

ED 589 ADOLESCENT SEXUAL DIVERSITY: SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER

Syllabus

Instructor: Sarah Helfrich, Ph.D.
E-mail: sarah.helfrich@bvsd.org
Hours available: 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. (MST)
Phone: 303.404.3050
303.447.5001 ext. 8970
Address: 11371 Quivas Way
Westminster, CO 80234

CREDIT HOURS:

Three Semester Hours

PREREQUISITES:

A baccalaureate degree is required for graduate level courses.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide the knowledge and the skills for educators to better understand the challenges faced by gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual youth, identify risk factors related to personal well-being and academic success, and implement specific strategies to create a safe learning environment that embraces all facets of human diversity.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will:

- Learn statistics related to homosexuality and gender identity in youth, including but not limited to: rates at which youth are disclosing, rates of mental illness and at-risk behaviors related to sexuality, and rates of bullying incidents related to sexuality in school settings
- Identify terms such as sexual identity, sexual orientation, transgender, transsexual, transphobia, gender identity, and gender identity disorder.
- Understand-students' experiences whose parents are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender
- Discern how family systems and family dynamics impact students at school
- Create classroom/school/district strategies that support children of diverse sexual orientations
- Develop support services available to students, parents and educators in an effort to create positive school climates and safe, respectful learning environments

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Study Guide Questions:

The study guide is divided into three sections: Research Foundations and At-Risk Behaviors, Students Experiences, and School Environments. The three sections each contain ten questions that you should answer and submit. There are thirty total questions and each question is worth two points. Full points will be awarded for workbook questions that are answered thoughtfully with strong connections to the text as well as in a reflective manner that suggests consideration of one's own experiences as well as those of one's students. Completion of the questions in the study guide is worth 60 points.

2. Research Paper:

In addition to completing the questions in the study guide, you will complete a three- to five-page research paper on an area of study related to students of diverse sexual orientations. The paper is worth 20 points.

3. Reflection Activity or Classroom Action Plan:

To complete the course activities, you will choose to engage in a self-reflective task or write a classroom action plan. The reflection activity or the classroom action plan will be worth 20 points.

Together, the questions, brief research paper, and reflection activity OR classroom action plan are worth 100 points.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Required Textbook:

Sears, James T., Ph.D., ed., *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education: Programs, Policies and Practices, first edition*. Harrington Press, 2005.
ISBN: 1-56023-524-1

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:

In alignment with ASC academic policies, no D may apply to a major or minor field.

Grade Distribution:

Study Guide Questions	60 points
Research Paper	20 points
Reflection Activity	
OR Classroom Action Plan	<u>20 points</u>
Total Points	100

Scale:

94-100	A
84-93	B
74-83	C
64-73	D
63 and below	F

COURSE INSTRUCTIONS**Research paper:**

For your brief research paper, you will choose a topic related to our course. Topics related to adolescent sexual diversity might include: bullying and resiliency, asset-building in youth, depression, substance abuse, self-mutilation, eating disorders, suicide, GLBT – straight alliance groups, etc. Please choose something that is of interest to you and will increase your knowledge and ability to support all students. I simply ask that you contact me by phone or e-mail so that we can briefly discuss the topic you have chosen.

The point rubric below should guide you in the content of your research paper:

1-5 points – Describes topic in generalities with no references made to current research on subject

6-15 points – Describes topic with some detail with occasional statistical or research-based references and links made to the school environment and how the topic is relevant to educators

16-20 points – Describes topic in great detail, includes statistical/research-based references, discusses relationship of topic to school environment and elaborates regarding how topic can be addressed in educational setting using specific examples.

Reflection Paper/ Classroom Action Plan**A. Reflection Paper**

Our society tends to operate with rigid ideas of what is feminine and what is masculine and these boundaries rarely blur. These strict gender roles influence our thoughts, actions, and experiences. The ideas we hold about gender have also created firm social stereotypes about what is considered “feminine” and what is considered “masculine.”

Take some time to reflect on how your life would have been different had you been born the opposite gender. You most likely would have had a different name – would you have been treated differently as a baby? How about as a toddler, school-aged child or teenager? Would you have made different life choices in terms of hobbies, education, career, family? Starting with your birth, move through your infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, etc. to the present. Comment on how each stage of your life was influenced by your biologically

assigned gender and how your experiences would have been different had you been born the opposite gender.

The point rubric below should guide you in the content of your reflection paper:

1-10 points- Discusses in generalities society's expectations about one's gender in terms of appearance and behavior at different stages in human development.

11-20 points- Discusses specific examples of expectations for behavior and appearance based on gender. Also addresses own feelings about being "male," "female," or somewhere in-between and how these feelings about gender identity influenced one's decision-making and one's interactions with parents, spouses or partners, siblings, peers, co-workers, etc.

B. Classroom Action Plan

So often we encounter research or data that is interesting or even compelling but we struggle to apply our new knowledge in our classrooms. Writing an action plan related to what you now know about sexual diversity will help you to take concrete steps to support all students. Establishing a plan of action can mean different things to different educators. For example, you may feel comfortable setting goals related to amending your classroom rules, what you will do to stop harassment, intimidation, and violence and committing to being a role model of acceptance. These steps could also include classroom meetings or discussions to address the culture of the school, feelings of safety, what students can do to stop harassment, etc.

You may feel ready to take additional steps and for instance, advocate for school and district policies that protect people from discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation as well as discuss sexual orientation in your classroom using research-based facts and use diverse learning materials including the study of GLBT leaders. Or, you may be willing to invite GLBT speakers to your school, sponsor a GLBT Alliance, encourage colleagues to use GLBT curriculum or work with your PTA or other health-education organizations to discuss the needs of GLBT youth in the community. The content of your action plan is up to you, your level of comfort and the culture of your school. I am always available to you for confidential discussions regarding the dynamics related to your plan and how it might make sense for you to proceed.

The point rubric below should guide you in the content of your classroom action plan:

1-10 points- Discusses in generalities one's goals related to actions to be taken in one's classroom or school.

11-20 points- Discusses one's goals related to actions to be taken in a specific manner with regard to resources needed, timelines, etc.

As mentioned above, you will complete the study guide questions relating to the chapters you read in the text (60 points). You will also complete a brief research paper (20 points) and a reflection activity OR classroom action plan (20 points).

You are welcome to e-mail me your study guide questions as you complete each chapter (be sure and reference the study guide section and the study question number) OR you may find it more convenient and time-saving to complete the study guide, your research paper, and your reflection activity or classroom action plan and mail them to me all at once. If you would like your work returned, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your assignments.

ADA Statement:

Students who need special accommodation to complete this class should contact the instructor and the Office of Student Affairs, 719.587.7221 as soon as possible.

Note: Web sites are constantly changing and you may find that some have moved or are simply no longer available; contact your instructor with any questions.