

**WGS303: Introduction to LGBT Studies
Syllabus & Class Policy Statement
UT Austin, Fall 2024**

Instructor: Ipek Sahinler

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Unique number: 44520

Class time & location: TTH 11:00-12:30 pm. PAR 103

Instructor office hours: M 11-1 pm on Zoom & by appointment

TA: [REDACTED]

TA office hours: [REDACTED]



*The Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldú who described herself as a "Tejana patlache (queer) nepantlera spiritual activist".
Photo by Annie F. Valva*

Land Acknowledgment: *I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous lands. I pay my respects to the Carrizo; Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.*

Course description

What are the significant debates about LGBTQ+ studies and communities today? How have sexually marginalized people understood and expressed their identities through various media over the twentieth century? This course offers students an intersectional perspective on LGBTQ+ studies, encompassing key theoretical, historical, and methodological approaches. Students will gain foundational skills in theory, history, and research methods, investigating the social construction of sexual identity and its interplay with racial, class, religion, and nationality. The course will zoom into global debates such as "born that way" versus social construction, human rights, reproductive rights, and new family structures. Special attention will be given to the exploration and meaning of the term "queer," while looking at transgender activism, critiques of homo/heteronormativity, and the role of art and culture in queer communities. Open to all, this course encourages self-reflection, open dialogue, and allyship towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Our main goal will be to help students grasp how gender and sexuality are inextricable units of analysis to understand any societal dynamic. This is essential not only for students' college work, but also for their life beyond school as individuals, political entities, or simply communicators of things.

Required book

- *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald Hall and Annamarie Jagose. Routledge, 2012
- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987

Note: all articles, readings, essays and multimedia will be available on Canvas and students won't need to pay for materials for this class.

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a strong understanding of LGBTQ+ studies and its historical context—both locally and globally.
- Write and speak persuasively about contemporary issues through the lens of women's, gender, and sexuality studies.
- Demonstrate how gender intersects with race, class, ability, and other social constructs
- Critically analyze literary and cultural productions through the lens of gender.
- Conduct extensive, scientific research using UT library resources and online databases.
- Exhibit critical thinking skills through class discussions, coherent written arguments, and multimodal projects.
- Use and produce language to go beyond binaristic ways of thinking.

Grade Distribution

First term paper (10%)

Gloria Anzaldúa Zine Project and Paper (20%)

Final Queer Studies Group Project (30%)

Weekly Canvas Discussion Posts (10%)
Participation (25%)
Attendance (5%)

Note: There is no final exam and extra credit option for this class. Participation will be assessed through your contribution to our common intellectual environment. (see the rubric on p.6)

Assessment Criteria

Grades will be assigned on a 100-point scale. Note that there is no A+:

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	89-87	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	0-60

Websites We'll Use

- Canvas: Canvas is the official course management site and where students will be able to access grades, download course files, and email the instructor.
- University of Texas Libraries: Students should use this link to conduct searches through UT library's print catalog and online databases. You may also request scans of articles and chapters.



Gay liberation activist Marsha O. Johnson wears a black sequined jumpsuit during a 1982 Pride March. Photo by Barbara Alper/Getty Images

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Flag: Cultural Diversity in the United States:

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. The purpose of the Cultural Diversity in the United States Flag is for students to explore in depth the shared practices and beliefs of one or more underrepresented cultural groups subject to persistent marginalization. In addition to learning about these diverse groups in relation to their specific contexts, students should engage in an active process of critical reflection. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one underrepresented cultural group in the U.S. ([source here](#))

Flag: Writing: This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. ([source here](#))

Plagiarism and Scholastic Honesty: Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to *all* drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University. So, take care to read and understand the [Statement on Scholastic Responsibility](#), which can be found online [here](#). If you have any doubts about your use of sources, feel free to ask for my help *before* you hand in the assignment.

Title IX and Senate Bill 212: Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419. Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under

Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

Email Accounts: Please always use your UT email address to communicate class information. All students may claim an email address at no cost by going to the IT Services website.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. More information is available on the Services for Students with Disabilities website.

Physical & mental wellbeing: It is very important to me that you take care of your mental, emotional and physical health. Using your time to take care of yourself will help you achieve your academic goals. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle and there are many helpful resources available at UT Austin. Please feel more than free to ask for my support, or get in touch with your TA, or a person that you trust. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events or feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. Remember that an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. So take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it.

CLASS GUIDELINES

Attendance: Attendance will be taken by the TA within the first five minutes of each class. Two late arrivals/early departures will be treated as one absence. Note that all students are permitted three no-penalty absences each semester. If you miss more than three classes, your TA will reach out to you via email to discuss with you your overall progress in the course.

You are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time, to have prepared assigned readings and writings, and to participate in all in-class discussions. In case of an illness, please avoid coming to class and communicate with your TA as soon as possible. If you should miss classes or other required activities due to the observance of a religious holy day, please inform your TA, always via email, at least one week before the absence. This way we can make alternative arrangements for you to complete work. Here you can consult UT's holy days calendar.

