

History 102-6-20
“Who’s Afraid of Gavin Grimm? The Struggle for/against Transgender Equality”

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In 2014, a fifteen-year-old trans boy named Gavin Grimm asked, and received, permission from his school principal in Gloucester County, VA to use restrooms and other facilities in accordance with his identity. That decision triggered a fierce backlash from parents and others in the community resulting in a new policy that required students to use restrooms and locker rooms “corresponding with their biological genders.” Grimm sued and eventually won, but not until his senior year after he had already been accepted to college. In the meantime, the question of how—and, indeed, whether—to include and support trans students and adults sparked ongoing nationwide controversy. This class zooms in on those experiences and debates in the hope of better understanding the ways people either chart new paths or fiercely resist doing so.

Course goals and learning objectives: This course is both an exploration of an important topic and a forum for you to hone the skills and habits of mind you’ll need to succeed at Northwestern. Some of those—e.g., analyzing evidence, identifying and evaluating arguments, and presenting ideas orally and in writing—may be fairly obvious. As Important, however, we’ll also spend time discussing how to navigate this very complicated place and how to keep your balance when things get tough—which they will!

Office Hours: I will hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30, i.e., immediately following our class meeting. What are “office hours?” Office hours are blocks of time that faculty members set aside for their students to stop by their offices to talk about...well, anything really: how things are going in the class, how things are going outside the class, plans for the future...whatever might be on your mind! You don’t need to have a particular question in mind, and you don’t need an appointment: just stop by! If you have another class during my scheduled office hours, let me know and we can schedule a different time to talk.

Requirements and Evaluation:

1. Active and informed participation in discussion (30%). This is a seminar, meaning a small class organized around discussion and collective inquiry. Attendance is mandatory and failure to attend will result in a reduction of your course grade. (If you miss three classes, you will receive an “F” for your participation grade. Missing more than three classes—i.e., two entire weeks of class—will constitute failure in the course.) If you are ill, you must go to the health service and ask for documentation to excuse your absence.

It isn't enough merely to attend class. You owe it both to yourself and to your peers to complete and think about the assigned reading for every session before coming to class. Please prepare for each discussion by answering the following questions, as relevant:

- What kind of document(s) did you read or examine?
- Who produced it/them and for what audience(s)?
- What is the author's main argument or idea?
- What evidence or supporting arguments does the author offer in support of the main argument?
- What ideas or goals does the author seem to have assumed the reader will take for granted?
- What conclusions did the author hope their audience would form?
- How, if at all, does this document change your understanding of the topic?

2. Writing and research. One of the primary goals of the first-year seminar program is to help you develop college-level writing and research skills. To that end, you will be assigned six shorter writing assignments (some as short as a paragraph, others 1-2 pages), each worth 5% of your course grade). You will also be assigned two somewhat lengthier writing assignments analyzing materials you unearth as part of two different research teams. The research assignments are both worth 20% of your course grade: 10% based on the team's presentation of its findings and 10% for a paper you write summarizing those findings and comparing/contrasting them with what you learn by listening to other teams' presentations. The short papers are due at 9AM on the dates indicated below (usually a Wednesday). The research papers are both due at noon on the Friday following the group presentations.

Academic Integrity: All work in this course will be held to the most rigorous standards of academic integrity. If you are not familiar with the University's policy on plagiarism or are unsure what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, I strongly encourage you to consult the information on the Provost's website:

<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>. A violation of academic integrity will constitute grounds for failure in the course.

REALLY IMPORTANT NOTE

College is a new experience. Indeed, that's part of what this class is about. Everyone – for real, everyone – will have some successes and will face some challenges this quarter and beyond. If you learn nothing else this fall, I hope it is that there are people here who care about you and want to help. I am one of those people. I have included my cell number above if you need it. If you are in trouble, if you need help, call at any time. Each year some students find themselves depressed, anxious, or afraid of failure. If you fall in one of these categories, you will not be the first, you will not be alone, and there are people here who can help through difficult times. You can also always click on [NUHelp](https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/) (https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/) if you don't know where else to go.

Schedule

9/25 For the first part of this session, read the document “Navigating the University” in the Module for Week One and identify the locations it lists on the campus map. We’ll begin class by talking about the university as a physical place and as a collection of activities and resources.

For the second part of this session, listen to Chris Gilbert, “In His Own Skin” and read Tey Meadow’s (very short) essay “Child” from *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, “Keywords” (2014).

9/30 For the first part of this session, watch the video “Smart Studying” (under “resources”) and read Janani Hariharan, “Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum” and Beth McMurtrie, “Knowing How to Study Can Mean the Difference Between Success and Failure for First-Generation Students. Here’s How Instructors Can Help.”

