

LESBIAN LIVES AND CULTURES

WMNST 535

SPRING 2016

ESTHER ROTHBLUM





Class Meeting Times: Tuesday, Thursday 2-3:15 p.m.

Classroom: Life Science North 134

Professor: Esther Rothblum

Office: AL 317

Office Hours: Wednesday 9-10:30 am

Telephone: 594-6662

Email: erothblu@mail.sdsu.edu

The best way to reach me is via email--I am happy to reply to emails any time. You can also talk to me before or after class.

Teaching Assistant: Julie Gardner

Email: gardnerj865@gmail.com

The focus of this course is on theoretical, historical, psychological, political and cultural construction of lesbian existence; the influence of feminisms on lesbian lives; and the complexity of lesbian lives across class, race, ethnic, age, and national/international differences. We will discuss the meaning of “lesbianism” and woman-identified-women across time and culture. The course will focus on a number of topics, including the coming out process, sex and relationships, parenting, the lesbian body, lesbian communities, activism, and popular culture, among many others.

Required texts available at KB Books and Aztec Books:

Blackwood, Evelyn & Saskia Wieringa

Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures
NY: Columbia University Press, 1999

Larkin, Joan (Ed.)

A Woman Like That: Lesbian and Bisexual Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories
NY: Avon Books, 1999

All additional readings are available electronically on Blackboard.sdsu.edu under Course Documents.



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:

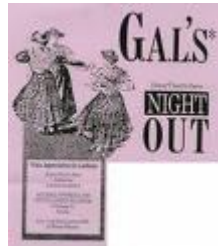
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the way that societies across national boundaries have constructed the lesbian
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways that lesbians' lives are shaped by social institutions
3. Evaluate multiple perspectives about lesbian lives and cultures from the perspectives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

Message from Student Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at [\(619\) 594-6473](tel:6195946473). To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

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.



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 10, halfway through the semester.

II. Weekly journals (30%)

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

Journal entries are due at the beginning of each class starting on Thursday, January 28.

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 30 readings in all during the semester).

Points will be taken off if the entries do not cover all readings for that class session, if the entries are not related to the above questions, or if the entries do not indicate you have done the readings.

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. Midterm Open-Book Exam: 30% of total grade (20% for graduate students)

The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate that you can integrate the course material (readings, films, lectures, student presentations, and discussions) in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

A list of essay exam questions will be given to the class on Tuesday, March 8. Students will have some choice of exam items. The midterm exam needs to be handed in in class on Thursday, March 17.

IV. Final Open-Book Exam: 25% of total grade (15% for graduate students)

The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate that you can integrate the course material (readings, films, lectures, student presentations, and discussions) in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

A list of essay exam questions will be given to the class on Thursday, April 28. Students will have some choice of exam items, and the exam is open book. Completed exams should be emailed via Blackboard by TUESDAY, MAY 10 AT 1PM (that is the final exam date for our course).

V. Class Lecture for Graduate Students (5% for prospectus + 15% for class lecture)

Each graduate student will give a class lecture on a topic related to this course. Please confirm topics with me by Tuesday, March 8 and submit a short (1/2 page) overview of your topic and a preliminary (1/2 page) bibliography on that day at the beginning of class. This will count as 5% of your grade. The class lecture itself is currently scheduled for Thursday, April 14 and will count as 15% of your grade.

IMPORTANT NOTE: ALL PAPERS AND EXAMS MUST REFLECT HIGH-QUALITY, COLLEGE-LEVEL WRITING. THE SDSU WRITING CENTER IS AN EXCELLENT RESOURCE: <http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/>



Extra credit (5% added to final course grade)

For a maximum of 3 points: At any time during the semester, students can hand in up to three additional journal entries about chapters from the Blackwood & Wieringa textbook *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures* that were not assigned as class readings. The extra credit journal entries should have the same outline as other in-class journal entries. Extra credit journal entries are due in class on Thursday, May 5 at the beginning of class.

For two points: Students can also show a 5-10 minute video clip in class that depicts lesbians in films, television, music or other media. Two class periods have been set aside for this: March 15 and April 7. Students will be scheduled in a first-come, first-served manner once they have sent me the sample clip and their preferred date.



SYLLABUS

Thursday, January 21
&
Tuesday, January 26

INTRODUCTION AND COURSE DESCRIPTION
AND
FILM: BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER

Thursday, January 28
&
Tuesday, February 2

IDENTITY: WHO IS A LESBIAN?

