

# LGBTQ MEMOIRS



Arts & Letters Hall Room 202  
Mondays & Wednesdays 2:40-4:10 PM

4 January–9 March 2016  
Final Due: 14 March, 5:00 p.m. (D2L Dropbox deadline)

~PROFESSOR: **Barrie Jean Borich**  
Arts & Letter Hall 213-03  
(2<sup>nd</sup> floor annex/ in the corner).

**Winter Drop-In OFFICE HOURS:** Wednesdays 4:30-5:30.  
Other afternoon and evening hours by appointment.

**EMAIL:** [bborich@depaul.edu](mailto:bborich@depaul.edu).  
Office: 773-325-8109

I'm happy to hear from you and **email is quickest**. (I rarely check my office voice mail. You might catch me live at my desk but don't rely on messages left at that number.) I usually respond to email within 24-to-48 hours during the week, but occasionally get behind. Please send me a follow-up email if I don't respond within a couple of days.

**I WILL USE EMAIL FREQUENTLY TO CONTACT ALL CLASS MEMBERS**, usually through D2L, so please make sure Campus Connect has your current email address, and remember to check email regularly.

Feel free to friend me at my public FACEBOOK site—*Barrie Borich Nonfiction-Universe*—developed for conversation within my teaching/writing communities. I try to add a few new links every week during the school year. I also tweet at BOOKofBJB, mostly on the topics of cities, bicycles, and the future of the book.

## ~COURSE TEXTS

- **BUTTERFLY BOY** by Rigoberto Gonzalez
- **FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES** by Charles Blow
- **FUN HOME** by Alison Bechdel
- **MAN ALIVE** by Thomas Page McBee
- **REDEFINING REALNESS** by Janet Mock

We will also view at least two films on issues related to our course material. Additional course readings are posted on D2L,

## ~COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes a queer life story? Are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and genderqueer memoirs merely literary selfies? Or do authors who make literature of actual queer lives help create worlds within which we all might better thrive? This course will examine the histories and contemporary forms of literary memoirs created by LGBTQ authors in post-Stonewall USA, contextualizing our reading in relation to time and location, considering both visibility and representation, and exploring queer narratives of activism, intersectionality, and self-invention.

This course meets the English Department DIVERSE TRADITIONS requirement, and is an approved course for the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts while developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students will interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity come to experience art with greater openness, insight and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of art or literature as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Work in this domain includes literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music and theater.

## ~COURSE GOALS

*At the end of this course students will be able to:*

- Explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
  - Articulate and explain the “content” of that work and/or its methodology of production.
  - Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
  - Assess the formal aspects of subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
  - Contextualize a work of art with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre.
  - Contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work’s reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.
- IN ADDITION, students in this particular class will have an opportunity to write creatively, in order to gain an experiential understanding of the choices memoirists make when recreating themselves as characters on the literary page.

## ~COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

*You must turn in work in each of these categories to pass this course. No make-ups on missed quizzes.*

### ***Reading Progress Quizzes***

You will periodically complete short in-class quizzes to demonstrate you are keeping up with the reading and to help you start thinking about ideas to contribute to class discussion.

### ***Discussion Spur Response Papers***

As we complete each book discussion you will come to class with a substantive written question you feel will spur class discussion, a typed out passage from the text that relates to your question, and a 150-250 word (one-half to one page) attempt to answer your own question. You may or may not be called on to ask your question, but you will turn these in for required course credit.

### **Midterm Essay Question**

You will respond, in well-composed sentences and paragraphs, to a question posted on D2L a week or so before the due date. Responses should be 250-500 words (one-two pages) in length.

### **Open-Theme Essay**

What are you interested in exploring further? Reflect on, interpret, and analyze some question or interest that comes up in the course of this class—about memoir, or queer identity, or intersections that make up any life, or the relationship of language, or politics, or body expression, to human identity, or anything at all about how queer identity relates to the creative arts, and write a thesis-driven essay of 1000-1500 words (four to five) pages that quotes from at least two of our assigned course texts (along with any others you choose to include), and cites sources using MLA-style guidelines.

### **Mini-Memoir**

Write a memoir-style description about some moment in your life where you came to new awareness about your gender or your sexuality or some other related experience having to do with your body and identity in your world. WRITE THIS MEMOIR in the third person, using the pronoun you feel best expresses how you understand your life at that time. This can be a conventional choice that does not conflict with the gender you have been assigned, or this can be a statement of how you feel you are at odds with your assigned gender, or it might even be a temporary experiment aimed at helping you see yourself interacting with your world in a new way. Be creative and don't worry about whether or not you consider yourself a literary writer, as this assignment will not be graded using any sort of artistic measurement. Rather I'm interested in seeing you attempt to re-see yourself in ways that offer insight into how memoir are formed. 750 words or less (one to three pages).

