

Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies

GWS/SOC 200

E (Elementary); Z (Humanities or Social Science); e (Ethnic Studies) credit

Summer 2019 Online

Canvas course site

Electronic materials and links available at: <http://learnuw.wisc.edu/>

Optional course Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/GathmanLGBTQ/>

(Shared content may be used for required Content Exploration posts)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies. The plus-sign is included in recognition that “LGBTQ” does not include everyone marginalized for their gender or sexuality, e.g. intersex people, asexual/aromantic people, pansexual/panromantic people, etc. Language and identities are always evolving.

We start from the position that taken-for-granted systems of categorization like gender and sexuality are in fact socially developed, enforced, and reproduced such that members of societies see them as "natural." **Note that this includes categories historically considered “biological” such as sex and race, which are also socially defined.** Although these systems may be described as “social constructs,” they are quite real to the people who are categorized by them, and who may actively work to reproduce, oppose, or transform them, as well as the personal identities that arise from them. Furthermore, these systems interact in various ways with other social categories such as class status, ability, age, etc.

Mainstream representations of LGBTQ+ individuals and the LGBTQ+ community overall tend to reinforce assumptions that the vast majority of LGBTQ+ people are White, middle-class, abled, cisgender men. This course therefore particularly emphasizes the central role in LGBTQ+ activism and communities that has been and continues to be played by transgender people and people of color, along with other underserved groups such as asexual/aromantic people and bi/pan people, and multiply marginalized LGBTQ+ people in general. Throughout the semester, we will address issues of **intersecting oppressions** and the **matrix of domination** originally raised by Black feminist theorists like **Kimberlé Crenshaw** and **Patricia Hill Collins**. We cannot understand how people are affected by gender and sexuality without understanding how they are also affected by other social categories.

We encourage you to bring up issues that we may not have considered. We value criticism and feedback from students who may have insight that we lack, and we make an effort to incorporate it as fully and immediately as possible.

Finally, introductory courses must cover a broad range of materials, and unfortunately often cannot delve into specific topics as deeply as I might like, **but that doesn't mean that they are easy**. Both online courses and accelerated summer courses require high levels of discipline and self-motivation, so it is particularly important that you manage your time effectively. The module overview pages in Canvas provide roadmaps to help you do so; we recommend that you refer to them early and often.

Course Objectives

- 1) Develop necessary vocabulary for discussing LGBTQ+ people and issues, with an understanding of how language can reinforce or challenge social norms.
- 2) Understand how “natural” categories such as sex, gender, sexuality, and race are constructed and understood in a particular social and historical context, while also respecting individual experiences and identities.
- 3) Practice expressing personal experiences and opinions in conversation with social scientific data and general social trends.
- 4) Learn about the history and current structure and effects of social institutions like criminal justice and healthcare in relation to groups marginalized by race, gender, and sexuality, with particular attention to the experiences and outcomes of multiply marginalized people such as transgender people of color.
- 5) Recognize how gender and sexuality intersect with other identities such as race, ethnicity, ability, age, economic class, etc. and explore how a person's experiences are shaped by their identities and group memberships.
- 6) Gain general knowledge about the history and present of LGBTQ+ communities and activism in the United States, and develop awareness of both coalitions and divisions within the LGBTQ+ “umbrella,” with particular attention to plurisexual communities, transgender communities, and LGBTQ+ communities of color.

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Communication with your teaching team

We welcome student email, but we ask that you follow these basic guidelines:

Please email:

- Requests to meet outside of normally scheduled office hours (we may or may not be able to accommodate these)
- Confidential or sensitive questions or issues

- Complicated questions, with the understanding that we may need to address them in communication with the class as a whole (without identifying information) or in a synchronous meeting—giving us lead time allows us to provide you with the best, most complete answer

Please do NOT email:

- Questions answered on the syllabus
- Questions answered in announcements posted to Canvas
- Clarification questions about materials (these belong in the module-specific WForum—see below)

We will do our best to answer email in a timely fashion, which for the summer online term means **within 24 hours**. Please do NOT send follow-up emails less than 24 hours after your initial email; this does not make us respond faster, but it does make it more difficult for us to prioritize student communications effectively. If it has been **more than** 24 hours and you have not received a reply, please DO send a follow-up.

