

**Course Name**

The Classroom Closet: The History of LGBTQ Teachers

Credit

1 license renewal / 1 graduate credit

Instructor/Contact Information

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Published Course Description

The first part of the 21st century can largely be seen as a period of time expanding rights and acceptance for LGBTQ individuals; however, the past few years have seen the pendulum of progress swinging back against LGBTQ folks-- especially in education. LGBTQ students and teachers are under more scrutiny now than they have been in the past several decades.

This course will focus on the history of LGBTQ teachers in the K-12 setting in the United States. To that end, students will study both the social expectations of teachers as well as the real lived experience of same-sex desiring teachers in the 19th and 20th centuries. Students will question the notion of “social progress” and work to understand how LGBTQ educators have worked to support the schooling experience of LGBTQ students. Additionally, this course will shed light on larger questions of American history. As historian Karen Leroux argued, “historicizing postwar homophobia, and using the history of teachers to do it, strengthens students’ grasp of gender as a powerful force in twentieth-century America.” (2016)

Required Materials

Blount, Jackie M. *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century*. State University Of New York Press, 2006.

<https://sunypress.edu/Books/F/Fit-to-Teach>

A digital course pack will be provided to students with the supplemental materials listed in the course calendar.

Outcomes and Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Identify specific ways in which school districts have regulated the gender and sexual orientation of their employees.
2. Explain how LGBTQ teachers have used both individual and collective action to improve the working and learning conditions in schools.
3. Use their knowledge to build safe and supportive schools.

Instructor Methods and Course Design

The class will meet weekly via Zoom for two hours a week over the course of eight weeks. The course will largely follow a book study design and primarily discussion based. Occasional mini-lectures and supplemental materials will be used.

How Does This Course Support the Iowa Core

This course will empower educators to use their knowledge of the history of LGBTQ issues in schools to create a safe and supportive environment for both colleagues and students in their schools. Additionally, this course will provide possible content knowledge for social studies and English language arts teachers.

Research Base

In her essay, “Using Case Studies in the History of Education to Teach U.S. Women’s and Gender History” (2016) Karen Leroux builds the argument that studying the history of education empowers students to have a deeper grasp of US history at large. The audience for this course is primarily educators-- by studying the history of the teaching profession, students will be able to connect their professional practice to the social and historical foundations of the United States.

Evaluation

Students will complete a 6–8 page analytical essay incorporating supplemental materials examining continuity and change in the history of LGBTQ educators.

Course Requirements

Participate in weekly class discussions.

All students must complete the weekly readings from Jackie Blount’s book *Fit to Teach*.

Supplemental readings are optional for license renewal students and **required for graduate credit students**.

Participant Evaluation

A/Pass Grade

- *Met all course requirements
- *Averaged 90% or better on coursework

B/Pass Grade

- *Met all course requirements
- *Averaged 80%-89% on coursework

C/Fail Grade

- *Met all course requirements
- *Averaged 70%-79% on coursework

D/Fail Grade

- *Met all course requirements
- *Averaged 60%-69% on coursework

F/Fail Grade

*Failed to meet 1 or more course requirement
and/or

*Averaged less than 60% on tests and coursework.

Rubric

<i>The Classroom Closet: The History of LGBTQ Teachers</i>				
Superior	Excellent	Developing	Below Average	Unsatisfactory
A/Pass (90%-100%)	B/Pass (80%-89%)	C/Fail (70%-79%)	D/Fail (60%-69%)	F/Fail (<60%)
Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, including a thorough understanding of relevant concepts, theories, & issues related to the topic	Demonstrates a thorough grasp of the subject matter, including a clear understanding of relevant concepts, theories, and issues related to the topic	A basic grasp of the subject matter is demonstrated; weak understanding of the relevant concepts, theories, and issues related to the topic	Poor grasp of subject matter; weak understanding of relevant concepts, theories, & issues related to the topic	Demonstrates no understanding of subject matter or relevant concepts, theories, & issues related to the topic
All parts of the question/ discussion is addressed & thoroughly answered.	All parts of the question/ discussion are addressed & clearly answered.	All parts of the question/ discussion are addressed; minimal answers.	Parts of the question/ discussion not addressed; minimal answers.	All parts of the question/ discussion not addressed; incorrect or incomplete answers.
The ability to think critically is clearly demonstrated in the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of relevant information, theories, &/or viewpoints	Ability to think critically is demonstrated in the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of relevant information, theories, &/or viewpoints	Basic ability to think critically is demonstrated in the evaluation of relevant information	An ability to think critically is poorly demonstrated; minimal evaluation of concepts	An ability to think critically is not attempted or demonstrated
Makes strong, clear connections between personal/ educational setting/ experience & content being discussed; includes examples.	Makes clear connections between the participant's individual educational setting/experience & content being discussed.	Makes general, minimal connections between educational setting & content being discussed	Makes weak or erroneous connections	Makes no connections

