

# WGS 210: GLBTQI Identities

Gettysburg College  
Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies  
Spring 2012

**Professor:** Bassam Romaya, PhD

**Office Location:** Weidensall Hall Room 310

**Email:** bromaya@gettysburg.edu

**Office Phone:** (717) 337-6296

**Office Hours:** Mon & Wed 12:30PM-1:30PM

**Meeting Times:** Tues Thurs 1:10PM-2:25PM

**Course Title:** GLBTQI Identities

**Course Location:** Weidensall Hall Room 402

**Course Section:** A

**Course Registration Number:** 20953

---

**I. Course Description:** In this course, we will draw upon various interdisciplinary approaches that make up the expansive field known as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex identity studies. A compendium to this area of study will serve as our primary text, supplemented by major theoretical works by Judith Butler, Jose Munoz, and Jasbir Puar. Our study will often be topical and chronological, as we focus on particular topics and place them within a broader historical context. We will consider foundations of GLBTQI identities in art and literature, history, politics, and mass media. We will trace our study of GLBTQI peoples to contemporary times, with a special focus on recent social and political struggles across the globe. Our course will consider a host of challenges introduced by transgender, transsexual, and intersex identities, and address whether (or not) they have successfully eroded the conventional notion of gender. Course topics include recent controversies such as gays in the military, same-sex marriage, gay clergy, queer diversity and transnationalism; we will also navigate more theoretical issues like social or environmental constructions of identity/ies and other key topics in this field, with particular emphasis on gender, drag, performance and disidentification, the rise of homonationalism, and intersectional components of identity.

**II. Course Format:** The course format consists in a combination of lectures, discussions, weekly readings, in-class presentations, take-home assignments and in-class examinations. On occasion, we may include other media (such as film, artwork, news items, etc.) with special significance to course content or we may invite guest speakers to contribute to our class discussions. Weekly lectures and in-class discussions *will not* be posted online in Moodle or made available outside of class. Classroom attendance and active participation is an indispensable part of the pedagogical process, substantially contributing to an integral portion of your overall course grade. As a general guideline, reading the text is mandatory. So, please come to class having done the assigned weekly readings and be prepared to discuss them enthusiastically.

**III. Course Texts:** In addition to the following required course texts, supplementary instructional material will be made available in class as needed.

a) Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004). ISBN: 0415969239.

b) Deborah T. Meem, Michelle A. Gibson, and Jonathan F. Alexander, eds., *Finding Out: An Introduction to LGBT Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010). ISBN: 1412938651.

c) Jose Esteban Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). ISBN: 978-0816630158.

d) Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). ISBN: 082234114X.

**IV. Prerequisites and Course Objectives:** Although no prerequisite exist in the formal sense, the only prerequisite you should expect to have is a willingness to be intellectually challenged, to think open-mindedly about new and traditional theoretical problems that we will examine/re-examine throughout the term. You are required to think critically and reflectively about the various topics we discuss. This course aims to: 1) broaden your theoretical presuppositions about the world we inhabit by critically examining open and free-exchange of ideas; 2) invite you to draw your own well-informed and well-reasoned conclusions about general problems of human life; 3) encourage you to further explore your own place in the world by guiding you along on your own journey in search of truth/s, meaning and personal understanding of our global environment. *Finally, as a general prerequisite, please be advised that some of the material we will be reading and discussing in this course features violent content, some profanity and nudity, and sexually explicit material; if such content makes you uncomfortable, it is recommended that you strongly consider withdrawing from the course.*

**V. Course Requirements and Grading Procedure:** Your grade for the course is based on the total number of points accumulated from 4 short papers, 1 midterm exam, 1 term paper, 1 final exam, an attendance and participation score, and a brief in-class presentation. Please note that this grading scale makes use of the plus/minus system. The *approximate* grading scale used to assess your final course grade is modeled upon the following grade point system:

94-96 % = A	80-83 % = B-	67-69 % = D+
90-93 % = A-	77-79 % = C+	64-66 % = D
87-89 % = B+	74-76 % = C	60-63 % = D-
84-86 % = B	70-73 % = C-	57-59 % = F