Please note: We will NOT use the course email list for announcements or other communications. By posting announcements in Canvas, we can ensure that they do are always available/searchable, whereas email can be unintentionally deleted. However, because Canvas messages have limited threading and searchability, we ask that you restrict **individual communications** to EMAIL ONLY.

Format and Instructors

The online course is available in Canvas through Learn@UW. Each module is organized chronologically, with a Module Overview page that maps out all required materials and assignments for the week. To help keep you on track, each module follows the same general structure, with hard deadlines at 11:59pm on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

For each module, there are two discussion forums: one for the Content Exploration assignment, which is restricted to your assigned team, and the WForum for questions and clarifications, which is open to the whole class. While your participation in the WForums is not graded, active participation (both by asking complex questions and providing useful feedback to classmates) may be awarded up to **one (1) percentage point of extra credit on your final grade**. Please note that while we make an effort to provide additional clarification for readings and concepts that students have historically found difficult, it is still your responsibility to raise questions!

Your TA will monitor and grade all discussion forum activity, and will also post occasional feedback. Their primary role is to moderate and help you explore and elaborate ideas, NOT to lecture! Your instructor will also check in occasionally in the discussion forums in a similar role.

At the beginning of every module, your instructor will post an introductory video. These videos will provide a brief preview and context for the module's materials; they will also serve to address questions and other “loose ends” from the reflective questions that students answered in the previous module's lecture clip embedded quizzes.

Accessibility

The policy of the Board of Regents of the UW System is to ensure that no qualified person shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated in the UW System. Each qualified person shall receive reasonable accommodations needed to ensure access to educational opportunities, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

If you have a McBurney VISA, please make it available to your instructor no later than **5pm on Tuesday, June 25th**. If you do not have a McBurney VISA but there are conditions or life circumstances that interfere with your ability to fulfill your responsibilities for this course, I encourage you to email me ASAP to discuss how best to accommodate you. In some cases, I may recommend that you consult with the McBurney Disability Resource Center (263-2742).

A McBurney VISA is useful because it provides a clear list of necessary accommodations that all instructors at UW-Madison should provide for you. This is especially helpful insofar as it relieves you as a student of the burden of self-advocacy with each new course. However, if you do not have a VISA, I will still work with you as much as possible to support you in doing your best work for this course.

“Disability” is a broad category that includes physical, cognitive, and psychological issues, including chronic or mental illness. **People with disabilities/disabled people have the right to an education.**

Course Intro Survey (Learn@UW)

To get to know you better as people, I have created an intro survey in Google Forms that you should fill out no later than **11:59pm on Thursday, June 20th**. This is linked in Module 0.

Note: If have trouble with the link, you may need to sign out of your personal Google account, as it records your UW username.

Please note that this form also gives you a chance to ask a question for me to answer for the class. Like you (see below), I have the option to decline, but I will address a few of these in each of my module introduction videos, in order to make the exchange of personal information that often occurs in this course more reciprocal.

You may decline to answer any questions that you like EXCEPT for two questions on the last page regarding goals and motivations, but should go through the entire form and submit it in order to receive credit. The form is graded pass/fail (based purely on submission), and counts for **2% of your final grade**.

Team Introductions & Replies

All students are randomly assigned by Canvas to teams of 7-9 people. These teams will serve as your online discussion section—most of your class discussions will be in team-specific forums, so you should get to know your teammates right away. To this end, you will introduce yourself in your Module 0 Team Social Forum.

As part of this assignment, you will need to upload an image to Canvas to embed in your post (while selfies are encouraged, you are never required to post personal photos). Photo upload instructions are available in the readings for Module 0.

You should make your introduction post following the specific requirements outlined in the forum no later than **11:59pm, Wednesday, June 19th**. This post is graded pass/fail and is worth **2% of your final grade**.

