

Capstone Proposal
We're Here:
listening to the needs of LGBTQ youth
Spring/Fall 2005

Section I

1. Course Description:

It is estimated that 1 in 10 individuals identify as a sexual minority. Often an already challenging stage in identity development, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & questioning (LGBTQ) youth face a set of issues unique to their daily lives. *We're Here* will examine the paths sexual and gender minority youth navigate in American society, exploring such questions as: What challenges do LGBTQ youth encounter? How do they cope, survive, find understanding & celebrate themselves amidst homophobia and intolerance? How do LGBTQ experiences vary across difference such as race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender and expression? Has the growing strength of political mobilization and visibility of LGBT issues affected and/or included the needs of youth? How can youth needs be brokered by social services, families, and the community at large? Our community partner will be the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC).

2. Community Issue or Need:

From marriage and partnership to the mention of homosexuality in schools, sexual minority issues spawn heated political debates in Oregon and throughout the nation. It is estimated that LGBTQ youth encounter an average of 25 uninterrupted homophobic remarks daily and are among the highest at risk of suicide. Portland is one of the few cities in the country that offers supportive services for LGBTQ youth in the form of a resource/recreation center. For years SMYRC has provided an affirming and safe climate for youth to find community, explore themselves and connect to other needed services. An invaluable resource, SMYRC has managed to keep its doors open even in a time of budget cuts. SMYRC's mission statement is to "promote the common interests and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people through mental health, education and other support services". Members of this Capstone will have the opportunity to aid in supportive services for youth at the drop-in site, perform outreach and, in effect, interrupt and work towards eradicating homophobia in our society, thereby creating a safer atmosphere for all youth to be healthy and happy.

3. The course learning objectives for PSU students are as follows:

- understand how homophobia is institutionalized and perpetuated against LGBT people
- explore how homophobia/heterosexism is interlinked with other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, classism & ageism

- critically analyze the debates surrounding LGBT issues in contemporary society, particularly local issues such as those related to Measures 9 and 36
- examine the impact of homophobia on youth, with particular regards to mental health and identity development
- understand the specific needs of LGBTQ youth by interacting and interviewing SMYRC program participant
- develop skills in active listening, research design, interviewing, sample recording and analyzing data in qualitative research with SMYRC youth participants
- participate in class debates regarding current LGBT issues
- develop an awareness of sexual and gender diversity via reading assignments, youth interaction, course journaling and assigned reflective essays
- brainstorm solutions for interrupting/combatting homophobia & heterosexism
- understand how LGBT issues vary across difference (race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, religion, gender)
- participate in an in-class sensitivity training facilitated by Bridge 13 (SMYRC speaker's panel)
- engage in on-going in-class discourse regarding the learned experiences of SMYRC youth interaction
- identify resources in the Portland community for and about LGBTQ youth and their families, friends, schools and providers
- apply learned experience and research in the creation of a resource guide combining resources for LGBTQ youth and their allies and excerpts from the interviews with SMYRC participants about their lives and experiences accessing the listed resources

4. The following is a list of academic literature to be used in the course:

Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Reader, Editor Amy Sonnie, Alyson Publications, 2000.

Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity, Editor, Tracie O'Keefe, Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identities & Youth: Psychological Perspectives, Editor, Charlotte J. Patterson, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Instructor Packet, *selected readings*:

Advocates For Youth. *Transitions Magazine: for GLBTQ Youth*.

Advocates For Youth. *GLBTQ Youth: at risk and underserved*.

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Am I Blue? Coming out from the silence*.

Bornstein, Kate. select quizzes from *My Gender Workbook*.

Baker, Jean. *How Homophobia Hurts Children*.

Chandler, Kurt. *Passages of Pride: lesbian & gay youth come of age*.

Donalek, Julie. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*.

Chung, Kathy. *Lesbian Identity Development*.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *The Five Sexes, Revisited*.

Haynes, Richard. *Towards Healthier Transgender Youth*.
 Herdt, Gilbert. *Something to Tell You: the road families travel when their child is gay*.
 Hopwood, Nick. *Research Design & Methods of Data Collection*.
 Jordan, Karen. *Substance Abuse Among GLBTQ Youths*.
 Rich, Jason. *Growing Up Gay in America*.
 Rich, Jason. *School Experiences of G&L Youth: the invisible minority*.
 Savin, Ritch. *The Psychosexual Development of Urban LGB Youths*.
 Task Force on Sexual Minority Youth. *Oregon's Sexual Minority Youth: an at-risk population*.

