Borderlands and Embodiment

Aliens—beings with strange forms, behaviors and inexplicable origins—might be the stuff of science fiction, but they are also products of everyday social practices. Indeed, it seems humans are quite attached to aliens even in the most common places: they are created at national borders (indicated by concepts such as “foreigner” and “illegal alien”), and everyday borders such as men’s and women’s bathrooms (are you “right” or “wrong” in this bathroom?) What kinds of border separates humans perceived to be “normal” and those perceived to be “freaks?” Just how solid or porous is the boundary between humans and non-humans? As these examples suggest, borders also contribute to the interpretation of bodies, bodily features, and bodily modifications.

This seminar examines human embodiment in a variety of historical and cultural contexts in which humans have created and crossed borders and inhabited borderlands. We will consider different kinds of borders and ask: what are borders and borderlands? how do we know they are there? how they are maintained? who may or must cross, and who may not cross? what happens when boundaries are crossed? what or who changes? In asking these questions, we will focus an analytical lens on embodiment and social categories through which bodies are often “read” or “marked” such as sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, dis/ability, age, and so forth. Our texts include graphic novel, poetry, essays, film, documentary, autobiography, law, and history.

This is an Honors FIG Seminar paired with Professor Susan Bernstein’s English 181 on Monsters and Marvels.

Required Course Books
(available at Room of One’s Own on Gorham; and on Reserve at College Library)

Ryan Knighton, Cockeyed
Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera
Eli Clare, Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation
Lauren Redniss, Radioactive (Go Big Read)
Jennifer Finney Boylan, I’m Looking Through You

Accessibility: Everyone, regardless of disabilities or special needs, is welcome in this course. Please let me know if you need any accommodations in the instruction or evaluation procedures in order to facilitate your full participation. The McBurney Center provides useful assistance and documentation.

Computers and cell phones: I ask that you do not use laptops in class unless, for reasons of disability and accessibility, you need one to fully participate in lecture (let me know if this is the case). I also ask that you turn off cell phones before lecture starts, and keep them in your bag for the duration of lecture.
Course Requirements:

You must fulfill all requirements in order to receive a passing grade.

*Attendance is required.* Attendance and active participation constitutes 20% of your final grade. Please do not schedule appointments, meetings, or trips during lecture or discussion section. You may miss one class period (for any reason). Each additional absence for part or all of a seminar will decrease your attendance grade by one letter.

*Attendance and Participation in Seminar:* You should come to seminar having closely and carefully read the material for that day, and be ready to actively engage in discussion. Our seminar emphasizes the collective process of learning by asking questions, listening, sharing ideas, and forming new perspectives. Everyone's perspective is invaluable and essential to the process, as are an open mind and willingness to consider things in a new light.

*Learn@UW participation, in-class writing, author reports, and “borderlands and embodiment in everyday life.” 20%.* We will share ideas via prompts on learn@uw, and use writing as a thinking tool in seminar. In addition, everyone will share information about the authors of our books. Finally, each student will offer 2 informal reports (2-3 minutes) drawn from your own observations on borderlands and embodiment in everyday life.

*4 Book Essays: 10% each.* Four different essays (4-6 pages) on 4 required books (Anzaldúa, Clare, Knighton, Boylan). You will receive a separate assignment sheet explaining this assignment.

*Final Essay 20%* This will be on a border of your choosing. It will require some additional reading and research to prepare a thoughtful essay (5-7 pages). It should have as its basis a contemporary, historical, mythical, religious, or fictional issue. You will define the border issue or question at stake and develop a list of approved works (book, film, graphic or sonic texts, etc) that allow you to address the issue. This can also include a synthetic analysis of course themes and texts. Due on or before December 11. You will receive an assignment sheet for this.

**Paper Submissions:**

Unless otherwise noted, papers should be submitted in hard copy. They should be double- or 1 ½ spaced, with standard margins and 12pt font. They must be stapled or paper-clipped. They may be double-sided or printed on scratch paper if you wish to save paper.

Class Schedule:
    Gender and social integrity in Japanese Manga

Sept 11  Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* front matter and chapters 1 and 2

Sept 18  Ryan Knighton, *Cockeyed* to p. 160

Sept 25  *Cockeyed*, remainder. **Paper on Knighton due.**

Oct  2  Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride* read to page 80

Oct  9  Guest Eli Clare; read from *Exile and Pride* page 81 to end

Oct 16 Honors Lunch with Lauren Redniss 12-1pm  
    **PAPER DUE on Exile and Pride, Eli’s visit**  
    Seminar: (no new reading) discussion and film: *Dr. Strangelove*

Oct 23  Jennifer Finney Boylan, *I’m Looking Through You*

Oct 30  Jennifer Finney Boylan, *I’m Looking Through You*

Nov  6  **PAPER DUE on Boylan**  
    Film, and discussion of Final Essay projects

Nov 13  Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6

Nov 20  Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, chapter 7 and selected poetry

Nov 27  **PAPER DUE on Anzaldua** (possible electronic submission)  
    Open research and planning time (no new reading)

Dec  4  Film and discussion of final essays

Dec 11  Borderlands and Embodiment reconsidered

**FINAL ESSAY Due on or before Dec 11**