You must post replies to at least four (4) of your teammates' introductions no later than **11:59pm, Friday, June 21st**. Each reply is worth **.5% of your final grade, for a total of 2% of your final grade for the category**.

Weekly Icebreaker Forums

Every week for Modules 2-8, there will be an icebreaker social forum. We encourage all students to get to know their teammates, but we don't want to penalize anyone for opting out, so participation in these forums is rewarded with **extra credit**.

The icebreaker forum opens at 4pm on Monday and remains open for the rest of the module, but your initial post is due NO LATER THAN 11:59pm Tuesday. This is meant to encourage you to check in on Canvas even on days when you don't have a deadline and get a start on the module contents sooner rather than later.

To receive extra credit, you will answer a Question of the Week from the discussion description; you may also choose to share photos from your past week (please share images of other people ONLY with explicit consent), recent experiences or new knowledge, or plans for the upcoming week. Icebreaker posts must be worth at least 100 words (images count as 10 words).

Your Module 2 Icebreaker Forum is worth .5 points on your final grade. The Icebreaker Forums for Modules 3-8 are each worth .25 points on your final grade. If you post in every Icebreaker Forum, you can earn up to **TWO (2) full percentage points of extra credit on your final grade**.

Lecture & Embedded Quizzes

Lecture content for this course consists mainly of short video clips from the offline full semester course and special recording sessions, with some outside content from other sources, including documentary films. To keep you on track viewing lecture content, reward keeping up with readings, and check in on your understanding of course content, our course video clips contain embedded quiz questions. This means that you should complete the week's readings BEFORE you start the lecture content, since all assigned readings are fair game for these questions.

In addition to multiple choice and true/false questions on the readings and previous lecture content (be sure to also view all lecture content in the order it is presented on Canvas!), there will be reflective questions throughout the course videos. These questions ask you to briefly reflect on your own experience and observations of the world in connection with course content, and are graded pass/fail for thoughtful completion.

There will be at least 24 quiz questions of these three types embedded in the lecture videos for each module. You must correctly/thoughtfully answer at least 16 of these for full credit (4 percentage points on your final grade per module, for a total of 32 percentage points on your final grade for the category). If you answer more than 16 questions in a module, only your 16 highest scores will be counted.

Remember, you only get one chance to answer a given video quiz question, so be sure to complete readings early and view all lecture videos in the order presented on Canvas.

To receive credit, all quiz questions must be answered by 11:59pm on Sunday night, before the next module begins.

Module 0 does not have required quiz questions; however, there are reflective questions built into the Module 0 video clips for which you may earn up to ONE (1) point of extra credit on your final grade. These questions will require you to address Module 0 readings.

Discussion Etiquette

These guidelines apply to any class discussion, regardless of size, topic, or venue.

You will be asked to discuss course materials and ideas with your teammates so that **everyone** can learn from the process. This course tends to attract a particularly diverse group in terms of previous knowledge of and experience, both academic and personal, with course material.

Please DO NOT be intimidated if you feel you are relatively ignorant in comparison to some of your classmates. Rather, you should appreciate the experience and expertise that they are willing to share.

Conversely, if you have comparatively more background in the material, please realize that this is an introductory course, and that everyone has to start somewhere. All of us have something to offer in our consideration of the material, and we all have something to learn from other participants in the course. This includes us as your instructors! Keep in mind that you may know a great deal about one aspect of identity or experience such as being an LGBTQ+ person, but very little about the experiences of other marginalized groups, such as people of color or disabled people—or vice versa. There may be no hierarchy of oppression, but oppression is also largely non-transferrable.

Some of the things that we discuss in this class are matters of fact and not open to interpretation (e.g. there are no documented cases of trans women committing assault in public bathrooms, despite frequent public outcry about this possibility, while there is a large body of evidence that trans women, particularly trans women of color, are disproportionately the targets of violence). In other cases, there are data about outcomes (e.g. children raised by two women have better conflict resolution skills, on average, than children raised by a man and a woman), but we might disagree about things like the methods used to collect the data (e.g. Who is in the sample? Who might be left out?), or the specific processes that lead to the observed outcome (i.e. WHY might these children have better conflict resolution skills?).