5. Final Product: Students in this course will have the opportunity to engage in supportive services at the SYMRC drop-in site in SE Portland, perform outreach and research in collecting information for LGBTQ youth, interview SMYRC program participants about their experiences and compile the information into the final product, a resource guide highlighting available resources and the experiences of LGBTQ youth intended for youth, social services, schools, and the larger community (see example provided).

6. Majors:

Social Work	Participate in a social service program. Interact with a vulnerable population. Research available social services in the area.
Sociology	Understand how LGBTQ youth function as a population in American society. Understand how other identity factors influence GLBT identities.
Psychology	Explore the particular mental health needs of LGBTQ youth and the emotional effects of homophobia/heterosexism on this population.
Women's Studies	Gain an understanding of homophobia/heterosexism as an institutionalized oppression. Interlink homophobia/heterosexism with other oppressions.
Communication/ English	Engage in interviewing and the collection of the experiences of LGBTQ youth.
Art	Ability to develop a visually compelling resource guide.
History	Participate in the process of interviewing and the collection of oral experiences and histories. Locate LGBT individuals within the context of civil rights movements.

Philosophy	Engage in class debates regarding current discourse surrounding LGBT individuals in contemporary society.
Biology	Understand the diversity of human gender and sexual expression. Analyze the etiology of the biological determinism/social construction debates regarding homosexuality and gender expression.

7. Instructor Information:

Molly Gray, MSW is a Social Worker, educator and social justice activist who works primarily with GLBT, women's and youth populations. Currently a therapist at a community mental health program for low-income individuals, she focuses on serving the specific needs of sexual minority and transgender folk. She has worked with homeless and sexual minority youth in Portland since 1999 at Janus Youth, Outside In and SMYRC in the capacity of counselor, instructor and advocate. As an Americorps Volunteer in Chicago she taught community education and facilitated a writing group for survivors of domestic violence. She has guest lectured at the Art Institute of Chicago, Beloit College and the University of Wisconsin and has facilitated workshops on feminist and LGBT issues at numerous conferences including the Rock & Roll Camp for Girls, International Women's Day, HERfest and numerous others across the country and abroad. She has undergraduate degrees from Beloit College in Women's Studies and Creative Writing. She received her Master's in Social Work from Portland State University where she was a Graduate Mentor for the University Studies Department.

8. Partnership Development:

I approached Zann Gibbs, a former co-worker and SMYRC Program Supervisor in September of 2004 about the creation of a Capstone in partnership with SMYRC. We have met to discuss the volunteer need that SMYRC is currently experiencing and the logistics of volunteer orientation as well as the legalities of students working with youth. Zann is enthusiastic about the prospect and informed me that there would be no problem scheduling Bridge 13, the youth speakers' bureau for an in-class sensitivity training. Any student work done within the drop-in center needs to be approved by the Youth Steering Committee, pending approval of this proposal.

9. Course Offering Format:

- Fall Quarter (also available Spring Term)
- 6 Credits

Section II

1. Inquiry and Critical Thinking

Students in this course will be introduced to the current debates regarding LGBT issues in our community and throughout the nation, taking measures to be inclusive of the polarized voices within the debate (such as introducing students to the differing principles behind such local groups as Basic Rights Oregon & the Oregon Citizen's Alliance). The topic of LGBTQ youth will be located within a human rights and mental health framework and students will consider solutions to providing culturally-appropriate services and support to this population, including problem-solving ways to interrupt/combat homophobia and ensure a safer environment for youth to explore sexual and gender expression. Students will also explore how homophobia/heterosexism operates and is institutionalized in American society as well as critically examine how homophobia/heterosexism interlinks to other oppressions such as sexism, racism, classism and ageism.

2. Communication

Students will enhance their communication skills in a variety of ways. First, through in-class debates students will gain a better understanding of the key debates surrounding LGBT issues. Students will also participate in a youth-facilitated sensitivity training, presented by Bridge 13 (an organized speaker's panel put on by our community partner SMYRC) introducing them to communicating with the LGBTQ youth population. Students will work within teams to brainstorm ways to facilitate support for LGBTQ youth in the capacities of drop-in site volunteering, interviewing youth about their experiences, making community contacts to compile information, develop written summaries of their findings and producing a resource guide in collaboration with the community partner. Students will engage in a great deal of learning about sensitivity to difference, active listening, and research methodology regarding interviewing and data collection.