For the second part of this session, read Andrew Solomon, *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*, Ch. XI “Transgender,” p. 599 through the top two lines on page 640. Tip: expand the selection to full-screen and zoom in.

10/2 For this session, read Solomon, “Transgender,” pp. 640-676.

Writing assignment (due 9AM): Outline Solomon’s essay identifying his main arguments and the evidence he offers in support of his conclusion.

10/7 For the first part of this session, (re)read “Academic Integrity for Students” and the learning goals outlined in “Academic Integrity: Student Learning Goals.” Identify what you think are the three main take-aways in these documents and come ready to discuss any questions you may have.

For the second part of this session, read the GLSEN (Gay Lesbian and Straight Educators Network) documents, “Schools Can be the Difference for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth” and “Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students” (2018).

10/9 Library orientation.

Writing assignment (due 9AM). Using the GLSEN documents assigned for 10/7 as your baseline, write a one-page research proposal about the evolution of trans-related policies and experience at one of the following institutions as assigned at the 10/7 session: Mills College, Howard University, UCLA, U.S. Military Academy, the NCAA.

10/14 For the first part of this session, reflect on your time at Northwestern so far. What did you expect? What have you learned—about yourself, about being a college student, about what it is that we're doing here? Is there anything that baffles or annoys you? How are you going to use that information to move forward?

For the second part of this session, read *G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board* (2015). Summarize Grimm's case: what did he want? What obstacles did he encounter? What solutions did he propose?

10/16 Read Supplemental Brief by Gloucester County School Board (2017). Summarize the School Board's position in this brief. How did their analysis of the facts differ from Grimm's? What solutions did they propose? What conclusions can you draw?

Writing assignment (due 9AM). Write two pages comparing/contrasting the arguments made by Gavin Grimm with those made by the Gloucester County School board.

10/21 For today's session, the groups who researched trans-related policies and experience at Mills College, Howard University, and UCLA will present their findings and take informed questions. The point is not just to listen, but to ask questions based on what your group found in researching the institution you chose.

10/23 For today's session, the groups who researched trans-related policies and experience at the U.S. Military Academy and the NCAA will present their findings and take informed questions. Remember: colleagues listen carefully and then ask informed questions.

Noon, 10/25: Writing assignment. Write approximately five pages summarizing the research your group did and drawing conclusions reached after listening to all five groups' presentations.

10/28 For the first part of this session, watch the videos "Managing Your Academic Stress" and "Mindsets for Learning."

For the second part of this session, read Charlotte Nondiscrimination Ordinance. North Carolina "Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act." Statement by Attorney General Loretta Lynch. Lawsuit filed by North Carolina legislators.

10/30 Nico Lang, "What It's Like to Use a Public Bathroom While Trans," *Rolling Stone* (March 31, 2016); Judith Halberstam, "The Bathroom Problem;" *Gender Spectrum*, "Transgender Students and School Bathrooms: Frequently Asked Questions"

Writing assignment: Write one paragraph explaining "why bathrooms?"

IMPORTANT DATE: Friday, November 1 is the last day to drop a fall-quarter class.

11/4 For this session, read the Executive Summary, chapter on Education, and Conclusion of Grant, et al., “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey” (2011).

Writing assignment: Write one to two pages summarizing the key conclusions of “Injustice at Every Turn.”

Assemble teams for second group research assignment.

11/6 NO CLASS: Schedule an appointment with Prof. Fenrich to discuss your fall-quarter experience and plans for the winter. Before meeting with Prof. Fenrich, watch the four short videos in “Explore Your Options” and read “Six Myths About Choosing a College Major.”

11/11 For this session, read Jack Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, Chapter Three “Becoming Trans*” (2018) and Avery Tompkins “Asterisk” from *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, “Keywords” (2014).

11/13 For this session, read Tey Meadow, *Trans Kids*, Chapter Three “Building a Parent Movement” (2018)

Writing assignment (2 pages): Compare and contrast the challenges LGBT and straight parents face in advocating for trans/gender-nonconforming children.

11/18 Working in teams of three, turn your lens on Northwestern. Using the GLSEN “Model School District Policy” and the Trans Student Educational Resources “Model Policy for Four Year Colleges and Universities” as benchmarks, survey Northwestern’s policies and experience with respect to any or all of the following: admissions, housing, inclusion (everything from pronouns and name changes to training staff and students), athletics, fraternities, other. Identify areas in which you think Northwestern meets or exceeds expectations, and areas in which it might improve. What specific recommendations for change, if any, would you make? (If you think nothing needs to change, then your task is to develop a Model Policy based on Northwestern’s success in admitting trans students and helping them to thrive.)

11/20 Group research presentations continue

11/25 Conclusions and Reflections.

11/27 NO CLASS