Bi/Pan/Asexuality: Community & Representation

GWS 340

Spring 2017

Sterling 1333

Meets: TR 2:30-3:45 with Dr. Cabell Gathman
("Cabell" rhymes with "Scrabble")

Electronic materials and links available at: http://learnuw.wisc.edu/
(NOTE: We are using Canvas!)

Optional course Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/GathmanLGBTQ/
Course Description

Bisexual/biromantic, pansexual/panromantic, and asexual/aromantic (BPA) people are often denied (full) membership in the “queer community,” or assumed to have the same experiences and concerns as lesbian and gay (LG) people and thus not offered targeted programs or services. Recent research has shown a wide variety of negative outcomes experienced by bisexual/biromantic people at much higher rates than LG people, and still barely acknowledges the existence of pansexual/panromantic or asexual/aromantic people. (Although research differentiating pan and bi people is still quite sparse, what exists suggests that systematic differences may exist between these groups, as well.)

This course builds on concepts and information covered in Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies (GWS 200). It will explore the experiences, needs, and goals of BPA people, as well as their interactions with the mainstream lesbian & gay community and overlap and coalition building with other marginalized groups. Throughout the course, we will keep in mind that within the BPA community, some groups may be multiply marginalized in ways that artificially drag down outcomes for the entire community. If bisexual people are disproportionately likely to be people of color, for instance, we might find that the documented lower wages earned by bisexual people as a group are largely the result of structural racism experienced by bisexual people of color. While available research on these topics may be limited, it is important to keep such questions at the forefront of our investigation.

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

1) Learn about specific outcome disparities for BPA people as compared to both heterosexual and LG people. Pose potential explanations for these disparities with particular attention to the concepts of social support and minority stress.

2) Build on existing understanding of identity categories to better understand the social context in which BPA people come to self-identify and form communities, with particular attention to how BPA identities may be shaped by and challenge existing norms and structures.

3) Consider how BPA people and communities intersect and form coalitions with other identity categories and communities such as trans folks, new religious groups, kink, and disability communities, and explore how these groups may fit into existing structures or work towards social change.

4) Analyze media representations of BPA people, consider their consequences for BPA individuals and communities, and engage with transformative works that explore alternative understandings of BPA identity.

5) Throughout the course, recognize how sexual and romantic identity intersects with other identities such as gender, trans or cis status, race, ability, age, economic class, etc. and explore how a person’s experiences are shaped by their identities and group memberships, with particular attention to which subgroups may experience disproportionately positive or negative outcomes.

Required Texts

There are two required books for this course, along with articles available electronically via our course website in Canvas. The books are on order at A Room of One’s Own (315 W. Gorham St.), a local independent bookstore serving feminist and queer communities.

**Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution**
By Shiri Eisner

**The Invisible Orientation: An Introduction to Asexuality**
By Julie Sondra Decker

All readings (including chapters/page numbers for the books) are listed by week on the Canvas home page for the course. You should complete readings by 5pm on Monday, before our first class meeting for the week. There is significant research indicating that understanding and synthesis of written materials are enhanced by “sleeping on it.”
Instructor Contact Information

Office: 3323 Sterling Hall

Office hours: Tuesday 4:00-5:00; Thursday 1:00-2:00; by appointment

Email: chgathman@wisc.edu

Please note: I try to answer all email within 48 weekday hours of receipt. This means that email sent on Friday may not receive a response until Tuesday of the following week. If you have an urgent issue, text message is appropriate (contact info announced in class). If you have a general question that your classmates might be able to answer, it’s quite likely the General Questions Discussion forum on the course website will be faster. If it has been more than 48 weekday hours and you have not received a reply, please DO email me to follow up, as occasionally emails get lost in the shuffle.

Please check your WiscMail and the course website on a regular basis, as I will use both of these to communicate with you.

Format

This class meets for 75 minutes twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30-3:45pm. It will be a mixture of lecture, small and large group short discussions, and structured small group discussions (see below). We will conclude the semester with student final project presentations.

Lectures will cover general concepts that are also addressed in the assigned readings, but they will NOT be a simple repetition of the readings; they will introduce new information and may also include related videos and other multimedia material. Throughout the semester, we may also have some guest lectures from researchers and activists doing related work.

Electronic Devices

I am fine with the use of electronic devices for note-taking and to reference readings in lecture. Many of your classmates find it distracting when you use laptops and other devices for non-class-related purposes; if this becomes a recurrent problem, you may be asked to leave.
If you need a device during lecture or discussion for access purposes (e.g. a translation device, a recorder, etc.), please let me know as soon as possible and show me the device.

