

Trans*formations of Gender, Body, Desire, and Soul

Course Format

Lecture

Meetings: 2 hours per week

Evaluations: attendance, in-class activities, final project

Credits: 5

Instructor

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Course Description

Why are we compelled to make ourselves count through gender categories? Who is gender for? Myself or others? Gender can be counted as an essence, performance, preference, or presentation, but it is almost always given as a way that social beings relate to each other. I'm curious how counting gender differently transforms one's relationship to one's self.

I invite you to explore the question of gender by reading an eclectic mix of philosophical, autobiographical, and fictional narratives about personal transformations from antiquity through the present. I'm committed to centering trans- and gender-nonconforming voices throughout the history of philosophy and from within our own community at Radboud.

We will explore gender as the transformation of body and beliefs, intimacy and politics, community and self. A significant portion of our class time will be devoted to developing our philosophical voices through experimental journaling, introspection, and communal writing.

This course is for those who are searching for new ways of understanding themselves and their relationships. It is for people who want to deepen their empathy, curiosity, and openness toward those with different experiences, self-understandings, and desires. It's for anyone who is committed to creating a class space, university, society, and world that is safer, more equitable, and brimming with possibilities that cannot yet be realized.

READINGS

Gender Revelations in the Dessert

“Sarah,” [The sayings of the Desert Fathers : the alphabetical collection](#). Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications. 1984. [ISBN 978-0-87907-959-8](#). 229-230

Marie Delcourt. "Female Saints in Masculine Clothing," *Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity*. (Studio Books, 1961) 84-101

Optional: Plato, “The Chariot Allegory” Phaedrus, (246a–254e): <https://web.stanford.edu/~mvr2j/ucsccourse/Phaedrus.pdf>

Writing Prompt: Choose one gender non-conforming mystic from our readings to meditate on. You may write them a letter or write a letter in their imagined voice, telling their “true story.”

We are Legion!

Michael Warner, “Tongues United: Memoirs of a Pentecostal Altar Boy”: <https://english.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Couriouser.pdf>

Writing Prompt: Write non-stop for 30 minutes. Reflect on one or multiple memories that have to do with your early relationship to your gender and sexuality. What insight emerge for you? Submit this writing (if you are comfortable) or submit a reflection on your writing.

Feral Encounters in the Wilderness

Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: Perverse Mondernities*. (Duke 2020) Chapter 1, "Wildness, Loss, and Death," 33–50; Chapter 4, "Where the Wild Things Are: Humans, Animals, and Children," 123–146

Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, *Ezili’s Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders*

Writing Prompt: Reflection on “Wilderness/Wildness.” Engage Halberstam to explore the themes of gender, sexuality, and self-determination. You’re free to take any approach to this prompt. You may want to incorporate philosophical autobiography, creative philosophical writing, or non-textual mediums (such as art or music). Please preface non-textual submissions with an abstract.

Beasty Metamorphoses

Kafka, *Metamorphosis*. https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Kafka_Metamorphosis.pdf

Nietzsche, “The Three Metamorphoses,” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Writing Prompt: Please read Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and Nietzsche’s “The Three Metamorphoses,” How would you interpret these texts through the themes of gender and sexuality?

Final Portfolio Assignment: Select three of your favorite assignments from this class. You may choose to refine or revise them. Please submit them in one document. Include a 1-page introduction that reflects on insights or experiences of transformation that you have gained over the course of this class. Explain why you’ve chosen these three works for your portfolio to represent your transformation.