

Women Writers' Cultures:

Spring 2020

ENG 315

Trans Comedy

Quinn Miller

crn: 36908

Synchronous Work Time: Thursdays, 10-11:20am

Zoom Meetings: 10-11:20am on April 9, April 30, and May 28 (TH weeks 2, 5, 9)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9am - noon (zoom, chat, and email)

Course Description

This course explores sexuality and self-expression by studying transgender comedy, including in poetry, novels, and digital performance. We will track queer media and critical race studies concepts and creative critical thinking skills that evolve out of the activist academic play represented in texts such as Casey Plett's *A Safe Girl to Love* and Roz Kaveney's *Tiny Pieces of Skull*.

Learning Objectives

- 1) Read literary and cultural texts produced by trans women with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions.
- 2) Draw on relevant cultural and historical information, including contextual information within texts, to situate texts within trans-centered art and activism.
- 3) Analyze formal elements of tone, humor, twitter jokes, and cultures of comedy.
- 4) Research and write insightful commentary on recent women's trans comedy.

Grading:

Curation - 25 points

Presentation - 25 points

Quizzes - 25 points

Essay - 25 points

(+ other available options)

Primary Research Task: an evolving list of funny trans tweeters/tumblrs to map (or of producers in alternative platforms; or an alternative primary research task)

Content Warning CW (TW): This course solicits intensive self-exploration. Course material may include slurs, nudity, violence, sex, misgendering, and reference to sexual assault and harassment, as well as direct attention to the constant threat of rape in the broad overall comedy scene we survey—and, in the case of *A Safe Girl to Love*, fictional depiction of family abuse, intimate partner sexual assault, gender dysphoria, harassment, and internalized sexism and homophobia.

If this material, or representations and discussion of sensitive issues such as expressive sexuality, social variance, sex work, and social and sexual taboo transgression, may present a problem for you, please let the professor (and/or the group) know. Troubling material and commentary may appear without advance warning. Texts under study include cissexism, white-centrism, gay bashing, representations of racism, sexism, and suicide, and heterosexist social mores and assumptions, as well as highly charged humor, self-deprecation, and explicit discussion of self-harm and substance use.

Expectations

* Practice self-care for trigger mitigation. Read, re-read, and study assigned texts. Prepare questions and comments for discussion. Review your notes and materials. Ask questions. Respect people's backgrounds, names, pronouns, contributions, frames of reference, and space (digital, in this case). For example, do not guess someone's pronoun from their name in order to refer to their contributions in the Canvas Discussion Board. Let the professor know your access points and, as soon as you can, of any accommodations you may need.

Readings are on Canvas.

[except: purchase *Tiny Pieces of Skull* if you want to read it in its entirety asap]

Casey Plett, *A Safe Girl to Love*

Roz Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull: Or, a Lesson in Manners*

WEEK ONE

* Plett, "Twenty Hot Tips To Shopping Success" (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.33-37

* Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull 1*

WEEK TWO

* Plett, "Winning" (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) (TW: p. 211) pp.183-224

* Lee, "Pussy Ballistics"

* Chu and Drager, "After Trans Studies"

* Plett, "Real Equality (A Manifesto)" (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.88-92

* Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull 2*

WEEK THREE

* Plett, "Lizzy & Annie" (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.64-87

* Citron, "Going Mainstream"

* Keegan, "Getting Disciplined"

WEEK FOUR

* Plett, "How Old Are You Anyway?" (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.38-53

* Harris, "The Pleasure Principle"

* Hidalgo, "The Exoticization of Lesbian Sexuality"

* Kai Cheng Thom, selections

WEEK FIVE

- * Plett, “How to Stay Friends” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.54-63
- * Plett, “Portland, Oregon” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.93-121
- * Mizejewski, “Camp Among the Swastikas”
- * Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull* 3

WEEK SIX

- * Plett, “Other Women” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) (TW: pp.26-28) pp.1-32
- * Harvilla, “The Art of the Pan”
- * Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull* 4
- * Ryzik, “Raging Against Empty Laughter”

WEEK SEVEN

- * Plett, “Youth” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp. 225-231
- * Nealon, “Poetry in Late-Late-Capitalism”
- * Vivek Shraya, selections

WEEK EIGHT

- * Plett, “Not Bleak” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.122-177
- * Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull* 5

WEEK NINE

- * Plett, “A Carried Ocean Breeze” (in *A Safe Girl to Love*) pp.178-182 (TW)
- * Bryant-Wilson, “Some Kind of Grace”

- WEEK TEN * Kaveney, *Tiny Pieces of Skull*
- * Plett, *A Safe Girl to Love*