If you have a personal need to be available for contact, please notify me ASAP. You should keep your device as low as possible to receive notifications, and step out of the classroom if you need to respond.

Accessibility

I am committed to accessibility. If you have a McBurney VISA, please make it available to me by the end of Week 3 of class.

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 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 meet with 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); however, I also want to know if you have non-disability issues such as work or family responsibilities.

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.
Attendance & Participation

Because the discussion of readings is a major component of this course, you will be graded on your preparation for and involvement in class in Weeks 2-13 (for Weeks 14 & 15, you will be responsible for presentation peer evaluations). This approach asks that you engage fully with the material and explore your own beliefs about the topics covered. Expressing one’s ideas and getting reactions from others can help you evaluate your own opinions and ultimately sharpen your thinking. Although I set the grading criteria, you assign your own participation grade daily (though I reserve the right to change these grades).

Please note that the most valuable participation does not necessarily come from the student who speaks the most. Students who do not listen to their classmates or who do not make room for various viewpoints and speakers will not earn the highest participation grades.

During class, I may call on students who do not have their hands raised. I will do this for several reasons. First, some students need to be invited into the conversation. By calling on students who are not volunteering their ideas, I am issuing that invitation. Second, I want all students in the class to shoulder the responsibility of moving the class forward by summarizing and analyzing course readings, by connecting the readings to established themes and concerns of the course, by engaging with and responding to the contributions of the other students, and by taking intellectual risks.

Third, I see the classroom as a place for actively working through questions that have no right answer. As a result, contributing to class discussion is not always about what you know when you walk into class. I also want to tap into what you struggle with and what you are confused by. There is no wrong answer to many of the questions I pose, and your willingness to share where you are with an issue will help us all. I do not call on people with the aim of embarrassing them. Finally, I believe that insightful participation is a skill that all students need to develop, just as they develop their analysis and writing skills.

I am aware, however, that for some students, being called upon is simply not a productive strategy for contributing in class. If this is true for you, please meet with me outside of class to discuss alternative participation strategies such as written memos and one-on-one meetings in office hours.

You should assign yourself a participation grade after each class based on the rubric below; you will submit your name and proposed participation grade on a notecard at the end of class. I will review these grades and may adjust them as I see fit.
How to Grade Your Participation (based out of a **maximum of 10 points**):

1) **Attendance points**
   - If you show up on time and stay the whole class period, you earn full credit.
   - If not, adjust accordingly.

2) **Attention points**
   - If you pay attention to the conversation, give yourself full credit. If you surf the web or zone out, adjust accordingly.

3) **Preparation points**
   - If you read all the readings AND artifact analyses for the week (Thursdays), give yourself full credit. If not, adjust accordingly.

4) **Participation**
   - Participation points gauge several aspects of course involvement. They reflect whether you have understood the basic issues, engaged with the material, volunteered your opinions, and listened to your classmates. Choose the category (and the point assignment) that best fits your situation.

   **Category A:** No participation
   - Did not participate in discussion
   - Points: 0

   **Category B:** Good participation
   - Answered a question when directly asked
   - Volunteered an item for a board list or close-ended question
   - Points: 1

   **Category C:** Better participation
   - Asked a question
   - Participated in small groups discussion
   - Voluntarily offered an interpretation of an event or reading
   - Voluntarily responded to a classmate’s comment
   - Voluntarily offered a summary of a reading
   - Points: 2

The discussion format is based upon the notion that students can and do learn from each other. To acknowledge this, **the last discussion point will be assigned by your peers.**

After every discussion, you will indicate which TWO (2) people you believe contributed the most value to discussion that day and explain why. Please note that this is not a reward for sheer quantity. Instead, perhaps someone asked one question that you made you rethink an issue. Perhaps somebody brought two disparate strains together in a way that enlivened discussion. So carefully consider which of your classmates helped you engage and analyze the material. I will compile these points after each class. If at least two of your classmates indicated that you made a particularly valuable contribution, you will receive an additional point on your participation grade for that day.

I have make-up policies in place to accommodate students who must miss class for various reasons. **Please do not come to class if you are ill.** Your classmates and I appreciate you protecting us from exposure to your illness.

Any religious observances or excused athletic activities will be honored. Since they are set in advance, please notify me by the end of Week 3 of class.
Attendance and participation for Weeks 2-13 make up 0.5 percentage points per date on your final grade, for a total of 12% of your final grade.