In very few cases, half points may boost your overall grade. That is, if your grade total contains a fraction, you will automatically receive the next highest grade. For example, if your grade points amount to 89½, you get an A- for the course rather than B+. This works toward your advantage. Please note that both the midterm and final exam will focus on knowledge base acquired during a previous X-weeks period, scheduled successively throughout the course; this means that there will be no comprehensive exam at the end of the term. Of course, you are encouraged to apply material you have amassed during various stages of the course, but do note that each exam is structured to test your knowledge base of a particular area that we cover during each X-weeks of instruction time. Finally, exams administered throughout the term will be writing-intensive/essay-based format, conventional in most upper level courses; hence, there will be no “multiple choice” questions or “fill-ins” on any exam. Detailed instructions on how to write an essay for an in-class exam will be provided several weeks before the first exam is given. The breakdown for 6 sections that constitute your overall course grade is detailed blow:

#### **V.1 Attendance and Participation: 10%**

Regular attendance is essential for succeeding in this (and probably any other) course. After the first week of class, I begin taking attendance; your attendance and participation score is largely determined by (fully awake) physical presence and active in-class participation; this customarily involves speaking up and directly contributing to our in-class discussions, projects, or assignments in a variety of ways. Participation scores are not tallied automatically; they are earned as a result of regular in-class participation and assessed at the sole discretion of the professor. The weekly lectures will assume that

students have done the assigned readings (and thought critically about them) before coming to class; therefore, please be prepared to discuss the material *enthusiastically*. The College does not recognize a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Every absence is penalized at 2 points per class meeting. For any exceptions in the form of unexpected or immediate special circumstances, a student must notify me in advance or *ex post facto* of their serious and compelling reasons for missing class; this generally involves circumstances beyond a student's control which may not only impact our own course but other classes as well. Compulsory obligations such as attending to unforeseen medical needs or immediate family emergencies constitute unexpected or immediate special circumstances. Supporting documentation may be requested in order to verify any urgent matters impacting class attendance. In the event that you are unable to make it to class, please remember that you are nonetheless responsible for obtaining and knowing any material covered during your absence (absences do not absolve you from accountability). Similarly, if you must leave class early or arrive late, you are responsible for knowing what you miss, so please consult with me or someone else in class about any crucial information you may have missed. Excessive absences will very likely impact your understanding of the material, thereby preventing you from succeeding in the course. What's more, information such as weekly reading assignments, handouts, and current announcement of exams, is often made during class. On average, you should expect to spend approximately 3 hours of study or preparation time for each 1 hour we spend in-class per week. If you find that you are struggling with the material, I strongly advise you to see me as soon as possible for extra help—before you fall behind. *Lastly, please make sure you have a current Gettysburg College email account and check it frequently (at least daily). I often email students course updates and other pertinent announcements as new information becomes available.*

### **V.2 Class Presentation: 10%**

Each student is required to conduct an in-class presentation. This may involve presenting one of the readings for the course (excluding introductions, prefaces, forwards, or short excerpts), research material from your term paper, a performance piece of some sort, an in-class dialogue of a text/short play, or some other possibility. Student presentations run approximately 10-15 minutes or longer, depending on content, complexity of material, and classroom dynamics. Students may present material individually, in pairs, or in small groups, provided that multiple students are needed to conduct the presentation. Presentations are assessed for strength, clarity, delivery, originality, and engagement with course content. Students should arrange to discuss their presentation ideas with me well in advance of their proposed presentation date.

### **V.3 Discussion Questions: 20%**

These biweekly assignments are drawn from the discussion questions listed at the end of each chapter in the *Finding Out* textbook. These assignments will contain your response/s to essay questions, specific tasks, or other activities outlined at the end of each chapter. Assignments may require argument analysis, short research projects, reflection/s on a film, or other creative endeavors based on the readings or other course content. The aim of these brief essay-style response papers is to keep you on track with weekly readings and other course material. The assignments also help you to hone down your writing skills in preparation for similar types of essay questions you will be faced with on the midterm and final exams. Additionally, they allow you to demonstrate your reading comprehension of the material, as well as your ability to situate a particular topic in relation to other material we have covered; the written assignments provide you with an opportunity to formally reflect on the readings on your own, and enable me to assess your level of engagement with this material. Generally, these papers run approximately 1 to 2 pages in length and each paper is worth up to 5 points. There will be 4 papers assigned throughout the term. You may earn up to 20 points possible from these papers during

the semester—this constitutes 20% of your course grade. The assignments are spaced out approximately 2 weeks apart, except for the weeks in which we have other things due.