### **Synthesis Paper**

What is your takeaway from this course? Write an informal personal response that makes connections across the various texts and articulates how you might carry the knowledge and understanding you've gained as you proceed into your further studies and in your life. The form of this paper is very informal. Consider it as a letter to the instructor and/or to your classmates. 750-1250 words (three to five pages).

### **Class Participation**

Show up. Communicate. Collaborate. Add your voice to the community. This is a discussion-based class, so your active participation is vital to our work.

**CONTENT ADVISORY:** Our course readings explore actual human experience, from the humorous to the excruciating. Such is what we choose when electing to study the nonfiction arts. Expect to read and view outside your comfort zone. The books, essays, and films have been chosen based on their artistic merit, and serve as powerful examples of what nonfiction forms can accomplish. They are works that ask difficult questions, and challenge readers to consider what it means to be human, and as such contain painful depictions of oppression, violence, racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of human suffering. They also contain stunning examples of strength, empathy, and love. If you find any part of the work excessively disturbing please take breaks and embrace whatever form of self-care works for you. Then come back, reach deep, and strive to stay open to discovery and surprise. If you are a trauma survivor you have the best sense of what you are able to read and view. Please contact me if completing course requirements is a concern. If you find yourself in need of professional support you will find excellent counseling resources at **DePaul's Office of Health Promotion and Wellness:** <http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/health-wellness/Pages/default.aspx>

## ~GRADES

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Reading Progress Quizzes 10 10%     | 5 quizzes at 20 points each, 100 points total |
| Discussion Spur Response Papers 20% | 5 papers at 40 points each, 200 points total  |
| Midterm Essay Question Test 20%     | 200 points                                    |
| Open-Theme Essay 20%                | 200 points                                    |
| Mini Memoir 10%                     | 100 points                                    |
| Synthesis Paper 10%                 | 100 points                                    |
| Class Participation 10%             | 100 points                                    |

### FINAL GRADE POINT SCALE

|            |            |            |                 |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| A=950–1000 | A–=910–949 |            |                 |
| B+=880–909 | B=850–879  | B–=810-849 |                 |
| C+=770–809 | C=730–769  | C–=690–729 |                 |
| D+=650–689 | D=630–649  | D–=610–629 | F=less than 600 |

## ~COURSE CALENDAR

(Subject to Change.) Please complete assignments and readings by the dates listed.

- WEEK 1      Mon Jan 4: Introductions. Readings from a few short memoirs.  
Wed Jan 6: Three Approaches / “Meditation 32” by Julie Marie Wade, “The Second to Last Woman I Loved” by Roxanne Gay, “La Guera” by Cherrie Moraga (D2L)
- WEEK 2      Mon Jan 1: Three Approaches/ “Afrikete,” by Audre Lorde, “If You Knew Now” by Ryan Van Meter, “Kiss a Woman” by Daisy Hernandez (D2L). Bring printout copies or a digital reading tool for close reading/ small group analysis.  
Wed Jan 13: “Alison Bechdel, FUN HOME, 1-86. Reading Progress Quiz.
- WEEK 3      Mon Jan 18: No Class. Campus Closed for MLK Day.  
Wed Jan 20: Alison Bechdel to end. Discussion Spur Response Paper #1 Due.
- WEEK 4      Mon Jan 25: Charles Blow, FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES, pp 1-81. Reading Progress Quiz. PLEASE ALSO PERUSE the D2L reading “What is Bisexuality?” this week and next, to help expand our terminology while we are discussing this book.  
Wed Jan 27: Charles Blow pp 82-155. Small & large group close reading/discussion.
- WEEK 5      Mon Feb 1: Charles Blow to end. Discussion Spur Response Paper #2 Due  
Wed Feb 3: Rigoberto Gonzalez, BUTTERFLY BOY, pp 1-66. Reading Progress Quiz.
- WEEK 6      Mon Feb 8: Rigoberto Gonzalez, pp 67-111 Small & large group close reading/discussion.  
Wed Feb 10: Rigoberto Gonzalez to end. Discussion Spur Response Paper #3 Due.
- WEEK 7      Mon Feb 15: FILM—*Tongues Untied*.  
MIDTERM DUE: ESSAY QUESTION posted and due on D2L by 11:59 PM  
Wed Feb 17: Janet Mock, REDEFINING REALNESS pp xi-83. Reading Progress Quiz.  
PLEASE ALSO PERUSE the D2L reading from TRANSGENDER HISTORY “An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts” this week and next, to help expand our terminology while we are discussing this book and the one that follows.