**Participation Make-Ups**

I recognize that people sometimes miss class for various reasons. If you miss class, you should complete an additional Artifact Analysis for the day and post it in the appropriate Discussion forum. This assignment follows the standard instructions for an Artifact Analysis and is due no later than 11:59pm on Tuesday or Thursday of the following week. You should include a sentence at the beginning of the post clearly indicating the date for which it serves as a make-up.

Because the tenth point for Participation is awarded based on peer evaluation in class, the maximum score on a make-up is 9/10. Late make-ups will not be accepted. There is no limit on the number of absences that can be made up, but an Artifact Analysis cannot double-count for the required assignment and a make-up. If you complete two Artifact Analyses for a single week (either as two make-ups or as one make-up and one Artifact Analysis assignment), you must use unique sources for the required minimum of two.

**Reading Memos**

For this course, you will submit six (6) reading memos in which you concisely synthesize, critique, and extend multiple assigned readings. This is a necessary skill across professions and especially useful when working with research and reports from a variety of disciplines/fields. This will also help you better understand and retain the material, and apply it in other academic work and potentially your personal or professional life in the future.

In no more than 500 words, you should:

- Summarize common ideas, problems, or concerns in the readings (if applicable)
- Summarize or engage with the socio-cultural context in which the readings are embedded—how do the issues they describe connect with the world around us?
- Comment on any relevant policy or program implications of the combined texts
- Comment on any problems you perceive with the assigned readings (flaws in research or theory, interpretation of findings, etc.)
- Touch on as many of the readings for that week as possible (at least three for a grade of BC or higher)
Questions to consider:

- What underlying assumptions do the authors work from? Are these warranted or not?
- Who is/are the author(s)? How might their perspectives shape their ideas?
- What empirical information do the readings provide about the topic at hand (e.g., rates, trends, disparities, etc.)?
- What do the readings indicate, if anything, about the evolution of specific concepts or changes in relevant issues over time?
- How do the readings agree with and speak to each other? Disagree with each other?
- How do the readings tie into larger themes of the course?
- You may also allude to other literature we have read for the course, as long as you are primarily engaged with the readings for that particular week. You may reference personal experience if it is directly relevant to the topic.

Memos will be graded on a 1-10 scale with expectations of:

- Good structure (e.g., thesis statement, supporting evidence, smooth transition sentences between paragraphs if the memo includes more than one paragraph--no "introduction" or "conclusion" necessary)
- Skillful synthesis of the readings
- Example of poor work: "The articles for this week discuss various aspects of bisexual erasure."
- Example of more thoughtful, precise writing: "Common forms of bisexual erasure include A, B, and C, which contribute to negative consequences such as X, Y, and Z."
- No more than 500 words, double-spaced, 12-point font
- Appropriate citations: Provide in-text citations as footnotes or end notes so that they do not contribute to the word count. Make sure that they are consistently formatted and include, at minimum, the author’s surname and the page number for direct quotes or specific information that has been paraphrased

You must complete the Week 2 memo. For the remaining five (5) memos, you may complete them for the weeks of your choice from Week 3 to Week 13. If you complete more than five in this period, only your six (6) highest scores overall will count toward your final grade; if you earn six (6) scores higher than the required Week 2 memo, I will exempt that grade so that it can be dropped, but I will not do this if the Week 2 memo is not submitted.

Memos are submitted via file upload to Canvas. They are due no later than 5pm Monday of the relevant week, BEFORE our first class meeting. Each of the six (6) required memos will count for five (5) percentage points on your total grade, for a total of 30% of the final grade.
Artifact Analyses

You will submit at least TWO (2) artifact analyses in two (2) different time periods. The semester is broken up into three (3) periods for these purposes: Weeks 1-5, Weeks 6-9, and Weeks 10-13.

For these assignments, you will find a piece of online content to relate to our assigned readings for the week. This could be a news article, event (including but not limited to events that you have participated in or plan to participate in), blog post, video, song, fan work, etc. In a Discussion forum post, you will provide a link and brief description of the content, including attribution of author(s)/creator(s), and explain how the content relates to at least two (2) assigned readings for the week.

Your post should be 500-750 words and must be submitted no later than 1pm on Wednesday of the relevant week. This gives your classmates ~24 hours to review posts in the forum before our Thursday class, when it will be relevant to group discussions. Since these posts will be fair game for discussion in class, you should be sure to review them between the deadline and our Thursday class meeting!

