Course Description: Transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth are quickly becoming more visible in society. Parents of gender non-conforming children are coming to mental health providers in increasing numbers and are often met with stigma and bias and a lack of education on TGNC health. TGNC youth are turned out of their homes at disproportionate rates and harassed and bullied in school at higher rates than their gender conforming peers. They have higher rates of suicide, depression and substance abuse and face unique medical, legal and social barriers. They also have produced their own cultures and communities to face these challenges. This course will examine the scientific research on TGNC youth in the context of the practical challenges faced by these individuals and their families. Students will hear from experts in the field, receive personal accounts from TGNC teens and transgender adults, and take field trips to social services agencies and events produced by TGNC teens themselves.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| Week 1 | **Introduction to Transgender Identity**  

Transgender is an umbrella term that is used to describe many people with distinct ways of expressing their gender identities. Terminology changes quickly and is driven from within communities. At any given moment the most widely used, accurate, or sensitive language may be different than it was the previous year. In this session we will explore students’ knowledge of terminology surrounding transgender culture. In addition, we will review course requirements and expectations. The objective of this session is to introduce students to the terms, definitions, and concepts that will be discussed throughout the course.

*Readings:*

| Week 2 | **Parenting Gender Non-Conforming Children**  

Guest Speakers: Judith Sennesh and Moriko Nishiuro-Betz, parents of trans children

Transgender and gender non-conforming youth do not grow up in a vacuum. Their parents are often the first to identify their children’s unique ways of expressing themselves. In this session, students will hear from parents raising TGNC youth about their experiences with their children as well as their families, friends, neighbors, and school systems. The objective of this session is for students to put themselves in the place of parents dealing with complicated gender issues in their children. What kinds of assumptions do parents make about their children before learning of their gender identity? How do parents’ hopes for their children change over time? How do parents find their own support?
Week 3  
**Gender Non-Conforming Youth and Their Families**

Families of TGNC youth need supportive environments in which to explore their children’s feelings as well as their own. In this session, students will learn about techniques and formats helpful in working with families of TGNC youth. Students will ask themselves controversial questions such as: “Does parenting style affect a child’s gender identity?” Students will also have a chance to discuss children’s books recently published for TGNC children and consider how these books might be viewed if read in schools or available in public libraries. The objective of this session is to introduce students to the family as a place of mental health intervention as it relates to TGNC youth and to encourage students to think about the debates that surround different family approaches to TGNC youth.

**Readings:**
5. Please familiarize yourself with the following websites:
   - Gender Spectrum: [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)
   - COLAGE: [www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)
   - Trans Youth Family Allies (TYFA): [www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org)

Week 4  
**Schools, Peers and Bullying**

Perception of gender variance and sexual orientation is a primary variable in bullying in schools and in the community and is a known modulator for teen suicide. This class will provide an overview of the prevalence of gender identity based bullying as well as interventions in place to target such bullying.

**Readings:**
3. Toomey, RB et. al. “Heteronormativity, school climates, and perceived safety for

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<th>Week 5</th>
<th><strong>Trans Youth in Popular Culture</strong></th>
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<td>While once starved for any representation in the media, TGNC individuals are featured more and more in the popular press. From daytime soap operas to prime time cable network programming to novels and newspaper articles, gender non-conformity is now a hot topic. In this class, we will review the history of media/popular culture representations of TGNC youth and adults and the impact of the Internet on TGNC community building.</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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Choose from one of the following young adult books.

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<th>Week 6</th>
<th><strong>Trans Youth Culture</strong></th>
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<td>Nearly 50% of homeless youth are LGBTQ identified, and many of these kids have been kicked out of their homes and families because of their identity. In cities like New York, a large underground community of trans and gender non-conforming youth have developed their own culture, complete with language, symbolism and rules. In this class, students will learn about historical and contemporary trans youth culture and the how culture impacts public health initiatives and outcomes. In addition, students will be provided the opportunity to volunteer at a social event at a trans youth support center such as the Hetrick-Martin Institute.</td>
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<td><strong>Films:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong></td>
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**BREAK - NO CLASS THIS WEEK**

| Week 7 | **Trans Youth Activism** |
It is often youth who catalyze social activism, and youth have been vital to the expansion of rights for TGNC youth and adults. In this session, we discover TGNC youth sites of resistance, such as the West Village Piers and the headquarters of FIERCE, a membership-based non-profit committed to building the leadership and power of LGBTQ youth of color, ages 13-24. We will study the process of social change within the TGNC youth community.

