

GSWS 306: Women's Autobiography, Memoirs & Journals

Topic: Queer/Trans Life Narratives Across Media

HC 1530

Tuesday, 9 am - 12:20pm

Dr. Helen Leung

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course studies experimental forms of life narrative by queer/trans subjects with a focus on North American and European writers, filmmakers, and performers. We will examine how life narratives challenge the boundaries between fact and fiction; play with genre expectations and straddle different media; tell stories of gender and sexual non-conformity while exploring issues of intimacy, family, and community. Forms studied include autobiographical fiction, auto-documentary, storytelling, stand-up comedy, pedagogical memoir, and automortography. Students will also be encouraged to engage in creative life narrative practices and experiment with genre and medium.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Kate Bornstein, *A Queer and Pleasant Danger* (Beacon, 2012)

Anna Camilleri, *I Am A Red Dress* (Arsenal Pulp, 2004)

Ivan E Coyote, *Loose Ends* (Arsenal Pulp, 2005)

Additional articles available on-line via SFU library or as PDF on Canvas

FILMS & VIDEOS

Kimberly Reed, *Prodigal Sons* (2008)

Kate Davis, *Southern Comfort* (2001)

Jules Roskam, *Against A Trans Narrative* (2008)

Margaret Cho, *I Am The One That I Want* (2000)

Eddie Izzard, excerpts from *Dressed To Kill* (1999), *Sexie* (2003) and other tours

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students are expected to: (1) demonstrate knowledge of how queer/trans subjects experiment with life narratives; (2) be conversant with critical issues regarding the autobiographical mode, its impact on concepts of the gendered and sexualized "self," and its significance for queer, trans, and feminist thought; (3) develop a capacity to engage creatively with one or more life narrative forms.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING PROFILE

Attendance & Participation	10%
Short Reading Responses (2 pages each) x 4	40%
Final Paper (8-10 pages)	30%
Life Narrative Project	20%

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance & Participation: The attendance and participation grade will reflect students' attendance, degree of involvement during class discussion, and contribution to the learning environment.

Full attendance = 5% (1% is deducted for each unexcused absence, 5 absences = 0/5)

Consistent, enthusiastic, and insightful participation = 5%; good, regular participation = 4%; occasional participation = 3%; infrequent participation = 2%; minimal participation = 1%; no participation or disruptive/unhelpful participation = 0%.

Short Reading Responses: Each student is required to hand in FOUR 2-page responses to four different life narratives/films/performance on the course reading list (excluding theoretical writings). The response must be handed in NO MORE THAN ONE WEEK after class discussion or screening of the text/film. Late submission will not be considered or receive credit.

The response should be in the form of a short essay. There is no set format but the following issues should be addressed:

- What is distinctive about the autobiographical or life narrative expression of the text or film?
- How does the text/film deal with issues of gender and/or sexuality?
- What is your own response to the text/film and what have you learnt from it?

Final Paper: A research paper (8-10 pages) that develops a relevant topic and includes independent research outside of the course syllabus. Detailed grading rubric will be available..

Life Writing Project:

DESCRIPTION

Students are required to make a piece of short life narrative work in any medium and present it to class. The presentation should not be more than 5 minutes long.

PURPOSE

This is an opportunity for students to learn about life narratives through practice, through exploring different forms and media, and experimenting with creative practices.

CONTENT

The piece should be a form of "life narrative" as the student understands it. It can be in any medium, such as writing, performance, video, drawing, blogging etc. If the piece is longer than 5 minutes, please pick a selection or an excerpt to present to class. We will spend another 5-10 minutes for fellow students to ask you questions about the process and other relevant issues.

RELATION TO COURSE

The piece does not have to be specifically about gender and sexuality or directly related to the content of the course. However, students should be prepared to discuss how their process or experience of working on the piece relate to the various forms of life writing that we have studied.

GRADING

The piece will be marked on the following: efforts; originality; thoughtfulness and insight;

TIME FRAME

The presentation will take place during the last two weeks of class but you are expected to have been developing the project throughout the semester. Sustained efforts (rather than an evidently rushed piece of work) will be given due credit.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 Jan 7 Introduction

Week 2 Jan 14

Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, "Life Narrative: Definitions and Distinctions"

Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, "The Visual-Verbal-Virtual Contexts of Life Narratives"

Week 3 Jan 21

Kate Bornstein, *A Queer And Pleasant Danger*

Week 4 Jan 28

Film Screening: *Prodigal Sons*

Week 5 Feb 4

Jay Prosser, "Mirror Images"

Film Screening: *Against A Trans Narrative*

Week 6 Feb 11 Reading Break. No Class.

Week 7 Feb 18

Workshop on autobiographical practices with guest facilitator Claire Robson

Week 8 Feb 25

Thomas Kane: "The Deaths of the Authors: Literary Celebrity and Automortography"

Film Screening: *Southern Comfort*

Week 9 Mar 4

Anna Camilleri, *I Am A Red Dress* + selected performances

Week 10 Mar 11

Ivan E. Coyote, *Loose Ends* + selected performances

Week 11 Mar 18

Helen Boyd, *My Husband Betty* (excerpts)

Video Screening: Eddie Izzard, *Dressed To Kill*, *Sexie*, *Stripped* (excerpts) + selected interviews

Week 12 Mar 25

Video Screening: Margaret Cho, *I Am The One That I Want*

Week 13 Apr 1

Project Presentations (Part 1)

Week 14 Apr 8

Project Presentations (Part 2) **Final Paper due via email or Canvas at noon on April 15, 2013.**