#### **V.4 Midterm Exam: 20%**

A three part midterm exam will test knowledge base acquired in the first half of the term. The basic format is 2 short essays and 1 long essay. The midterm exam is worth 20 points total; the long essay is worth 10 points and each of the two short essays is valued at 5 points. You may also attempt an extra credit question at the end of your exam which may boost your overall exam score (see Section VI on Extra Credit). *Please note that no electronic devices may be used or accessed during your midterm exam.*

#### **V.5 Term Paper: 20%**

The term paper assignment asks you to explore an issue/theme with respect to GLBTQI identities. You may write on any topic that interests you from our course readings; it is also possible to write on related material that we may not be studying. Recommended length for these papers is 8-10 pages. More detailed information on the term paper assignment will follow.

#### **V.6 Final Exam: 20%**

A final exam will be administered during our regularly scheduled exam time (see page 6). The final will be very similar to the midterm in format, though it will cover knowledge base acquired in the second half of the term. It is not a *comprehensive* exam, which means, it will not cover everything we learned since the first week of class, but only material acquired in the second half of the semester. *Please note that no electronic devices may be used or accessed during your final exam.*

**VI. Extra Credit:** While there are no formal assignments made for the exclusive purpose of gaining extra credit points, students have the opportunity to earn “extra credit” on both the midterm and final exams. Accordingly, students may accumulate more than the total number of points possible on either the midterm or final, through successfully addressing an optional extra credit question/problem which appears at the end of each exam. You will have several extra credit questions to choose from so your choices will not be limited. Please do keep in mind that extra credit exam questions may not come from the text and might be more challenging than ones contained in the body of the exam. Generally speaking, extra credit problems are set to a higher degree of assessment; that is, graded with a greater degree of scrutiny than questions in the body of the exam.

**VII. Make-Up Exams and Late Work Acceptance Policy:** Please make every effort to take the midterm and final exam during their regularly scheduled class time. Make-ups may only be administered in the event of serious and compelling reasons beyond the student’s control; this includes but is not limited to immediate family emergencies, documented medical reasons, or other College-approved exemptions. You must notify me in advance of your impending emergency and schedule a mutually-convenient appointment time for any make-ups. Late papers are penalized at a rate of 10% markdown for each day late beyond the due date (for example, if the term paper is worth 20 points, you will lose 2 points for each day the paper is late).

**VIII. Snow Emergencies and Unexpected Class Cancellations:** In the event of an unexpected campus wide emergency due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances that result in class cancellation, I will contact you (by email) with specific instructions on how the emergency impacts any exams, papers, or other assignments scheduled for the day/s in question. Depending on

where we are at in the semester, I may postpone your exam, convert it to a take-home, or make other arrangement for you to complete the assigned course work.

**IX. Academic Integrity:** You are expected to abide by the principles and practices of the Gettysburg College Honor Code at all times. The Honor Code encompasses a broad range of responsibilities for honesty apart from specific academic contexts. While there will be several opportunities to discuss the principles of the Honor Code with respect to particular course assignments and in-class exams, you are encouraged to see me with any questions or concerns you may have about the College's Honor Code system. Additionally, I encourage (but do not require) you to include and sign the pledge on all submitted work. As a reminder, all students are bound by the principles of the Honor Code regardless of whether or not they wish to sign and include the pledge in submitted course work. Printed copies of the Honor Code are available in the Office of Academic Advising. The full text is also available from their website at: [http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/honor\\_code/](http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/honor_code/)

