

LESBIAN LIVES AND CULTURES

WMNST 535

FALL 2010

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:

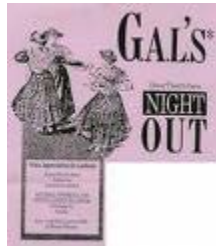
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the way that societies across national boundaries have constructed the lesbian
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways that lesbians' lives are shaped by social institutions
3. Evaluate multiple perspectives about lesbian lives and cultures from the perspectives 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 to put these quotes within quotation marks.



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 October 19, halfway through the semester.

II. Weekly journals (45%)

The readings are an 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 Tuesday, September 7.

For each journal entry, please do the following:

1. When you read the article, find two main points that you think the author emphasizes. Main points would be ones you would use if you were to describe the purpose of the article to others.
2. Write one paragraph about each main point. Even if the author uses technical language, describe the main point in such a way that it is easy to understand.
3. Then write one paragraph that evaluates the article. What was your reaction and why?

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.

One point will be deducted if you hand in journal entries after class begins but within the first 15 minutes of class; after that, journal entries will not be accepted because we will be discussing the main points of readings in class. You can avoid late entries by handing in journal entries during the class before they are due, or emailing the entries to a classmate so that he/she can print out your journal entries when you can't come to class. You cannot email journal entries to the instructor.



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 (scholar.google.com is a good website to research for this purpose), 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 double-spaced, typed 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, September 21 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 Thursday, December 9 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: October 5, October 19, November 2, November 16, and December 2. You can use any format to convey the information. Be sure to leave time for questions and discussion.



Extra credit (3% added to final course grade)

At any time during the semester, students can hand in up to three additional journal entries about lesbian studies in academic journals. To do that, get on scholar.google.com and enter a key word or phrase (e.g., “lesbians in the military,” “lesbians in Argentina”). Extra credit readings **MUST BE ARTICLES IN ACADEMIC JOURNALS**. They cannot be articles in academic books, or book reviews, or print media. Check with me if you are uncertain. Read the pdf online if available, or read the journal article in the SDSU library. The journal entry should have the same outline as other in-class journal entries. Be sure to put the complete reference (title, authors, name of academic journal, year, volume, and page numbers) at the top of the journal entry. Extra credit journal entries are due in class on Thursday, December 9 at the beginning of class.



TIMETABLE

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

Tuesday, September 7: 5 journal entries due about lesbian identity readings and about lesbians versus bisexuals/gays/heterosexuals/transgenders readings

Tuesday, September 14: 4 journal entries due about lesbian history readings

Tuesday, September 21: 3 journal entries due about the coming out process

Tuesday, September 21: TERM PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE

Tuesday, September 28: 5 journal entries due about sex, love and relationships readings

Tuesday, October 5: 2 journal entries due about lesbian community readings

Tuesday, October 12: 3 journal entries due about lesbian mental health readings

Tuesday, October 19: 3 journal entries due about the lesbian body readings

Tuesday, October 26: 5 journal entries due about same-sex marriage readings and spirituality readings

Tuesday, November 2: 4 journal entries due about lesbian parenting readings

Tuesday, November 9: 3 journal entries due about lesbians in educational settings readings

Tuesday, November 16: 2 journal entries due about lesbian popular culture readings

Tuesday, November 23: no journal entries due

Tuesday, November 30: 2 journal entries due about economics of lesbianism readings

Tuesday, December 7: 4 journal entries due about biology of sexual orientation readings and global lesbianism readings

Thursday, December 9: TERM PAPER DUE



SYLLABUS

Tuesday, August 31 INTRODUCTION AND COURSE DESCRIPTION
 &
 Thursday, September 2

Film: But I'm a Cheerleader

Tuesday, September 7 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, September 9 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, September 14 LESBIAN HISTORY
 &
 Thursday, September 16

Blackwood and Wieringa book: *The Politics of Identities and Languages: Lesbian Desire in Ancient and Modern India*, by Giti Thadani

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1975). *The female world of love and ritual: Relations between women in nineteenth-century America*. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1(1), 1-29.

Larkin book: *Mad For Her*, by Jill Johnston

Together Alone, by Eva Kollisch

Tuesday, September 21 THE COMING OUT PROCESS

Saori Kamano (2005). *Entering the lesbian world in Japan: Debut stories*. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 9(1/2), 11-30.

Larkin book: *First Love*, by Karla Jay

Waking Up, by Jacquie Bishop

Thursday, September 23 NO CLASS



Tuesday, September 28 SEX, LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
 &
 Thursday, September 30

Blackwood and Wieringa book: Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Gender, by Kendall

Larkin book: Pot Luck, by Cynthia Bond

Lisa Diamond (2002). “Having a girlfriend without knowing it”: Intimate friendships among adolescent sexual-minority women. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 6(1), 5-16.

Esther Rothblum (1999). Poly-friendships. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3(1/2), 71-83.

Cynthia Deer (1999). A Long Journey Towards Polyamorous Bliss. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3(1/2), 165-174.

Tuesday, October 5 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, October 7 WHAT ARE LESBIAN “COMMUNITIES”?

Susan Krieger (2005). The *Mirror Dance* in Retrospect. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 9(1/2), 1-9.

Shaba Barnes (2005). My Life in the Lesbian Community: The Joys and the Pain. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 9(1/2), 45-54.



Tuesday, October 26

THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DEBATE

Larkin book: *Diary of a Mad Lesbian*, by Leslea Newman

Kitty Tsui (1995). Lesbian marriage ceremonies: I do. In K. Jay (Ed.) *Dyke Life: From growing up to growing old*. NY: Basic Books.

Marlon Bailey, Priya Kandaswamy & Mattie Udora Richardson (2004). Is Gay Marriage Racist? In Mattilda (aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore) *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* (pp. 87-93). Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press.

Thursday, October 28

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, November 2

SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS



Thursday, November 4 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.

Tuesday, November 9 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, November 11 NO CLASS—VETERANS DAY

Tuesday, November 16 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS



Thursday, November 18 LESBIAN POPULAR CULTURE
 &
 Tuesday, November 23

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

Thursday, November 25 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING

Tuesday, November 30 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.

Thursday, December 2 SPECIAL TOPICS—STUDENT
 PRESENTATIONS