Course Outline

Class 1: Introduction

Reading Due: “Skeleton Key”

1. Introductions
2. Personal experience with LGBTQ teachers and students
3. Review of the history of education and teaching
4. What does “Skeleton Key” reveal to us about the experience of being a gay teacher in 1980’s Iowa?
5. What can we learn from studying the history of LGBTQ teachers?

Class 2: Gender, Orientation, and Desire

Reading Due: Blount, Intro, and Chapter 1 (pg. 1-28)

Supplemental: Beecher, “An Essay on the Education of Female Teachers”

1. Key Terms:
 - a. Sex
 - b. Gender
 - c. Sexual Orientation
 - d. Same-Sex Desire
 - e. Social Construction
 - f. Feminization
2. How should we talk about sexual orientation when dealing with time periods where the concept of “sexual orientation” didn’t exist?
3. How could we describe the gender roles and expectations of 19th century America?
4. What is meant by the “feminization of teaching” and why did that happen?

Class 3: Social Attitudes Towards Teachers Early 20th Century

Reading Due: Blount, Chapters 2 and 3 (pg. 29-58)

Supplemental: Haley, “Why Teachers Should Organize”

1. Key Terms
 - a. Common School Movement
2. What is Blount’s argument about same-sex educational institutions in the 19th and early 20th centuries? What do you think of this?
3. How did the Common School Movement change education patterns in the United States?
4. What were the social expectations of female teachers during this time period? Male teachers?
5. How did housing shape the experiences of teachers in the United States?
6. What do the experiences of Margaret Haley and Ella Flagg Young teach us about the role of teachers and the nature of LGBTQ life in the early 20th century?

Class 4: Challenges to Gender Expectations in the Early 20th Century

Reading Due: Blount, Chapter 4 (pg. 59-79)

Supplemental: The National Education Association, “The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education”

1. Key Terms
 - a. The Eugenics Movement

- b. Social Hygiene
 - c. Life Adjustment
 - d. The Marriage Bar
- 2. How did the social marriage expectations of women shape education and the teaching profession in the early 20th century?
- 3. Blount discusses the work of G. Stanley Hall in reference to increasing opportunities for women. How does Blount's discussion of his work contribute to our understanding of same-sex desiring teachers?
- 4. The NEA's *Cardinal Principles* is a landmark document outlining what would become the standard high school program in the United States. How do their recommendations illustrate early 20th century views on sex and gender?

Class 5: A Day Without Sunshine

Reading Due: Blount, Chapter 5 (pg. 80-107)

Supplemental: The Florida Legislative Investigative Committee, "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida" (selections)

- 1. Key Terms
 - a. Homophile Association/Organization
- 2. How did Alfred Kinsey's study shape American perceptions on sexual orientation? How about popular media articles about sexual orientation?
- 3. What effect did World War 2 have on both US public education and sexual orientation?
- 4. Do you believe materials like "The Purple Pamphlet" are effective propaganda?
- 5. What do you imagine the long-term impact of the Johns Committee was on public education in Florida?
- 6. View in class: *Boys Beware*: How did instructional materials enforce mid-century beliefs about gender and sexual orientation?