**X. Class Conduct/Miscellaneous Policies:** A successful learning environment is generated by respect, professional courtesy, and kind consideration of others; please keep this in mind while in class. As always, please adhere to familiar classroom etiquette; that is, please refrain from eating (drinks are fine), sleeping, talking privately, texting, and using any and all electronic equipment (i.e., cell phones, iPods, Blackberrys, personal stereos/headphones, palm pilots, recording devices, scientific calculators, laptops, etc.) while in class. *Please note that the use of cellular/mobile phones as well as laptops is not permitted in class at any time (or in my office hours).* The use of cellular phones in class is completely inappropriate; operating phones in class distracts other students and interrupts my concentration. Moreover, students have been known to use cellular phones as a contemporary cheating device; therefore, you may not use your phones (or other electronic devices) during an exam. If it is imperative that you use your phone, please conduct your business outside of class as quickly as possible and disable your phone before returning to class. Additionally, *laptops may not be used or accessed during class, as students often busy themselves with external matters unsuitable or inappropriate for a participatory in-class environment.* For special or personal circumstances, please see me in advance about any exceptions to the prohibition on the use of electronic devices in class. In addition, please do not bring young children or non-human animals/pets (unless pre-approved by the College) to class. Finally, if you have any questions or concerns with respect to grades or your specific course performance, please contact me personally. As a general rule, your grades (among other educational records) are confidential, thus I am *not permitted nor required* to discuss your course performance with anyone else on your behalf. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as FERPA) prohibit me from discussing your educational records with other parties. For the FERPA policy governing Gettysburg College faculty, please see the College Registrar's website at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/registrar>. In brief, please conduct yourselves appropriately and adhere to commonsensical, mutually beneficial, classroom etiquette.

**XI. Special Circumstances and Students with Disabilities:** Please do not hesitate to meet with me in the event you encounter difficulties of a personal nature which may hinder your ability to succeed in this course. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, etc.) that may impact course performance, should contact me immediately so that I may accommodate your needs as early on as possible. If you would like to request accommodations or review the College's policies governing disability disclosures, please contact the Office of Academic Advising at (717) 337-6579 or visit their office located in the College Union Building Room 280. You may also access the Gettysburg College *Handbook for Students with Disabilities* online at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/disabilities/>

**XII. Gettysburg College Writing Center:** You are encouraged to take advantage of the Gettysburg College Writing Center in order to improve the quality of your writing. While you are *always* welcome to see me for help in improving your written work, on occasion, I may refer you to our Writing Center for additional assistance. If you would like information on drop-in tutoring hours, location, or the types of services offered by the College's Writing Center, please consult the Center's website at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/english/student/writing-center.dot>. You may also contact the Center's Assistant Director, Professor William Lane, directly by email at [wlane@gettysburg.edu](mailto:wlane@gettysburg.edu) or by phone at (717) 337-6756.

**XIII. Tentative Course Outline:** (Subject to frequent revisions and omissions as needed)

Week 1: 1/24, 1/26: Introduction to GLBTQI Identities, *Finding Out*—Introduction, Ch 1-Ch 2

Week 2: 1/31, 2/2: *Finding Out*—Ch 3, Butler—Introduction, Ch 1-Ch 3

Week 3: 2/7, 2/9: *Finding Out*—Ch 4, Butler—Ch 4-Ch 6, **Discussion Question # 1**

Week 4: 2/14, 2/16 (No Class: APA Central): *Finding Out*—Ch 5, Butler—Ch 7-Ch 9

Week 5: 2/21, 2/23: *Finding Out*—Ch 6, Butler—Ch 10-Ch11, **Discussion Question # 2**

Week 6: 2/28, 3/1: *Finding Out*—Ch 7, Munoz—Preface, Introduction, Ch 1

Week 7: 3/6, 3/8: *Finding Out*—Ch 8, Munoz—Ch 2-Ch 3, Midterm Review, **Midterm Exam**

Week 8: 3/13, 3/15: SPRING BREAK

Week 9: 3/20, 3/22: *Finding Out*—Ch 9, Munoz—Ch 4-Ch 6

Week 10: 3/27, 3/29: *Finding Out*—Ch 10, Munoz—Ch 7-Ch 8, **Discussion Question # 3**

Week 11: 4/3, 4/5: *Finding Out*—Ch 11, Puar—Preface, Introduction

*Last day to withdraw from a course with grade of "W": Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2012*

Week 12: 4/10, 4/12: *Finding Out*—Ch 12, Puar—Ch 1, **Discussion Question # 4**

Week 13: 4/17, 4/19: *Finding Out*—Ch 13, Puar—Ch 2

Week 14: 4/24, 4/26: *Finding Out*—Ch 14, Puar—Ch 3

Week 15: 5/1, 5/3: *Finding Out*—Ch 15, Puar—Ch 4, Final Review, **Term Papers Due**

Week 16: 5/12: **Final Exam**

According to the Gettysburg College Spring 2012 Final Examination Schedule, our officially scheduled final exam will take place on:  
**Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> 2012 at 8:30AM to 11:30AM in Weidensall Hall 402**