Participation: Participation is a vital part of your overall success in this class (25%). Because students bring many learning styles to the classroom, there are many ways to participate. These include speaking during class discussions, sharing reflections whilst in-class writing exercises, participating in small group discussions, and coming to office hours. There are also a variety of ways to hurt your participation grade, including non-class-related web surfing or emailing, cell phone use or texting, irregular attendance, frequent tardiness, or disruptive behavior. Please see the rubric below to get a more tangible sense of how the participation will be assessed.

Level of participation and preparation	Grade
Excellent participation; very well prepared; shows courtesy toward other students and to professor; thoroughly engages in course material and interacts with others' opinions	A
Good participation; well prepared; courteous; engages in course material and interacts with others' opinions	B
Average participation; adequate preparation; interjects but does not interact	C
Little participation; inadequate preparation; interrupts discussion; tangential interaction	D
Present in class; minimal participation; unprepared	F
Present in class; no participation; unprepared; lack of respect for others; disrupts discussion; reads or writes text messages	0 points

Late Work Policy:

Deadlines are an important part of life, and we will strive to meet them in this classroom. I also recognize that your lives, like mine, are complex and busy and our shared classroom is but a part of a larger whole. So please contact me and/or your TA if there are any obstacles getting your way of participation or meeting due dates. I am much more interested in working with you on solutions to those problems than I am in being punitive. My top priority is for you to succeed in this class, to become a stronger reader, writer, and thinker, to grow your academic abilities, and your confidence in your work.

- Minor assignments: There will be weekly discussion posts and blog entries to keep you on track and prepared for classes. Because these are low-stakes assignments, no late submissions will not be accepted, unless you have contacted your TA at least 24 hours before the due date of the assignment in question to get an extension. Last minute emails/excuses will not be accepted.
- Major assignments: All major projects should be submitted on time. If you need an extension, please contact your TA via email at least 48 hours before the due date of the project in question. Help them understand your need for an extension and they will give you a new submission date. If you fail to meet your new deadline, you unfortunately won't get any points for that project. Last minute emails/excuses/extension request will not be accepted.

Feedback: For major projects, students should expect to see on Canvas their grade alongside a personalized feedback, ten days after their submission. Feel free to email your TA or me for any questions you might have. I check my email very often during the day, and never after 6 p.m. (CST). I will reply within twenty-four hours but not immediately. So please plan accordingly.

Accessibility: Your success in this class is very important to me. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and course requirements. I am committed to

making all course materials as accessible as possible, and to working with students if any of these materials are inaccessible. We will all need some accommodations in this class because we all learn differently. If you need specific accommodations, let me know. Any conversations we have about accommodations are confidential. I am more than happy to take extra steps to ensure accessibility for all students.

Safe Space Policy: This class is a safe space for learning and development; that is, a space where we can develop and refine the knowledge and skills necessary for culturally competent practice. Learning requires stretching beyond comfort zones, and yet feeling safe is a prerequisite for a good learning environment. As we all bring diverse experiences to our shared classroom, below are some related guidelines to help create the environment we want.

Weapons Policy: No weapons may be brought into this classroom. Please reach out to me if you have questions or concerns, or simply wish to discuss this.

Learning Procedures:

-It is never okay to laugh at, belittle, or harass a colleague because of their opinion or point of view. Always think about how your comments will support our learning as a group. But safe doesn't mean operating in an environment where beliefs and ideas go unchallenged. Challenging colleagues to explain their arguments in a thoughtful manner is key to creating an engaging learning community.

- Make a commitment to understand unfamiliar positions from the context or point of view of your peers.
- Please speak for yourself rather than for a group (use your "I" statements).
- Be present – really listening to your colleagues will dramatically improve your in-class experience and prevent most misunderstandings.
- Take risks in speaking honestly; this will help the learning of the group.

Behavior: Be respectful of your colleagues. There is zero tolerance for slurs or derogatory language. In general, don't discriminate based on race, gender presentation, marital status, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation. Everyone in our class has the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity. The university provides me with a class roster containing each student's legal name and sex marker. I will gladly address you by the name and gender pronoun with which you identify. Please let me know your preferred name and pronouns early in the semester, so your peers and I can address you appropriately. If you find a reading or assignment triggering in any way, or suspect that you will be triggered, please contact me as soon as possible. I am happy to speak with you about the content of the material in advance and/or provide you with an alternative assignment. If you are troubled by or feel unsafe in any class discussion, please speak with me as soon as possible so that we can work to resolve the immediate problem and prevent future issues. Finally, feel free to use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line [here](#) to help a fellow UT member about whom you have concerns.

Snacks and Drinks: Drinks are allowed, but no food/eating is permitted during classes, as this might disrupt other students' attention.