These analyses are graded on a scale of 1-10. One period will be dropped by the grade book, so you must complete at least one analysis in each of two out of three periods. You may post more than once to replace a score within a single period, or to make up for an absence (see Attendance & Participation Make-Ups on p. 8).

Each of the two remaining periods counts for five (5) percentage points on your final grade, for a total of 10% of your final grade.

Peer Facilitation

In Week 1, you will sign up for one week from Weeks 3-12 for peer facilitation of our Thursday discussion sections. Each week will have no more than four (4) students signed up to facilitate discussion. I will break you up into groups of ~10 based on sign-up slots; these groups will be shuffled 2-3 times over the course of the semester, so that you have multiple weeks with a group but are not in the same group for the entire semester.

For your assigned week, you must submit a list of questions for discussion. You should provide at least TWO (2) questions for each of the assigned readings, with a total of at least 15 questions (note that this will require more than two questions for at least one reading). Your questions should be designed to help your peers connect the readings to each other and the world around us as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses in the methods and arguments that they convey. You may include questions about how to apply terms and concepts from a reading to other situations, but you should NOT ask for simple definitions or other "one right answer" responses. (See Week 1 Thursday handout for a model.)
You must upload your questions to Canvas no later than **1pm on Wednesday of your assigned week** (Canvas will display deadlines for individual students). You do not need to print copies of your discussion questions; I will assemble a master list of selected questions for all groups. This means that not all of your questions will be included, although you may still raise them in your group if you wish.

Your questions will be graded on a scale of 1-20. This assignment is worth **10% of your final grade**.

For up to **TWO (2)** bonus points on your Peer Facilitation grade, you can post discussion questions for Week 2 in the appropriate Discussion forum no later than 1pm on Wednesday, January 25th. Note that “likes” in this Discussion are only available to me as a grader, so you may refer to it for examples of strong discussion questions—they’re the ones that are “liked.”

**Final Project**

For this course, you will complete a final project. We will cover detailed instructions, including multiple project options, in Week 6. Altogether, your final project and peer evaluations that you provide for other students count for **35% of your final grade**, broken down as follows:

- **Final Project Outline** 5%
- **Final Project Outline Peer Reviews (5)** 5%
- **Final Project** 15%
- **Final Project Presentation** 5%
- **Presentation Peer Reviews (15)** 5%

You will upload your outline to Canvas no later than 5pm on Friday, March 17th (Week 9). The outline is worth **5% of your final grade**. Canvas will randomly assign peer reviews for five classmates, which you must submit no later than 5pm on Friday, April 7th (Week 11). Each outline peer review is worth one (1) percentage point on your final grade, for a total of **5% of your final grade**.

You will upload your final project to Canvas no later than 5pm on Friday, April 21st (Week 13), and **TWO (2) PowerPoint slides** for a presentation on the project to Canvas no later than 5pm on Monday, April 24th (beginning of Week 14). By submitting the final project three weeks before scheduled finals, you will be able to better divide your time and effort among classes at the end of the semester. The final project is worth **15% of your final grade**.

The last two weeks of the semester and our final exam period (12:25-2:25pm, Wednesday, May 10th) will be devoted to short presentations on the final projects. I will assign presentation dates; each presentation will be **capped at five (5) minutes, with an additional three (3) minutes for peer questions and comments**. Your presentation, including the slides you uploaded, is worth **5% of your final grade**.
Canvas will randomly assign peer reviews such that you will be responsible for 2-4 peer reviews on each class date and the final date, for a total of 15 peer reviews. Each peer review is worth 1/3 percentage points on the final grade, for a total of 5% of your final grade.

If you must miss a presentation date, you will be responsible for submitting at least 500 words of feedback for each of the projects that you were scheduled to review to me and the authors.

**Canvas Introductions**

To encourage you to familiarize yourself with some aspects of Canvas and make first week grading more streamlined, I am requiring you to introduce yourself in a Discussion in the course site in Canvas. The instructions for this post are in the Discussion, and require that you include an image; you must also upload this image to a separate assignment in Canvas. These are due no later than 11:59pm on Wednesday, January 18th. The introduction post is worth one (1) percentage point on your final grade; the image upload is worth ½ percentage points on your final grade.

You must also reply to at least THREE (3) of your classmates (instructions in Discussion forum). Each of these replies is worth ½ percentage points on your final grade, for a total of 1.5% of your final grade.

