

LESBIAN LIVES AND CULTURES

WMNST 535

SPRING 2008

ESTHER ROTHBLUM





Student Learning Goals and Objectives:

Student learning goals for this course have been aligned with the overall goals for a Women's Studies major.

At the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the way that societies across national boundaries have constructed the lesbian
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways that lesbians' lives are shaped by social institutions
3. Evaluate multiple perspectives about lesbian lives and cultures from the perspectives of history, psychology, politics, and cultural studies.
4. Write and speak articulately about lesbian lives and cultures, and demonstrate critical thinking skills
5. Produce a research paper and class presentation with a clear focus and argument on lesbian lives and cultures.

Students With Special Needs

Students who need accommodation of their disabilities should contact me privately to discuss specific accommodations for which they have received authorization. If you have a disability, but have not contacted Student Disability Services at 619-594-6473 (Calpulli Center, 3rd Floor, Suite 3101), please do so before making an appointment to see me.

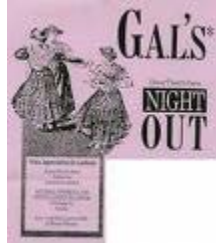
Academic Misconduct

Section 41301 of Title V of the California Code of Regulations defines academic misconduct as "Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus." According to the SDSU Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, "Examples of cheating would include using unauthorized notes or study guides during an exam, unauthorized collaboration on coursework, stealing course examinations or materials, falsifying records or data, and intentionally assisting another individual in any of the above." Some examples of plagiarism include submitting work that was written by someone else or using someone else's ideas without referencing that source in a footnote or bibliography. When using exact quotes, be sure put these quotes within quotation marks.



Instructions for accessing course readings electronically

- Get on the website ecr.sdsu.edu
- Click on "electronic reserves and reserve pages"
- You can then search for this course under instructor name or course number
- Click on "Course reserve pages by instructor"
- Scroll down to "Rothblum" and click "search"
- Click on this course number, which is `wmnst 535`
- It will ask for the password, which is "gender"
- Enter the password and then click on "accept"
- You will get a list of all course readings, listed in alphabetical order by title
- For most of the readings, you can just click on the symbol to the left and then click again, and you will be in the adobe acrobat version of the article. You can read it on line, print it out, etc.
- A few of the articles have a funny symbol of a globe to the left. When you click on those articles, you first get a page called "document info." Click on the place that says "click here for more information." When you get the next page, wait a few seconds, and the article will appear. If it doesn't, look for a place that says "pdf full text" and click on that.
- Some students have found that articles with the globe symbol can only be accessed while on campus, not off campus, so be sure to plan ahead.
- Let me know if you find any missing pages or have difficulty reading the articles.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Class participation (15%)

It is important to develop the ability to critically evaluate material and to communicate your ideas to others. In addition, this course depends heavily on collective discussion and interpretation of the readings. You will be graded on class participation depending on the extent to which your comments and reflections in class contributed to and enhanced general knowledge of the course materials and added to the learning experience of the class as a whole.

Note that this is a significant portion of your total grade. I will be emailing all students feedback about level and quality of class participation on March 4, halfway through the semester.

II. Weekly journals (45%)

The readings are important part of this course. You will be required to submit a journal entry each week that consists of a brief (about 1 page, typed, double-spaced) evaluation of each reading for that week.

Journal entries are due at the beginning of each class starting on January 29. Journal entries should not just consist of a summary of the reading. Instead, they should evaluate the reading. For example:

1. What does this reading indicate or suggest about the ways in which the meaning of lesbianism varies for women in different social, historical, political, and cultural contexts?
2. What does the reading suggest about the relationship between lesbianism and (a) feminism, (b) anti-racism, and/or (c) social movements?
3. What assumptions or assertions does this reading make about the social position of women compared to men?
4. Select a significant concept, idea, or argument from this reading and use it as a basis for (re)interpreting (a) an experience in your own life, or (b) observation(s) you have made regarding contemporary society. How might this concept, idea, or argument change the way you interpret that experience or observation?

Points: 1 for each reading (there are 45 readings in all during the semester).

Points will be taken off if the entries do not cover all readings for that week, if the entries are not related to the above questions, or if the entries do not indicate you have done the readings. There will no credit for late entries.



III. Term paper (20%) + Term paper overview (5%)

The purpose of the term paper is to gain a more in-depth knowledge of a topic related to lesbians. The term paper can cover either a topic from the course syllabus in greater detail, or a topic not covered in class more generally. A term paper should consist of (a) a general introduction describing the area and why it is important for lesbians, (b) a review of the relevant literature, with your evaluations and comments, and (c) a lengthy conclusion in which you integrate the literature, provide suggestions for future scholarship, and state your opinions about the area as it relates to lesbians. The term paper should be 8-10 pages in length (15 pages for graduate students). It might be helpful to check with me about the topic you wish to cover and for suggested readings. The term paper must be sensitive to cross-cultural issues; you cannot focus only on white, U.S. lesbians.

The term paper should incorporate 4-6 scholarly sources (books, book chapters, or academic journal articles) and 2-3 internet sources (web sites, electronic data bases, or other resources). Other sources (e.g., attendance at a lesbian cultural event, interview with lesbian activist) are optional.

A brief prospectus of your paper is due on Tuesday, February 19 at the beginning of class. This should include a short (1/2 page) overview of your topic and a preliminary (1/2 page) bibliography. This will count as 5% of your grade.

The term paper is due on Tuesday, May 6 at the beginning of class.