3. Variety of Human Experiences

This course focuses on the particular experience of a diverse and vulnerable population through literature, films, panels and other guest speakers and through experiences with the community partner. Students will learn about the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth with a focus on difference within the LGBT population with regards to race, ethnicity, class, gender and age. This course will have contact with individuals from a diverse background of sexual and gender identity and expressions, socio-economic class, racial and ethnic background and age. Students will also be working collaboratively in diverse groups within the class and encouraged to focus on learning how to bridge difference in their goals to create a final product. Class participants will be asked to engage in a series of self-reflective exercises regarding their own sexual and gender expression, how they understand their own identities and will participate in a sensitivity training facilitated by Bridge 13. Students will engage also in the collection of experiences from the lives of LGBTQ youth as well as gain exposure to the differing perspectives regarding LGBT issues.

4. Ethical and Social Responsibility

This class will explore a variety of topics related to ethical and social responsibility. Students will expand their understanding of the impact of homophobia on the sexual minority youth population and how individual choices can perpetuate or interrupt homophobia in society. Students will be introduced to literature that aims to heighten awareness of the condition of intolerance in society and that presents opportunities for citizens to make a difference, that is, to work towards the creation of a more tolerant, safer and healthier society. Students will also gain experience working with a non-profit agency and engage in socially responsible practices aimed at addressing community needs. Students will be asked to write academically reflective pieces on how their social privileges, particularly in a university context, affect their choices and beliefs and how their engagement with LGBTQ youth has affected their previous knowledge.

Proposed Capstone *We're Here: listening to the needs of LGBTQ youth*
Syllabus Outline
Molly Gray

- Week 1: Introduction to Instructor/Course
Introduce terminology
Exploring stereotypes exercise-linking ageism & homophobia
Background information on SMYRC, community partner
Assigned Reading: Begin Revolutionary Voices & Instructor Packet
- Week 2: Continue introducing definitions
Continue discussion oppressions
Film: *Gay Youth*
Bridge 13 (SMYRC) Community Partner In-Class Training
Assigned: Response to Film
Assigned Reading: Continue Revolutionary Voices
- Week 3: Introduction to Qualitative Research
Research Design, Methodology & Analyzing Data Presentation (speaker, TBA)
Form groups in class based on student interest in final-product participation areas
Brainstorm session on forming sample questions & resource collection
Assigned: Internet Log & Gender Journal Topic
Assigned Reading: Continue Revolutionary Voices & Instructor Packet
- Week 4: Youth & School Experiences
In-Class Debate: The Harvey Milk School
Assigned Reading: Instructor Packet & Finding the Real Me *journals due
- Week 5: Youth & Coming Out/Family Experiences
In-Class Panel: PFLAG
Assigned: Write a Coming-Out Letter
Assigned Reading: Instructor Packet & Finding the Real Me
- Week 6: Transgender/Transsexual Youth
Film: "Just Call Me Kade"
Assigned: Annotated Bibliography & Gender Journal Topic
Assigned Reading: Instructor Packet & Finding the Real Me
- Week 7: Mental Health Issues & LGBTQ Youth
Instructor Lecture
Class-room time for Working on Final Project *journals due

Selected Assignments for

Proposed Capstone We're Here: *listening to the needs of LGBTQ youth*

1. **Write a Coming Out Letter.** Based on the experiences you've read about in class materials as well as the Bridge 13 presentation, imagine you are a questioning youth and write a 2-3 page coming out letter and attached response paper. Consider someone in your life that you would have (or had) an interesting/difficult/uncomfortable time expressing your sexual orientation to if you were or are a LGBT individual—is it your boss, your parents, your partner, your classmates, your grandparents or other extended family, neighbor, church, friends or other member(s) of your community? Explain what you would tell them-how would you go about it? Would you present it in a matter-of-fact fashion? Would you be nervous or scared? Would you want to present information and resources for them-if so, what would it be and where would you go to find that information? Would you try to be nonchalant although inwardly fearful? Keep in mind the experiences of youth in this situation. What kind of response do you think you might get? Would this response maybe change over time? How would their response affect you? Include your understanding of the concept of "coming out"—does it serve more than a private function? Is coming out a political act? Or is sexuality simply a matter of privacy and "nobody else's business"? What would you like to accomplish by coming out, what differences and goals does it achieve? Is coming out an event, a rite of passage, a process? Please format the paper as if it were a real letter, addressing it to the person(s) that you are writing it to and attach a 1-2 page response paper describing how this assignment affected you as well as answer the questions posed above that were not appropriate to include in your letter.

