your thinking in relation to the material covered in class and show how you are moving toward mastery and synthesis of the course concepts. They will also ask you to show facility for applying theory to your lived experience and the larger world. These are prompted essays. I will share all prompts with you well in advance of the essay due dates.

Rubric:

These essays should:

1. Demonstrate a fundamental understanding of the course theories, research, concepts, and their major concerns/debates.
2. Show that you understand interdisciplinary nature of feminist and trans* theories and how they continue to inform and be inflected by other discourses (e.g. queer theory, critical race theory, literary theory, film theory, sociology, anthropology, etc.).
3. Productively use concepts in transfeminism to assess social and political movements.

4. Be written using clear, correct, and appropriate grammar, in-text citations, and a bibliography.
5. You must quote and cite materials (at least 4) from the syllabus in your essays. You must also locate and use 1 additional scholarly article from a major journal in the field (e.g. *GLQ*, *TSQ*, *WSQ*, *Journal of Homosexuality*, *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Signs*, *Hypatia*, *Feminist Studies*, *Feminist Formations*, *Differences*, *Frontiers*).

3. Reading and Viewing Project:

This project measures your ability to collaboratively engage the material and to demonstrate a deep understanding of the research, concepts, and major concerns/debates in a single course text. In a team, you will be assigned one a text to investigate using steps 1-6 in “Getting a Read: A Student Worksheet on Critique” (see Appendix A). Your team will read the piece closely, taking notes for each step. For step 5, you will need to do some team research: Look up the other texts that your text cites and investigate who/what/why your assigned piece is referencing them. Who wrote those pieces, and where/when were they published? Why might your author have selected them as evidence? Collaborate to write a short paragraph for each step, and be prepared to walk the class through your findings.

4. Original Transfeminist Analysis:

In this short paper/presentation, you will select a popular text or object and apply the theories from our course to show how theory can produce new interpretations of/knowledges about society and politics. How does the text or object you selected reflect the ideas we’ve been discussing in class? How might the text be theorized as containing or illuminating transfeminist social or political possibilities? For examples of how to do this, pay close attention to the scholars and activists we’ll be reading and the discussions led by the professor. You may either:

1. Write up your reading as a short paper (2 pages minimum).
2. Make a 5 minute video/audio version of your reading.

Your analysis must make direct reference to course materials. Make sure to include a representation of the primary object or text you are reading. You will be assigned a week during which your reading will be due.

5. Transfeminist Activist/Research Project:

This project measures your ability to apply an integrated understanding of feminist and trans* theoretical concepts to a social or political problem. Theory is not just critiquing “what is”: it is also attempting to define what should be. Using concepts and tools gleaned from our course materials, you will identify a problem in the known world and then construct your own transfeminist response for “what should be” using the steps outlined in Charlotte Bunch’s “Not By Degrees.” This project can be written, recorded, or artistically represented (must include an artist’s statement). You may work alone or with

others. Our final meeting will be a showcase in which the whole class will share their work.

Class Schedule:

1. Imagining Transfeminisms

Week 1 Framing and Key Terms

Introduction to course, learning community, and concepts

Read: A. Finn Enke, "Introduction: Transfeminist Perspectives" and "Note on Terms and Concepts" from *Transfeminist Perspectives*.

Read: Janet Halley, "A Story of Sexual-Subordination Feminism and its Others" and "1998: Trans Theory Splits While Staying in Place," from *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism*.

Week 2

Manifesting Transfeminisms

Read: Star House, "Street Transvestites for Gay Power Statement."

Watch: "S.T.A.R.," (*We've Been Around* video series short)

Read: "Combahee River Collective Statement."

Read: Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto."

Read: Julia Serano, "Trans Woman Manifesto."

2. Transfeminist Histories

Week 3

Transfeminist Liberation

Read: Susan Stryker, "Transgender Liberation" from *Transgender History*.

Watch: *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*.

Read: Jessi Gan, "'Still at the Back of the Bus': Sylvia Rivera's Struggle" from *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*.

Watch: *Major!*

Week 4

Radical Transfeminisms

Read: Susan Stryker, "The Difficult Decades" from *Transgender History*.

Read: Cristan Williams, "Recounting the Trans Inclusive History of Radical Feminism" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Week 5

Read: Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman."

Read: Emma Heaney, "Women-Identified Women: Trans Women in 1970s Lesbian Feminist Organizing" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Essay 1 due

3. Trans/Feminist Dialectics

Week 6

Call and Response

Read: Janice Raymond, "Sappho by Surgery: The Transsexually Constructed Lesbian-Feminist" from *The Transsexual Empire*.