On another dimension, **I expect many disagreements** about values and policy (e.g. some LGBTQ people believe that civil marriage should be abolished rather than expanded to include same-gender couples, while others see marriage equality as a high priority goal for activism).

In this class, you will be learning **social scientific** data and ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality and their relationships with other categories of identity. **While I expect that your personal opinions will be part of the discussion, your challenge will be to consider the data and think critically using a sociological framework.** That involves, in part, understanding how our **positionality** as people of a certain race/ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, size, etc., affect our experiences and outcomes in life, which in turn shape our opinions. In particular, we all need to recognize that people are experts on their own experience. We do not know someone else's life better than they do.

I fully expect you to agree and disagree about ideas and theories. You may also find that your personal experiences do not always align with those of others, even when you claim many of the same identity labels; remember that you can only speak for yourself, not anyone else. NEVER personally attack or insult another person or group in this class (this includes insults meant as jokes).

At all times, I expect you to respect both me and your classmates and engage in **good faith discussion**, which means that you communicate your individual perspective as clearly and honestly as possible. Discussing in good faith also means that if someone says something you find hurtful, you should assume that their intent was not to do harm. Please try to explain WHY what the person said was hurtful, so that everyone can learn from your point of view. If someone else says they found something you said hurtful, please listen and try to understand their position. It is okay to ask for more information or to need more time to think about a response. One particular advantage of the online course is that you may feel relieved of pressure to immediately respond, though you can always post a "placeholder" along the lines of "I appreciate your response and I am taking some time to reflect."

You should also not be afraid to apologize **if you mean it**. Avoid "I'm sorry if you were offended"-type statements, and keep in mind that an effective apology is generally specific in terms of what is being apologized for and what we plan to do differently in the future. Just remember that everyone, including your instructors, messes up sometimes.

Content Exploration Discussion Posts & Replies

In the online course, we do not have in-person group meetings to discuss course materials. Instead, for each module you will either complete a required assignment (Modules 1 & 8), or you will seek out some artifact relevant to the module's topics (Modules 2-7), to share and discuss with your team. If you are having trouble finding relevant artifacts, anything posted on the supplementary Facebook page for the course is fair game!

Detailed instructions for the Module 1 & 8 Concept Maps are available in Canvas. For the Module 2-7 artifacts, you may upload and insert an image (with credit to the source), embed a video, or link to outside content such as a blog post, news article, etc. The body of each post should be 500-750 words in which you connect course materials to your artifact, analyze or critique that artifact, and raise questions for discussion. You must substantively reference at least TWO (2) readings and ONE (1) lecture clip in your post. A substantive reference is one that uses details from the source to support a specific argument about or interpretation of your chosen artifact. You should also reference specific details about the artifact itself. You will conclude the post with at least TWO (2) bullet-pointed questions for discussion with your team. These questions should provide a jumping off point for thoughtful conversation; they should NOT be close-ended yes/no questions. Your questions do NOT count toward the 500-750 word requirement.

Your Content Exploration discussion post must be made **no later than 11:59pm on Wednesday**. You will not be able to view others' posts in the forum until you have made your own. Your SINGLE lowest Content Exploration score from Weeks 2-7, including zeroes, will be dropped. Each remaining Content Exploration post is graded on a 25-point scale and is worth **5% of your final grade, for a total of 25% of your final grade for the category**.

After making your own post, you must reply to at least TWO (2) of your teammates' posts **no later than 11:59pm on Friday**. A reply must be at least 250 words and **substantively engage** with ideas or questions raised by the initial post. If you agree with the initial poster on a particular argument or idea, you must expand on the point in some way, adding new evidence or elements to the claim. If you disagree, you should explain why with specific evidence from materials or outside experience.