Two journal entries due on January 28 for:

1. Blackwood and Wieringa book: *Lesbians, Men-Women, and Two Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures*, by Sabine Lang
2. Blackwood and Wieringa book: "What's Identity Got to Do With It?" *Rethinking Identity in Light of the Mati Work in Suriname*, by Gloria Wekker

Thursday, February 4
&
Tuesday, February 9

LESBIAN HISTORY

Two journal entries due on February 4 for:

1. 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.
2. Larkin book: *Mad For Her*, by Jill Johnston



Thursday, February 11 THE COMING OUT PROCESS

One journal entry due on February 11 for:

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

Tuesday, February 16 SEX, LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

&

Thursday, February 18

Three journal entries due on February 16 for:

1. Blackwood and Wieringa book: Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Gender, by Kendall
2. Esther Rothblum (1999). Poly-friendships. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3(1/2), 71-83.
3. Cynthia Deer (1999). A Long Journey Towards Polyamorous Bliss. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3(1/2), 165-174.

Tuesday, February 23 THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DEBATE

&

Thursday, February 25

Two journal entries due on February 23 for:

1. Kitty Tsui (1995). Lesbian marriage ceremonies: I do. In K. Jay (Ed.) *Dyke Life: From growing up to growing old*. NY: Basic Books.
2. 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.



Tuesday, March 1 THE LESBIAN BODY

Two journal entries due on March 1 for:

1. Larkin book: A Vision, by Rebecca Brown
2. Jennifer Lyle et al. (1999). Beauty on the borderland: On being Black lesbian and beautiful. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3(4), 45-53.

Thursday, March 3 BIOLOGY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

One journal entry due on March 3 for:

1. What is Sexual Orientation and Do Women Have One? By J. Michael Bailey. In Debra Hope (2009) *Contemporary Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities*. NY: Springer Science and Business Media.

Tuesday, March 8 LESBIAN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
&
Thursday, March 10

Two journal entries due on March 8 for:

1. Larkin book: My Debut, by Blanche McCrary Boyd
2. Larkin book: Cherry Picker, by Chrystos

MIDTERM ESSAY EXAM QUESTIONS GIVEN TO STUDENTS TODAY (DUE ON MARCH 17)

GRADUATE STUDENTS ENROLED IN THE COURSE SUBMIT A PROSPECTUS TODAY ON THE TOPIC OF THEIR GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATION (the presentation will be on April 14)



Tuesday, March 15 EXTRA CREDIT POPULAR CULTURE CLIPS

No journal entries due

Thursday, March 17 LESBIANS AS PARENTS

Three journal entries due on Marcy 17 for:

1. Larkin book: The Coming Out of a Gay Pride Child, by Elizabeth Lorde-Rollins
2. Larkin book: Easter Weekend, by Minnie Bruce Pratt
3. Rachel Epstein (2002). Butches with babies: Reconfiguring gender and motherhood. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 6(2), 41-57.

IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMS DUE (exam questions were distributed on March 8)

Tuesday, March 22 WHO WERE THE AMAZONS?

&

Thursday, March 24

Film: Amazon Warrior Women

One journal entry due on April 5 for:

1. V.I. Guliaev (2003). Amazons in the Scythia: New Finds at the Middle Don. *World Archeology*, 35(1), 112-125.

Tuesday, March 29 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

&

Thursday, March 31



Tuesday, April 5

LESBIANS AND SPIRITUALITY

Two journal entries due on March 22 for:

1. Mary Hunt (1994). Lovingly Lesbian: Toward a Feminist Theology of Friendship. In James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow (Eds.) *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*. Louisville: Westminster.
2. Jisho Warner (1997). What Do Lesbians Do in the Daytime? In Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon (Eds.) *Being Bodies: Buddhist Women on the Paradox of Embodiment*. Boston: Shambhala.

Thursday, April 7

EXTRA CREDIT POPULAR CULTURE CLIPS

No journal entries due

Tuesday, April 12

ECONOMICS OF LESBIANISM

Two journal entries due on April 12 for:

1. 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.
2. Danae Clark (1993). Commodity Lesbianism. In Harry Abelow and Michele Barale (Eds.) *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. NY: Routledge.



Thursday, April 14 GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

No journal entries due

Tuesday, April 19 GUEST LECTURE BY TEACHING ASSISTANT
JULIE GARDNER

One journal entry due on April 19 for a reading to be assigned

Thursday, April 21 GLOBAL LESBIANISM

Two journal entries due on April 21 for:

1. Blackwood and Wieringa book: How Homosexuality Became “Un-African,” by Margrete Aarmo
2. Blackwood and Wieringa book Women’s Sexuality and the Discourse on Asian Values: Cross-Dressing in Malaysia, by Tan ben hui

Tuesday, April 26 WHAT ARE LESBIAN “COMMUNITIES”?
&

Thursday, April 28

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

Film: Last Call at Maud’s

FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED TODAY (due via email on Tuesday, May 10 at 1 pm).

Tuesday, May 3

LESBIAN MUSIC AND FESTIVALS

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

Film: Radical Harmonies

Thursday, May 5

LESBIANS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

1. 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.

FINAL EXAM: The final exam will be a take-home exam. Essay questions will be distributed in class on Thursday, April 28. Completed exams should be emailed via Blackboard by TUESDAY, MAY 10 AT 1 PM (this is the final exam period scheduled for our class).