Read: Carol Riddell, "Divided Sisterhood: A Critical Review of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*" from *The Transgender Studies Reader 1*.

Week 7 **Trans* Ruptures**

Read: Sandy Stone, "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." from *The Transgender Studies Reader 1*.

Read: Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" from *GLQ* 1.3.

Week 8 **Narrating Trans***

Read: Judith Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex reassignment and the Allegories of Transsexuality" from *Undoing Gender*.

Read: Jay Prosser, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex" from *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*.

Week 9 **The Politics of Space**

Read: Julia Serano, "Bending Over Backwards: Traditional Sexism and Trans-Woman Exclusion Policies" from *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*.

Watch: *Camp Trans* (*We've Been Around* video series short)

Watch: *Transparent*, "Man on the Land"

Read: Elias Cosenza Krell, "Is Transmisogyny Killing Trans Women of Color? Black Trans Feminisms and the Exigencies of White Femininity" from *TSQ* 4.2 (May 2017).

First half Transfeminist Analyses due and showcase

4. Transmasculine Transfeminisms

Week 10

Trans(male)feminisms

Read: Lou Sullivan, "A Transvestite Answers a Feminist."

Watch: *Lou Sullivan* (*We've Been Around* video series short)

Read: Bobby Noble, excerpt from "Our Bodies are Not Ourselves: Tranny Guys and the Racialized Class Politics of Incoherence" from *Sons of the*

Movement: FTMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape.
Read: Miram Abelson, "Trans Men Engaging, Reforming, and Resisting Feminisms" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Week 11

Getting Lost

Read: C. Jacob Hale, "Tracing a Ghostly Memory in my Throat: Reflections on FTM Feminist Voice and Agency" from *You've Changed: Sex Reassignment and Personal Identity*.

Watch: *Against a Trans Narrative*

Week 12

Must M/F = M>F?

Read: Henry Rubin, "Reading Like a (Transsexual) Man" from *Men Doing Feminism*.

Read: Read: Cam Awkward-Rich, "Trans, Feminism: Or, Reading Like a Depressed Transsexual" from *Signs* 42.4 (Summer 2017).

Essay 2 due

5. Transnational Transfeminisms

Week 13

Decolonizing Transfeminisms

Read: Aren Z. Aizura, Tom Boellstorff, Mauro Cabral, micha cárdenas, Trystan Cotten, Eric A. Stanley, and Kalaniopua Young, "Decolonizing Transgender: A Roundtable Discussion" from *TSQ* 1.3 (May 2014).

Read: Saylesh Wesley, "Twin-Spirited Woman: Sts'iyo'ye smest'iyexw slha':li," from *TSQ* 1.3 (May 2014).

Week 14

Transnational Organizing

Read: Karine Espineira and Marie-Hélène/Sam Bourcier, "Transfeminism: Something Else, Somewhere Else" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Read: Daniel Brittany Chávez, "Transmasculine Insurgency: Masculinity and Dissidence in Feminist Movements in México" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Categorical Entanglements

Read: Yana Kirey-Sitnikova, "The Emergence of Transfeminism in Russia: Opposition from Cisnormative Feminists and Trans* People" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Read: Shan Ye, "Reconstructing the Transgendered Self as a Feminist Subject: Trans/Feminist Praxis in Urban China," from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Watch: *Tales of the Waria*

Second half Transfeminist Analyses due and showcase

6. Transfeminist Futures

Week 15

Breaking Together, Breaking Out

Read: Nat Raha, "Transfeminine Brokenness, Radical Transfeminism" from *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116.3 (July 2017).

Read: Zavé Martohardjono and Rye Young, "Toward Transfeminism: Moving Beyond Inclusion" from *Nonprofit Quarterly* (March 2, 2016).

Read: micha cardenas, "Shifting Futures: Trans of Color Digital Praxis" from *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology* 6 (2015).

Watch: *Free CeCe*

Week 16

Haunting and Staying Haunted

Read: Bobby Noble, "Trans. Panic. Toward a Theory of Feminist Fundamentalism" from *Transfeminist Perspectives*.

Read: reese simpkins, "Trans*Feminist Intersections" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Read: Sandy Stone and Susan Stryker, "Another Dream of a Common Language" from *TSQ* 3.1-2 (May 2016).

Essay 3 due

Final Exam Session: Projects due and Presentations!