You must make a total of 12 reply posts throughout the course, with no more than TWO (2) in a single module. Although technically this means you could skip replying in two modules entirely, we recommend that you reply as often as you are able in the first half of the course at least to ensure a buffer for unexpected low scores or outside demands on your time.

Each reply is graded on a 10-point scale and is worth **2% of your final grade, for a total of 24% of your final grade for the category.**

WTForum

For each module, there is a general discussion forum called the WTForum. This forum is NOT team-specific; it is open to the entire class. This is where you should post general questions about readings and lecture materials, from basic definitions and terms to requests for specific examples to checks on your understanding (for instance, you could try to summarize a concept from a reading and ask if you've got it right). All students should feel free to respond; the teaching team will also post replies, but your classmates may be able to address some questions more quickly than we can, or to provide examples that resonate more strongly.

Keep in mind that if you have a question, it is incredibly unlikely that you are the only one, so don't be afraid to ask! The WTForums will allow us to efficiently address common questions and misunderstandings, avoiding repetition via private emails and providing opportunities for more collaborative learning.

The WTForum is not graded, but active participation throughout the course may earn you up to **one (1) percentage point of extra credit on your final grade.** This includes either frequent, relatively complex questions/checks, or frequent useful replies/explanations.

Course Grading Scheme

Team Introduction post	2%
Four (4) Team Introduction replies	2%
Lecture Video Quiz Questions	32%
One Intro Concept Map	5%
Five (5) Content Exploration posts	25%
One (1) Content Exploration post (DROPPED)	0%
One Exit Concept Map	10%
12 Content Exploration replies	24%
TOTAL	100%

IMPORTANT note on grades: Grades in this course are not negotiable, but we are happy to discuss course content and strategies for improvement in the future via email or Skype.

There are up to FOUR (4) percentage points of available extra credit in this course, as outlined above. **No other extra credit will be granted.**

Grading Scale

A	92.5+
AB	87.5 – 92.49
B	82.5 – 87.49
BC	77.5 – 82.49
C	71.5 – 77.49
D	63.5 – 71.49
F	<63.5

Statement on academic dishonesty

We take academic dishonesty and plagiarism extremely seriously, and we will pursue all avenues allowed by the university in the event that we discover any student misrepresenting the words or ideas of another, published or unpublished, as their own. In addition to any grade penalties imposed for the course, any student caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be reported to the office of the Dean of Students to prevent continuing patterns of such behavior. For assorted university resources on academic dishonesty and misconduct, see:

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/student-resources/>

Required Textbook

For this course, you will need a copy of the reader, *LGBTQ People & Issues: An Integrative Approach*. The reader is available directly from the publisher here: <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/> (Watch email list for more detailed instructions on ordering.) Once ordered, you will have online access to the beginning of the reader.

Used copies of *LGBTQ People & Issues* are available online and may also be available from former students in your social network. The reader is also available on reserve in the Physics Library on the UW-Madison campus (4th floor of Chamberlin Hall) and in College Library.

Additional readings are available electronically via Canvas.

Semester Schedule

This is a list of general topics & learning objectives for each module. For complete reading and lecture materials lists and assignment deadlines, see Module Overview pages in Canvas.

Module 0 (Prior to 6/20): Course Introduction

1. Learn to find information in Canvas.
2. Learn to upload files to Canvas.
3. Learn to use discussion forums in Canvas.
4. Get to know your teammates & the teaching team.
5. Learn to use quizzes in Canvas.

Module 1 (6/17 – 6/23): Social Construction of Sex & Sexuality

1. Explain how “natural” categories such as sex, gender, sexuality, and race are constructed and understood in a particular social and historical context.
2. Review historical and current models of sexual orientation.
3. Recognize that “social categories” are still real and have material consequences for real people, with attention to specific negative outcomes experienced by intersex, transgender, and plurisexual people.
4. Consider what it means to “fix” or change society as a whole to address the needs of marginalized people.
5. Explore the concept of “queerness” in conversation with classmates and the teaching team.