If you need more information than what has been provided in class materials and discussion, please refer to the following websites for examples of coming out letters and resources: www.youthresource.com/our_lives/coming_out/letters/
www.10percent.org/resource.html

2. **Internet Search Log.** Imagine yourself as a young teen questioning his or her sexuality and/or gender identity. You are at home after school and have 1-2 hours before your parent(s) arrive home. This gives you free, unsupervised internet access time to look for information about LGBT issues. Imagine what you would have felt like as a young teen—would you be nervous, jumpy, excited? Would you make sure you erased the computer's search history so you didn't get "caught"? Would you leave the search history and secretly hope to be found out? Try a number of different search phrases, such as: "queer youth" "gay teens" "gibt" "lesbian teens", etc. What do you find? Please log each site name and address that you explore and write a few sentences about the nature of the material and resources available on the site. Be sure to note which sites were particularly informative and appropriate for LGBTQ youth resources. This assignment is a stepping stone to a later assignment when you will be asked to create a 5-7 page annotated bibliography of LGBTQ youth resources, in preparation for the Capstone's final project.

A note of caution: Some material on the internet that surfaces in researching these topics can be pornographic and/or predatory in nature. While this is a very real and important aspect of understanding

the questioning youth's experience, please be aware of safety issues, particularly regarding the sharing of any personal information, chat rooms and other areas.

3. **Gender Journal.** Throughout the term you will be asked to keep a "gender journal", a self-reflective log of brief responses to class materials and discussions regarding issues of gender and sexuality. Some entries will be self-generated by your own interest in engaging a topic further and some inquiries will be assigned by the instructor. Journals will be collected at the 4th and 8th weeks. Some inquiry topics include:

a. Critically examine your social gender, or, your physical presentation-the clothes you wear, the accessories you choose, your hair style, cosmetics, grooming, etc. How did you decide to present yourself this way? What sources or other factors inform these decisions? Describe your presentation, is there a term for your style in popular culture? Have you always looked like this? Do you question it? Do you feel different in regards to gender identity and sexuality when you are dressed differently than you are usually (i.e. when you're in sweatpants or in formal attire). How did you learn to present yourself the way you do? Was it expected of you? Do you wish you presented yourself differently than you do? What do you want your outside appearance to reflect about your personality? Are you comfortable? What is someone of another gender presented the way you do-would that be considered non-traditional? How do you think the general public would respond? Do you consider your presentation traditional? What responses have you fielded in your life regarding your gender identity and presentation?

b. What are your earliest memories of the information you've received about issues of sexuality and sexual identity? How have you become informed about sexual preferences? What are the types of representations of LGBT people have you had exposure to throughout your life? Did you learn about LGBT individuals through a joke, through slang, through TV or a family member? Were you presented options when you were in the stage of forming your sexual identity? Were you given or did you take space to explore or question your sexual identity as an adolescent? Do you remember adolescence as a confusing or exploratory time in regards to sexuality? How would your life be different if you were a different sexuality? Do you feel sexual identity is a choice? Is it biologically determined? If you could have changed how you learned about sexual identities, what would you change or include? What would you tell an adolescent in your life who came to asking about sexual identity issues?

c. How do you understand the concept of "cross-dressing"? How do you interpret cross-dressing or what would it look like to imagine yourself as cross-dressed or dressed as another gender? What emotions does it illicit to imagine yourself this way?-strangeness, excitement, interest, fear? How might you imagine a youth who is thinking about these issues feels? Design an alter ego for yourself, one of another gender-who is that alter ego? A man? A woman? Androgynous? What is your alter ego's name? What differences in personality does your alter ego possess, if any? Would your gender affect your sexual preference? How would you present yourself? Describe your alter ego's social gender, or gender presentation. How do you think people would react if you presented as your alter ego?

Note: You may choose to design an alter ego for an individual close to you if you prefer and answer the related questions as if you were that person's alter ego.

