ENG 490/WMST 489
SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Instructor:    Gender and Sexual Identity in Literature    Office:
Semester:    Office Hours:
Meeting time:    Phone:
Room:    Email:

**General Description**

This is a General Capstone and Diversity course that will introduce students to literature, popular culture, and critical theory centrally concerned with issues of gender and sexual identity. Through careful reading, class discussion, and critical writing, students will be invited to broaden their perspective on gender and sexuality beyond those offered by the dominant culture. We will interrogate the historical construction of gender and how it intersects with other identity categories, such as race or class. Through intensive reading and research of cutting-edge theory, we will interrogate the very terms of gender (man, masculine, woman, feminine, androgynous, etc.) and sexual identity (heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, etc.), and will we question “common sense” ideas of a “natural” gender or sexual identity.

**Required Texts**

*The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader* edited by Henry Abelove  
*Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory* edited by Robin Warhol  
*The History of Sexuality: Volume I* by Michel Foucault  
*Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson  
*Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman  
*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs  
*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin  
*Mama Black Widow* by Iceberg Slim  
*Stone Butch Blues* by Leslie Feinberg  
*Angels in America* by Toni Kushner  
*Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* by Gil Courtemanche  
*The Road* by Cormac McCarthy

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

- select and apply appropriate methods of inquiry to analyze complex questions about gender and sexual identity, cultural difference and/or equity (CO 10)
- identify fundamental concepts within theory for addressing issues of human social behavior, especially gender and sexuality
- apply a gender studies framework to literary texts from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries (fiction, poetry, drama, film, essay, and popular culture).
- describe how gender and sexual identity intersect with other cultural categories (e.g., race, class, ethnicity, nationality, religion) (CO 10)
• make connections between and apply theories from previous coursework and/or other disciplines to the topic of gender and sexuality (CO 13).
• identify the contributions of those whose “otherness” (in terms of gender or sexual identity) makes them somehow “unconventional.” (CO 10)
• identify and summarize current scholarly conversations (e.g., challenges, opportunities, trends) that exist within conversations on gender and sexuality (CO 13)
• Connect the texts to contemporary discussions of human rights for sexual minorities.
• Read carefully, discuss thoughtfully, write analytically, think creatively, and participate actively.
• produce a well-supported argument that makes an original contribution to the field and could be submitted for publication in an undergraduate journal. (CO1)
• frame original research in the context of prior literature, demonstrating an understanding of the discipline's scope and methods (CO 13)

Core Objectives
This Course SATISFIES the following COS: Diversity & Equity (CO 10); and Integration & Synthesis (CO 13). This course integrates CO 1 (Effective Composition & Communication) and CO 3 (Critical Analysis & Use of Information).

CO 1: Effective Composition & Communications
Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

CO 3: Critical Analysis & Use of Information
Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

CO 10: Diversity & Equity
Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

CO 13: Integration & Synthesis
Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

Assessment of COs

CO 10: Diversity and Equity
CO 10 will be evaluated via discussion questions and oral presentations that encourage students to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge of 1 or more central diversity issues, including gender and sexual identity. Oral presentations that critically discuss history, customs, worldviews, and/or other cultural markers in different gender and sexual identity groups will be assessed using rubrics keyed to the CO10 SLOs.
CO 13: Integration & Synthesis
CO13 will be evaluated via a major research assignment. Assessing integration of knowledge (CO 13) will be carried out by evaluating the writing skills of a literature review (CO1), as well as ability to evaluate information (CO3).

Course Expectations

Phones, Laptops, and Other Electronics: We all will be responsible for maintaining a good learning environment for everyone enrolled. When you enter the classroom, make sure all portable electronic devices are turned off. This includes cell phones, blackberries, Ipods, and MP3 players. You may use a laptop or notebook computer to take notes, of course, but playing games, sending texts, or checking email during class time even once will lose you this privilege for the rest of the semester.

Argumentation: Mutual respect and good academic argument will be required in this course. At any time, one or more of us might disagree strongly with others in the class. The topics we will cover are often emotionally charged or otherwise challenging. We all need to act in ways that keep discussion going. Express your views, especially when others might disagree, thoughtfully. Pay attention carefully to your peers, allow them to finish their thoughts, and offer your comments in reply. For purposes of this course, “good academic argument” means avoiding personal attacks or faulty generalizations (for example, use of unexamined stereotypes). Be prepared to provide background or evidence in support of any statements you write or say.

Statement on Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, plagiarism, or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment.

Statement of Disability Services: Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Statement for Academic Success Services: Your student fees cover usage of the University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing_center/). This center supports your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign a responsible and successful student.