Combined, your introduction, image upload, and replies are worth 3% of your final grade.

**Course Grading Scheme**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two (2) Artifact Analyses</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Facilitation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 Reading Memo</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five (5) Reading Memos (Weeks 3-13)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final Project Outline</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Final Project Peer Evaluations</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Final Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Presentation Peer Evaluations</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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IMPORTANT NOTE: Grades in this course are not negotiable, but I am happy to discuss course content and strategies for improvement in the future. I do not discuss grades via email, or immediately before or after class. I do require a 24-hour waiting period between receipt of a grade and discussion thereof. If you have questions about graded work, please come to office hours or set up an alternate time to meet and discuss them with me.

Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5+</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>87.5 – 92.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.5 – 87.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>77.5 – 82.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>71.5 – 77.49</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63.5 – 71.49</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;63.5</td>
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Statement on academic dishonesty

I take academic dishonesty and plagiarism extremely seriously, and I will pursue all avenues allowed by the university in the event that I 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 the university’s policy on academic dishonesty and misconduct, see:
http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/misconduct.html

Please note: A score of “0” received for academic dishonesty CANNOT BE DROPPED, regardless of the normal mechanisms for the grade category.
Semester Schedule

Please see Canvas Modules for assigned readings and specific assignment deadlines, including individualized Peer Facilitation assignments!

Week 1 (1/17 & 1/19):
**Getting Started**
MUST SUBMIT: Introduction post & image upload (1/18)
 M MAY SUBMIT: Introduction replies (1/20)
MAY SUBMIT: Weeks 1-5 Artifact Analysis (1/18)

Week 2 (1/24 & 1/26):
**Who are these people & why are we here?**
MUST SUBMIT: Week 2 Reading Memo (1/23)
 MAY SUBMIT: Weeks 1-5 Artifact Analysis (1/25)
 Bonus Forum (1/25)

Week 3 (1/31 & 2/2):
**Norms & Biases**
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 3 Reading Memo (1/30)
 Weeks 1-5 Artifact Analysis (2/1)

Week 4 (2/7 & 2/9):
**Health Disparities**
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 4 Reading Memo (2/6)
 Weeks 1-5 Artifact Analysis (2/8)

Week 5 (2/14 & 2/16):
**Identity Development & Coming Out**
MUST SUBMIT BY NOW: Weeks 1-5 Artifact Analysis (2/15)
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 5 Reading Memo (2/13)

Week 6 (2/21 & 2/23):
**Erasure & Rejection**
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 6 Reading Memo (2/20)
 Weeks 6-9 Artifact Analysis (2/22)

Week 7 (2/28 & 3/2):
**Family & Relationships**
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 7 Reading Memo (2/27)
 Weeks 6-9 Artifact Analysis (3/1)

Week 8 (3/7 & 3/9):
**Conflations & Complications (Racism & Ableism)**
 MAY SUBMIT: Week 8 Reading Memo (3/6)
 Weeks 6-9 Artifact Analysis (3/8)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Assignment Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Alternative Communities (Poly &amp; Kink)</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT BY NOW: Weeks 6-9 Artifact Analysis (3/15)</td>
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<td>MUST SUBMIT: Final Project Outline (3/17)</td>
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<td>MAY SUBMIT: Week 9 Reading Memo (3/13)</td>
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<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Religion &amp; Politics</td>
<td>MAY SUBMIT: Week 10 Reading Memo (3/27)</td>
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<td>MAY SUBMIT: Weeks 10-13 Artifact Analysis (3/29)</td>
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<td>Outline Peer Evaluations</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Radical Queerness</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT BY NOW: Outline Peer Evaluations (4/7)</td>
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<td>MAY SUBMIT: Week 11 Reading Memo (4/3)</td>
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<td>Week 11 Reading Memo (4/3)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Media Representation</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT: Week 12 Reading Memo (4/10)</td>
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<td>Week 12 Reading Memo (4/10)</td>
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<td>MAY SUBMIT: Weeks 10-13 Artifact Analysis (4/12)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Media Transformation</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT: Final Project (4/21)</td>
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<td>MUST SUBMIT: Week 13 Reading Memo (4/17)</td>
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<td>Presentations!!!</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Presentations!!!</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT: Peer Evaluations (5/2)</td>
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<td>MUST SUBMIT: Peer Evaluations (5/4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>Presentations!!!</td>
<td>MUST SUBMIT: Peer Evaluations (5/10)</td>
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