- WEEK 8      Mon Feb 22: Janet Mock. Pp 85-162. Small & large group close reading/discussion.  
Wed Feb 24: Janet Mock to end. Discussion Spur Response Paper #4 Due.
- WEEK 9      Mon Feb 29: View video interview with Thomas Page McBee linked on D2L.  
 Film in class on trans themes: Title TBA  
 OPEN-THEME ESSAY DUE (1000-1500 words/ 4-6 pages) on any topic related to course material you wish to consider. Due 11:59 tonight on D2L.  
Wed Mar 2: Thomas Page McBee, MAN ALIVE, pp 7-89. Reading Progress Quiz.
- WEEK 10     Mon Mar 7: Thomas Page Mc Bee to end. Discussion Spur Response Paper #5 Due.  
Wed Mar 9: Student reading of memoir exercise  
 DUE Mini-Memoir (1-3 pages/ 750 words or less)
- FINAL        DUE March 14<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 PM  
 Final Synthesis Paper. 3-5 pages/ 750-1250 words. D2L Deadline. We will not meet.

## ~OFFICIAL COURSE POLICIES

LAPTOPS and PHONES: I do allow electronic devices in the classroom. I believe in the power of technology as a writing tool, support the use of e-books (and think of my own laptop as a shiny beloved puppy) and encourage you to do so as well (the first two parts of this sentence at least.) THAT SAID—we're all aware of the problems and temptations. Please know that while I allow devices for writing, note taking, and research purposes, I DO NOT allow use in class unrelated to our work. Please be courteous. DO NOT: answer cell phones, send text messages, check e-mail or social media, shop, check the game score, register for the coming term, or do anything at all on your device unrelated to our immediate classroom activities. I reserve the right to look at your device screen to make sure you are doing class work. I don't wish to police you, but all actions in the classroom impact every single member of the group. Please abide by these guidelines and don't put either of us in the awkward position of stopping class to intervene on electronics-related distractions.

RESTROOM BREAKS: Please try to use the restroom before class begins. Having people entering or leaving the classroom constantly can be disruptive to class conversation. If it happens once I will assume it's an emergency, but if more than once you will lose class participation points unless you let me know in advance that you need special consideration.

ABSENCES: You are allowed TWO absences for any reason, serious or frivolous. It's not my business to fact check the reasons you miss class, so the same rule applies to everyone. If you miss more than two classes you will lose significant grade points every missed session and may have a problem passing the course. Do not schedule family events, medical appointments, social or professional meetings during class time. If you face a life emergency of some kind please talk to someone on the teaching team before you miss class, or as soon as possible after. The worst thing you can do is just disappear.

PREPARATION: Just showing up is not enough. Lack of preparation will impact your grade. You are responsible for knowing what is due and when, If you have questions about deadlines, please ask. If you are having life problems preventing you from completing your work please tell me the truth about what's going on and we will proceed as fairly as possible.

CONDITION OF WORK: Please make sure all work submitted (digital or paper) is professionally presented—i.e. carefully edited, paginated, word-processed with 12-point type and double-spaced, and if printed, using black ink on white paper (one-or-two sided, but no scratch paper), stapled, with your full name on the front page AND in the document title. [Remember that once your work is on the professor's hard drive she/he has difficulty identifying the author of *ASSIGNMENT1.doc*. Label your submissions.]

INCOMPLETES: An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family or a serious illness, and must be documented. Requests for incompletes must be made in writing, such as in an email.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: *DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment that has been prepared by someone else.* SHORT VERSION of the PLAGIARISM POLICY: *Don't do it. We will fail you.*

## DEPAUL SERVICES

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) provides DePaul University's accommodations and services to students with disabilities aligned with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Student success is at the core of the Center's mission and fits integrally with DePaul University as a diverse learning community. Through individualized support services and accommodations, CSD strives to teach students skills and strategies to achieve academic success, instill lifelong learning, and segue into the workplace and their communities with confidence. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the course instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-8656 in Lincoln Park Student Center, Suite 370 or at 312-362-8002 in Lewis Center 1420 (Loop campus).

WRITING CENTER: Correct grammar, usage, punctuation and spelling are required, and we will grade down any work that comes to us with mechanical problems. If you have any concerns about writing mechanics, please contact The Writing Center, a wonderful resource open to undergrads and graduate students. To schedule a Face-to-Face Meeting, Written Feedback by Email, or Online Appointment, visit [www.depaul.edu/writing](http://www.depaul.edu/writing).

DEAN OF STUDENTS: The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. Absence Notifications to faculty, personal or medical Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals, support students both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally we have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQA student services. DOS is committed to your success as a DePaul student. Please visit DOS at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/>.