Statement on Audio and Video Recording: Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Online Evaluation: Your chance to evaluate this English course will appear two weeks before the last day of classes in the form of a new course on your WebCampus home page. This new course contains only the evaluation survey. These online course evaluations are extremely important to your
instructor and to the Department of English, so please take a few minutes to complete your course evaluation when it becomes available. The evaluation is completely anonymous and your comments can never be connected with your name. Instructors cannot see the evaluation course on WebCampus and will not have access to the contents of these evaluations until after final grades have been posted.

Final Week: It is university policy that all classes are required to meet during the final week at the appropriate times and dates indicated in the Final Week Class Schedule http://www.unr.edu/academic-central/academic-resources/finals-schedule. This is in keeping with accreditation requirements for the appropriate number of hours for classes. Our final is scheduled for **Monday, December 16 @ 2:45**. No one may take the final early. Please plan you winter break accordingly.

Grade Breakdown

**Class Participation, Short Writing Assignments, and Attendance [15% course grade]**. In fulfillment of CO 10. Students will be expected to attend class meetings regularly, participate actively in discussions, turn in weekly writing assignments on time, and read all primary and secondary readings as scheduled. Excessive absences (beyond two) or excessive tardiness will adversely affect your grade; subtractions of one letter grade per day on your final participation grade will be imposed.

**One 5-7 Page Essay [30% course grade]**. Students will choose from a list of questions and will be required to provide factual/empirical information, careful interpretation, and strong arguments well-grounded in theories addressed in the course. Students may complete this essay by conducting field work, developing a case study, and/or developing and applying a theoretical framework for discussing representations. All written assignments must be submitted on time as unexcused late work will not be accepted. These will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Use of relevant course readings to support claims, observations, and interpretations.
- Reflection on course material (theoretical readings, literary texts, class discussions, etc.) and development of ideas.
- Organization, clarity of presentation, and readability, including careful proofreading.
- Use of language and approach that is appropriate for the audience.

**One Group Presentation [15% course grade]**. In Fulfillment of CO 10, An important element of this course will be group collaboration on a research project related to topics of gender and sexuality. Students will be expected to present outside research as a team on a topic from one of the two anthologies. More details on the group project will follow.

**A Multi-Component Research Project [40% course grade]**. In fulfillment of CO 13; Integrates COs 1 and 3. The research paper will be handed in during finals week, though you will work on it throughout the semester. **This paper will summarize current scholarly conversations and make connections between prior coursework and this course.** Students may frame their intervention via fieldwork, development of a case study, or application of a
theoretical framework. Your research paper will include:

1. A two-page proposal that outlines the topic, methods, and potential resources for research.
2. A selected annotated bibliography of 10-15 sources (MLA, APA, or Chicago style documentation).
3. A 15-20 page research paper (MLA, APA, or Chicago style documentation). Students will turn in a rough draft well prior to the final due date to obtain instructor aid. A final, polished version is required on the due date.
4. A short (5 min) in-class presentation on the project.

This project, as a whole, will be evaluated on its care in design, use of resources, application of course discussions and ideas, effective writing and argument, and fulfillment of the project objectives set out in its proposal. Emphasis will also be placed on extending the student’s knowledge of the theories, history, and issues addressed in the course.

Course Schedule

You are required to do the readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned.

Week One (August 26/28): Introduction to the Course

Reading: Foucault 1-49
Writing: 250 word essay identifying and assessing Foucault’s main claims
Viewing: Paris is Burning

Unit 1: Understanding the Diversity of Experiences of Sex and Gender (this unit addresses CO10)

Week Two (September 4): Gender Performance in Literature and Theory

Reading: Judith Butler “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” in Abelove 307-320
Winterson 1-190
Writing: 250 word essay identifying and assessing Butler’s main claims or applying any of the theories we have read to Winterson’s text
Viewing: RuPaul’s Drag Race

Week Three (September 9/11): Trapped in the Closet?

Reading: Eve Sedgwick “Epistemology of the Closet” in Abelove 45-61
Whitman
Inscriptions “I Hear America Singing” “Poets to Come” “To You” (pages 9-11)
Starting from Paumanok sections 6, 9, 12, 13, 15, and 19 (pages 14-39)
Song of Myself sections 11-14, 24, 27-29, 45, 47, 52 (pages 31-76)
Children of Adam (pages 77-94)
Calamus (pages 95-113)
Drum-Taps “Vigil Strange” “The Wound-Dresser” “Give me the Splendid Silent Sun” “Over the Carnage” “Not Youth Pertains to Me” “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” “As I Lay with my Head” “To a Certain Civilian” “Adieu to a Soldier” (pages 254-272)
“So Long!” (pp 412-15)
Writing: 250 word essay identifying and examining Sedgwick’s theories or applying any of the theories we have read to Whitman’s poems