IV. Class presentation (15%)

You will give a 15-minute presentation of your term paper topic to the class. Five class periods have been set aside for this: February 26, March 11, March 25, April 22, and May 6. You can use any format to convey the information. Be sure to leave time for questions and discussion.



TIMETABLE

In all cases, assignments are due at the beginning of class.

Tuesday, January 29: 5 journal entries due about lesbian identity readings and about lesbians versus bisexuals/gays/heterosexuals/transgenders readings

Tuesday, February 5: 4 journal entries due about lesbian history readings

Tuesday, February 12: 5 journal entries due about the coming out process and lesbian communities readings

Tuesday, February 19: 5 journal entries due about sex, love and relationships readings

Tuesday, February 19: TERM PAPER OVERVIEW DUE

Tuesday, February 26: 3 journal entries due about the lesbian body readings

Tuesday, March 4: 3 journal entries due about lesbian mental health readings

Tuesday, March 11: 3 journal entries due about the same-sex marriage debate readings

Tuesday, March 18: 4 journal entries due about lesbian parents readings

Tuesday, March 25: 2 journal entries due about lesbian spirituality readings

Tuesday, April 8: 2 journal entries due about lesbian popular culture readings

Tuesday, April 15: 5 journal entries due about lesbians in educational settings and economics of lesbianism readings

Tuesday, April 22: 2 journal entries due about biology of sexual orientation readings

Tuesday, April 29: 2 journal entries due about lesbians in educational settings and global lesbianism readings

Tuesday, May 6: TERM PAPER DUE



SYLLABUS

Tuesday, January 22 INTRODUCTION AND COURSE DESCRIPTION
 &
 Thursday, January 24

Film: But I'm a Cheerleader

Tuesday, January 29 IDENTITY: WHO IS A LESBIAN?

Blackwood and Wieringa book:

Lesbians, Men-Women, and Two Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures, by Sabine Lang

“What’s Identity Got to Do With It?” Rethinking Identity in Light of the Mati Work in Suriname, by Gloria Wekker

Thursday, January 31 LESBIANS VERSUS BISEXUAL WOMEN,
 HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN, GAY MEN, AND
 TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE

Larkin book: Coming Out...Or Going More Deeply In? by Margaret Randall

Layers of the Onion, Spokes of the Wheel, by Pat Califia

Kate Bornstein (1997. Queer Theory and Shopping: Dichotomy or Symbionts? In Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel (Eds.) *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* (pp. 13-17). Cleis Press.



Tuesday, March 18 LESBIANS AS PARENTS

Larkin book: The Coming Out of a Gay Pride Child, by Elizabeth Lorde-Rollins

Easter Weekend, by Minnie Bruce Pratt

A Letter to Some Lesbians Who've Been Out for a Long Time, by
Mariana Romo-Carmona

Rachel Epstein (2002). Butches with babies: Reconfiguring gender and motherhood.
Journal of Lesbian Studies, 6(2), 41-57.

Thursday, March 20 NO CLASS

Tuesday, March 25 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, March 27 LESBIANS AND SPIRITUALITY

Starhawk (1989). The Goddess. Chapter 5 in Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (pp. 102-112). San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Tony Kushner (1995). A Prayer. In Kushner's *Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*. Theatre Communications Group.

Tuesday, April 1 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK
and
Thursday, April 3



Tuesday, April 8 LESBIAN POPULAR CULTURE
 &
 Thursday, April 10

Larkin book: What Comes First, by Holly Hughes

Bonnie Morris (2005). Negotiating Lesbian Worlds: The Festival Communities. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 9(1/2), 55-62.

Film: Radical Harmonies

Tuesday, April 15 LESBIANS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Larkin book: The Secret Agent, by Jane DeLynn

Maria Gonzalez (1997). Women of color, sexuality, and the academy (pp. 234-242). In B. Mintz and E. Rothblum (Eds.) *Lesbians in academia: Degrees of freedom*. NY: Routledge.

Connie Chan (1996). Combatting heterosexism in educational institutions: Structural changes and strategies. In E. Rothblum and L. Bond (Eds.) *Preventing heterosexism and homophobia*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Thursday, April 17 ECONOMICS OF LESBIANISM

M.V. Lee Badgett (1996). Employment and sexual orientation: Disclosure and discrimination in the work place. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 4(3), 29-52.

Danae Clark (1993). Commodity Lesbianism. In Harry Abelow and Michele Barale (Eds.) *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. NY: Routledge.



Tuesday, April 22 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, April 24 BIOLOGY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Meredith Chivers, Gerulf Riegers, Elizabeth Latty & J. Michael Bailey (2004). A sex difference in the specificity of sexual arousal. *Psychological Science*, 15(11), 736-744.

Garland Allen (1997). The double-edged sword of genetic determinism: Social and political agendas in genetic studies of homosexuality, 1940-1994 (pp. 242-270). In V.A. Rosario (Ed.) *Science and homosexualities*. NY: Routledge.

Tuesday, April 29 LESBIANS AND SPORTS

No readings

Thursday, May 1 GLOBAL LESBIANISM

Blackwood and Wieringa book:

How Homosexuality Became “Un-African,” by Margrete Aarmo

Women’s Sexuality and the Discourse on Asian Values: Cross-Dressing in Malaysia, by Tan ben hui

Tuesday, May 6 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, May 8 FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND ACTIVISM

No readings

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	goudou		lesbi	
servici		lesbobinen		marimacha
	samlkam		lesbiik kvinde	
lesbica		lesbiana	PATLACE	
lesbisk	QUEERING			tortilla

International Lesbian Information Service