*Sample Lesson Plan for
Proposed Capstone We're Here:*

Examining LGBTQ Youth Stereotypes: A Classroom Discussion

Molly Gray, M.S.W.

- Purpose:*
- a. To engage in discussion regarding discrimination and stigma in our society and how it affects LGBT individuals and youth
 - b. To further understand the ways in which homophobia and ageism is perpetuated
 - c. To illustrate the effects of homophobia and ageism so that students may learn socially responsible ways of disrupting discrimination
 - d. To engage the students in classroom discussion and AB sharing so as to further develop a discourse for which to discuss social issues

University Studies Goals:

- a. Inquiry and critical thinking; communication; the diversity of human experience; ethical issues and social responsibility.

Objective:

- a. To engage students in critically examining homophobia and ageism, how these oppressions manifest and their effects in society
- a. To identify personal and communal responsibility for interrupting oppression and discrimination in society

Set Up Ground Rules:

- a. Bare Minimum-Respectful listening, no interruptions, refraining from stereotypes, racist language or other oppressive behaviors, no tokenizing, use "I" statements and speak from personal experience-ask for others. Keep on board for reference

Body:

- a. Instructor-led discussion explaining the concepts of homophobia and ageism in society. Define key concepts and terms.
- b. Ask students to journal lists of stereotypes that come to mind regarding LGBT individuals and youth
- c. Ask students to do an AB sharing of their lists
- d. Ask for volunteers to write a cumulative list of stereotypes of board
- e. Pose the following questions to class:
 - Q. Where do these images come from?
 - Q. What kind of power do these images yield?
 - Q. How do oppressions link-are there similarities between ageism and homophobia?
 - Q. What are characteristics of people in your life that are LGBT or young?

Example of Final Product Resource Manual:

Portland Area LGBTQ Youth Programs:

"When I first started thinking maybe I was gay, I was so scared. I was 14 and didn't know anyone who was or where to go. Later on, I found out through this program at my school about COSMYC and that led me to SMYRC. When I first started going to drop-in, I would take the bus secretly and I would be real nervous and just sit there and stare at the other kids who were so happy and okay with everything. I wish I would have known from the beginning that everything was going to be okay, that there was a place like SMYRC where I could go and be confused for awhile if I needed to be and figure out how to be myself. I look at the other newbies that come to drop-in and see my old self and want to help them out now, cuz everyone here was so helpful to me." -Justin, 16

Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC)

2100 SE Belmont

503-872-9664

www.smyrc.org

Drop-In Hours: Wed 4pm-9pm, Fri 4pm-11pm

SMYRC is a drop-in center for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and questioning youth 23 and under. Youth

come to play pool, use computers, access resources, use the library, meet people, make art and

just have fun! SMYRC offers leadership opportunities through the Youth Steering Committee,

which plans activities and advises about SMYRC's policies. SMYRC offers the following groups;

- Personal Deity Proxy; an art and writing activity group for LGBTQ youth
- Miscellaneous Etcetera: A social/ support group for transsexual, transgender, trans, cross dressing and questioning youth.
- S.M.I.L.E. A support group for youth coming-out or wanting peer support for any number of issues including relationships, families, anger and the effects of homophobia.

Roots and Branches-

503-872-9664 x28

Offers individual support, case management and resource referral to sexual minority youth 13-17

who live in Multnomah co. R&B also runs East County Expression, a support group for sexual

minority youth who live in East Multnomah County.

"Being a part of Bridge 13 and the Youth Steering Committee at SMYRC gave me a voice I didn't think that I had. Back when I first came out and I had been kicked out of the house and got into some bad stuff, you couldn't have told me I'd be giving presentations to people about being trans and all that. Last month we gave a workshop to a group of therapists! I used to be scared of therapists, well, I still am a little, but at least I know that they're not all out to convert me to something I'm not. And it's cool I get to have a part in that." -Jessica, 17

Bridge 13-

503-872-9664 x27

Fun and interactive youth led educational trainings about the issues sexual and gender minority youth face.

Washington County Pride Project-

503-260-5792

www.prideproject.org

The Pride Project brings together Washington Co lesbian, gay, bi, trans and questioning youth for support and social activities. Pride also offers drop-in social/support groups in Hillsboro, Beaverton and Tigard.

COSMYC-

503-969-0060

Clackamas County Sexual Minority Youth Coalition is a group of youth and adults working to create a safer environment for sexual minority youth in Clackamas County.