Week Four (September 16/18): Intersections of Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Reading: Jean Yellin “Introduction” in Jacobs xiii-xxxv
Jacobs 1-201
Writing: Paper #1 outline due

Week Five (September 23/25): Domesticity in Literature

Reading: Elizabeth Ammons “Women of Color in The Awakening” in Chopin 309-311
Chopin 3-109
Writing: Paper #1 draft due

Week Six (September 30/October 2nd): The Gaze and the Technologies of Gender

Reading: Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in Warhol 438-448
Viewing: Selections from Double Indemnity and The Postman Always Rings Twice
Writing: Paper #1 due on Wednesday, October 2nd
Group Project #1: Audre Lorde “The Uses of the Erotic” in Abelove 339-343
Kobena Mercer “Looking for Trouble” in Abelove 350-359
Richard Meyer “Robert Mapplethorpe” in Abelove 360-380
Douglass Crimp “The Boys in My Bedroom” in Abelove 344-349
Beth Newman “The Situation of the Looker-On” in Warhol 449-466

Week Seven (October 7/9): Class, Race, Gender, and Popular Fiction

Reading: Janice Radway “The Readers and Their Romances” in Warhol 574-608
Beck 1-313
Writing: 250 word essay applying any of the theories we have read so far to Beck’s text
Group Project #2: Leslie Rabine “Romance in the Age of Electronics” in Warhol 976-991
Philip Bryan Harper “Eloquence and Epitaph” in Abelove 159-175
Deborah McDowell “It’s Not Safe. Not Safe at All” in Abelove 616-625
Hortense Spillers “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe” in Warhol 384-405
Nellie McKay “Reflections on Black Women Writers” in Warhol 151-163

UNIT 2: Methods and Theories for Describing the Social Conditions in which Categories of Sex and Gender Emerge

Week Eight (October 14/16): Butches, Femmes, and He/Shes

Reading: Gayle Rubin “Thinking Sex” in Abelove 3-44
Feinberg 1-169
Writing: 250 word essay applying any of the theories we have studied to Feinberg’s text
Group Project #3: Marjorie Garber “Spare Parts” in Abelove 321-336
   Adrienne Rich “Compulsory Heterosexuality” in Abelove 227-254
   Esther Newton “Just One of the Boys” in Abelove 528-541
   Sue-Ellen Case “Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic” in Abelove 294-306

Week Nine (October 21/23): Gender and Sexuality in Postindustrial America

Reading: Feinberg 170-301
Writing: Annotated bibliography due

Group Project #4: Monique Wittig “One is Not Born a Woman” in Abelove 103-109
   Martha Vicinus “They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong” in Abelove 432-452
   Danae Clark “Commodity Lesbianism” in Abelove 186-201
   Nancy Armstrong “Some Call it Fiction” in Warhol 913-930

Week Ten (October 28/30): AIDS in America

Reading: Kushner 1-280
Writing: Research project proposal due

Group Project #5: John D’Emilio “Capitalism and Gay Identity” in Abelove 467-476
   Stuart Hall “Deviance, Politics, and the Media” in Abelove 62-90
   Ana Alonso and Maria Koreck “Silences” in Abelove 110-126
   Simon Watney “The Spectacle of AIDS” in Abelove 202-211

Week Eleven (November 4/6): The Globalization of Sexuality

Reading: Courtemanche 1-260
Writing: Research paper outline due: Case Study, Fieldwork, or Theoretical Framework

Group Project #6: Gayatri Spivak “Three Women’s Texts” in Warhol 896-912
   Susan Willis “I Shop Therefore I Am” in Warhol 992-1008
   Gloria Anzaldúa “Towards a New Consciousness” in Warhol 765-775
   Serena Nanda “Hijras as Neither Man Nor Woman” in Abelove 542-552
   Lauren Berlant “The Queen of America” in Warhol 931-950

Week Twelve (November 13): Gender in the Post-Apocalypse

Reading: McCarthy 3-287
Writing: Continue to work on research project

Group Project #7: Susan Jeffords “Masculinity as Excess in Vietnam Films” in Warhol 1046-1067
   Eve Sedgwick “Introduction” and “Gender Asymetry” in Warhol 507-531
   Tomas Almaguer “Chicano Men” in Abelove 255-273
   Harriet Whitehead “The Bow and the Burden Strap” in Abelove 498-527
Unit 3: Final Paper (satisfies CO 13; integrates COs 1 and 3)

Week Thirteen (November 18/20): Course Review
Writing: Research project draft #1 due

Week Fourteen (November 25/27): Thanksgiving Week
Writing: Research project draft #2 due

Week Fifteen (November 2/December 4): Conference Week
Activity: Presentation of Research Projects

Week Sixteen (December 9): Conclusions
Writing: Final portfolios due