

SP.401 – Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies
Essay Assignment #2

Date Due: Thursday, April 7

Length: 5-7 pages, or approximately 1500-1800 words

Choose **ONE** of the following topics and write a **5-7page essay** in response to it. You will need to draw examples from the texts we have read to support your points; use parenthetical citations to document the sources you use. Be sure that you are introducing your quotes adequately, creating smooth transitions between your own writing and that of your sources. Your essay should include a clear **thesis statement** in which you make an argument in answer to the question you choose.

1. Using examples from at least three different assigned readings (and/or films shown in class), explain how in particular intersex and transgender identities challenge conventional notions of sex and gender. What do these cases tell us about how the binary sex/gender system is policed and maintained in North America?
2. Children experience gender socialization at a very early age. Drawing from the studies by Thorne, Risman, and Thornton Dill, explain what the *implications* of these essays are for changing the way we view gender in society. How might the conclusions of these social scientists (and/or Lorber and Kimmel) be in conflict with emerging biological findings by Fausto-Sterling, Kessler, and the failed outcome of John Money’s famous Reimer twins case?
3. In *Exile and Pride*, Eli Clare discusses the complexity of occupying multiple subject positions. Explain what Clare means by *exile* and how ze navigates conflicting allegiances in relationship to environmentalism, (dis)ability, sexuality, and class.
4. How is our notion of a “normal” body constructed by societal expectations, particularly in relationship to disability, race, and gender? Consider Clare’s discussion of “supercrip” and the history of the freak show. You might also incorporate a discussion of Galler and Gimlin from *Feminist Frontiers*, or compare this to the problems discussed earlier in the assessment of trans and intersex bodies.