**Readings:**

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<th>Week 8</th>
<th><strong>Legal Challenges for the TGNC Community</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Guest Speaker:</strong> Dru Levasseur, Transgender Rights Attorney, Lambda Legal</td>
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<td>Transgender people face numerous legal challenges, including criminalization of their identities, changing gender markers on identity documents, biased marriage laws, and discrimination in diverse areas such as immigration, employment, and child custody. It is still legal in a majority of states to be fired for being trans or gendered, and many schools ban expression of any non-conforming gender identity. Trans youth, who are disproportionately rejected by their families, face biased school and foster care systems, leading many to live on the street or in LGBT-specific youth housing programs. Furthermore, despite clearly documented benefits of treatment, hormonal and surgical interventions for transgender individuals are specifically denied coverage by most insurance plans, including Medicaid and Medicare. In this class students will also have the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of a transgender rights attorney who works to improve equality for the TGNC community.</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<th>Week 9</th>
<th><strong>Gender Dysphoria in the DSM</strong></th>
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|        | The existence of Gender Dysphoria (formerly named Gender Identity Disorder) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) carries with it significant controversy. In this session, students will learn about the history of the diagnosis, its
effects on individuals, and the controversy of gender-based diagnoses.

Readings:
3. GID Reform Advocates: http://gidreform.org/

Week 10  
Transgender Mental Health

Transgender people face unique mental health challenges due to discrimination and violence. Minority stress theory predicts that marginalized communities will display increased mental health concerns. In this session, we will review common mental health issues in transgender populations, including depression, anxiety, suicidality, PTSD, and substance abuse.

Readings:

Choose from one of the following guidebooks written by therapists:

Week 11  
Mental Health Assessment of Gender Non-Conforming Youth

Gender non-conforming youth face many of the same mental health challenges as trans adults but are at a unique stage in their development. They are learning to piece together their gender and sexual identities while under adult supervision both at school and at home. This class will introduce students to the methods of assessment used by child and adolescent psychiatrists and psychologists in various clinics within the United States, as well as in the main gender clinic in the Netherlands. Students will explore common issues that arise for gender non-conforming youth in a mental health setting and have a chance to evaluate and critique current methods of assessment.

Readings:
1. World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Standards of Care: http://www.wpath.org/publications_standards.cfm


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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Medical Interventions with Trans Youth</th>
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<td>Much recent controversy regarding gender non-conforming youth centers around the use of medical interventions such as puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. This class will introduce students to the current scientific knowledge regarding the use of these medications and explore the debate surrounding their use.</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Gender Non-Conforming Youth Around the World</th>
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<td>In the Western world our conception of gender includes two separate gender/sex categories and separates gender identity from sexual orientation. However, the understanding of gender and sexuality varies greatly around the world. This class will introduce students to some non-Western concepts of gender and sexuality, such as the Kathoey or Ladyboys in Thailand and Hijras in India and Pakistan.</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Student Presentations</th>
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<td>In this final class, students will each present for 5-10 minutes on their final essay topics and answer questions from classmates.</td>
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*Final Essay Due*

1. Give a provisional, detailed list of assigned readings, and a list of recommended readings, if any (not a bibliography of the subject), indicating the actual required readings or the sources from which the readings will be drawn.
Assigned Readings:

Ali Forney: Housing for Homeless LGBT Youth. www.aliforneycenter.org/
Carmel, T., Erickson-Schroth, L. Transgender Mental Health (in press).
COLAGE: www.colage.org
Drescher, J. Queer Diagnoses: Parallels and Contrasts in the History of Homosexuality, Gender


*Gender Spectrum*: [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)


Ryan, C et. al. *Family Acceptance Project Literature:*

[http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications)


Toomey, RB et. al. “Gender-nonconforming lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: school victimization and young adult psychosocial adjustment.” *Dev Psychol.* 2010 Nov;46(6), 1580-9.


Trans Youth Family Allies (TYFA): [www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org)


World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Standards of Care: [http://www.wpath.org/publications_standards.cfm](http://www.wpath.org/publications_standards.cfm)

Optional Readings:


Chen, C.I., Dulani, J., Piepzna-Samarasinha, L.L., eds. The Revolution Starts at Home:
2. How many examinations, papers, or other obligations (specify) will there be?
   a. Class participation (10%)
   b. Three 3-page Response Papers, (30%): Students will be asked to provide a 3-page response paper to the class visits and the readings three times throughout the course. They may choose when during the course they would like to hand in these responses. The students will respond to how the material/experience has helped shape their understanding of transgender youth.
   c. FINAL ESSAY (50%): Students will write a 15-page research paper on a topic related to TGNC youth. Topics will be selected by students but require approval by the instructors.
   f. PRESENTATIONS (10%): Students will each have the opportunity to present twice during the course. They will be assigned group presentations to correlate with the topics being taught that week. These presentations will be based on additional reading not assigned to the rest of the class, the purpose of which will be to supplement the knowledge obtained from the regular class readings.