Class 6: Fighting Back

Reading Due: Blount, Chapter 6 (pg. 108-134)

Supplemental: Selections from West Side Story about Mike Roe

- 1. What role did homophile associations like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis play in advancing the rights of homosexual teachers?
- 2. Why might Blount's account of Mike Roe differ from what was reported on the situation in the Iowa City West student newspaper, West Side Story?
- 3. Case studies--how have the following teachers contributed to our understanding for LGBTQ teachers in the second half of the 20th century?
 - a. Mark Morrison (112-113)
 - b. Peggy Burton (113-114)
 - c. John Gish (114-116)
 - d. Joseph Acanfora (116-118)
 - e. James Gaylord (118-119)
 - f. Paula Grossman and Steve Dain (119)
- 4. How did organizations like the Gay Teachers Association and the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition advance the rights of LGBTQ teachers?

Class 7: A Day Without Orange Juice

Reading Due: Blount, Chapter 7 (pg. 135-155)

Supplemental: Graves, *Political Pawns in an Educational Endgame*

1. How did the 1967 CBS story on homosexuality portray the lives of homosexuals?
2. Many of the advocates against the Brigg's initiative framed their objections around the violation of union-negotiated contracts instead of as a violation of the rights of LGBTQ teachers. How do you feel about that framing? Why do you suppose it happened that way?
3. Imagine that a law like the Brigg's initiative was being proposed today in Iowa. How would you respond?

Class 8: It's Still About the Kids

Reading Due: Blount, Chapter 8 and Epilogue (156-186)

Supplemental: (GLSEN, 2021 Iowa Snapshot on LGBTQ Youth)

1. How did the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980's impact education and educators?
2. What does the 1989 Health and Human Services report on suicide reveal about the experiences of LGBTQ students?
3. What are your final thoughts on Blount's book? Do you think she established and defended an argument about same-sex desiring teachers? Did you like the book?
4. What is the school experience like for both LGBTQ students and teachers today?
5. As educators, LGBTQ or otherwise, what should we walk away from this class curious about or ready to do?

Assessment

Submit a 6-8 page analysis paper: Historians often consider change and continuity when studying history. What has changed and what has stayed the same for same-sex desiring teachers (and/or students) in the United States? You must cite Blount, at least one of the supplemental texts, and one of the following additional books or collection of scholarly articles:

Blackburn et al, *Stepping Up!: Teachers Advocating for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools*

Clifford, *Those Good Gertrudes*

Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*

Jennings, *One Teacher in Ten* (any addition)

Lugg, *US Public Schools, and the Politics of Queer Erasure*

-OR-

Read all the following scholarly articles to count as "one book":

Graves, K. (2012). "So, You Think You Have a History?": Taking a Q from Lesbian and Gay Studies in Writing Education History. *History of Education Quarterly*, 52(4), 465-487.
doi:10.1111/j.1748-5959.2012.00416.x

Mayernick, J. (2020). The Gay Teachers Association of NYC and LGB Students: 1974–1985. *Teachers College Record*, 122(9), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146812012200906>

Smith-Silverman, S. (2020). “Gay Teachers Fight Back!”: Rank-and-File Gay and Lesbian Teachers’ Activism against the Briggs Initiative, 1977–1978. In *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (Vol. 29, Issue 1, pp. 79–107). University of Texas Press. <https://doi.org/10.7560/jhs29104>

Wimberly, G. L. (Ed.). (2015). *LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda*. American Educational Research Association. <https://doi.org/10.3102/978-0-935302-36-3> (Chapters 2 and 3 only)

Course Time Outline

Class will meet for two hours a week for eight weeks for a total of sixteen hours of seat time. Below is an estimation of the time students will spend out of class for each week:

Text	Pages	Time
Class 1		
"Skeleton Key"	29-38	0.50
Class 2		
Blount Intro and Ch. 1	1-28	1.25
Beecher "Essay"	57-60	0.25
Class 3		
Blount Chs 2-3	29-58	1.25
Haley "Why"	67-69	0.25
Class 4		
Blount Ch 4	59-79	1.00
"Cardinal Principles"	1-32	1.00
Class 5		
Blount Ch. 5	80-107	1.00
Florida Report	1-17	1.00
Class 6		
Blount Ch. 6	108-134	1.25
<i>West Side Story</i>	5	0.25
Class 7		
Blount Ch. 7	135-155	1.00
Graves "Pawns"	1-20	1.00
Class 8		
Blount Ch. 8 and Epi	156-186	1.5
GLSEN Report	1-5	0.5

Final Assignment		
Additional Book/Article Packet	200	8.5
Final Paper		8.5
Total		30.00