Module 2 (6/24 – 6/30): Changing Identities in Context

1. Examine the history of gender, sexuality, and race as context-dependent, intertwined categories, and recognize how scientific and medical authority have been used to pathologize marginalized groups.
2. Understand how identities are often developed in opposition to each other (laying groundwork for “gender performance” and “boundary-policing” in Module 3).
3. Understand and apply the concepts of “gender strategies” and “erotic markets,” particularly in relation to heteronormativity and queer identities.
4. Consider asexual and non-binary gender identities in the West as examples of relatively new identity-based communities.
5. Recognize the specific character of individuals’ identities-- though based in ideas about community and common experience, no two people are identical.

Module 3 (7/1 – 7/7): Boundaries & Belonging

1. Explore how structural oppression characteristic of mainstream society exists within “LGBTQ+ communities” as well.
2. Understand the concept of “gender performance,” including common critiques and responses.
3. Define “boundary-policing” and identify specific instances of the practice within LGBTQ+ communities with attention to motivations and outcomes.
4. Review specific outcome disparities for transgender people, plurisexual people, and queer and trans people of color (QTPOC).
5. Recognize the limits, as well as the utility, of identity categories for community-building and activism.

Module 4 (7/8 – 7/14)

1. Identify methodological strengths and weaknesses of particular social scientific studies.
2. Become familiar with outcome disparities for LGBTQ+ students, particularly those who are multiply marginalized.
3. Describe popular rhetoric about LGBTQ+ parents (negative and positive) and summarize research findings on the demographics of “LGBT families” in the United States and outcomes for children with same-gender parents.
4. Describe how family support or the lack thereof affects LGBTQ+ children and adolescents.
5. Understand the importance of religious identity for many LGBTQ+ people and describe religious arguments for and against LGBTQ+ equality.

Module 5 (7/15 – 7/21)

1. Describe the concept of minority stress and its role in health disparities for LGBTQ+ people as well as other marginalized groups such as POC.
2. Contrast the social model of disability with medical, charity, and supercrip models and apply it to disabled LGBTQ+ people in particular.
3. Identify commonalities in the experiences of disabled and transgender people in particular.
4. Critique mainstream narratives about fat and health with particular attention to the role of gender in anti-fat attitudes.
5. Develop patient advocacy skills to benefit yourself and others.

Module 6 (7/22 – 7/28)

1. Describe major historical events and activist organizations of significance to the LGBTQ+ community in the United States.
2. Evaluate specific goals and strategies pursued by different individuals and groups in the LGBTQ+ community and explain the influence of current social and political climates on these goals and strategies.
3. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of coalition activism.
4. Summarize justifications for and critiques of activist focus on marriage rights in particular.
5. Review major strategies and achievements of early HIV/AIDS activism and consider their application in the current context (bridging to Module 7).

Module 7 (7/29 – 8/4)

1. Understand how (lack of) policy response shaped the AIDS crisis, and continues to produce disproportionately negative outcomes for multiply marginalized HIV+ people.
2. Distinguish between interpersonal and institutional violence, with attention to how they reinforce each other.
3. Review statistics about the risk of violence to different groups of LGBTQ+ people, particularly those who are multiply marginalized such as trans women of color.
4. Summarize disparities at all levels of the criminal justice system experienced by LGBTQ+ people and explain how these are mediated by other factors such as race and gender expression.
5. Analyze common policy proposals meant to protect LGBTQ+ communities such as bias crime legislation.

Module 8 (8/5 – 8/11)

1. Discover a range of media by LGBTQ+ creators or featuring prominent LGBTQ+ characters or storylines.
2. Analyze current media coverage and representations of LGBTQ+ people and issues in terms of accuracy, diversity, and likely/desirable effects in society.
3. Examine how media, particularly fan works, may reinforce heteronormativity and other forms of hegemony as well as how they may become a venue for radical representation and action.
4. Examine the role of “networked counterpublics” in identity formation, community building, and organizing work.
5. Further explore the concept of “queerness” in conversation with classmates and the teaching team.