

# Gender Identity and Expression

- Trans\* 101 -

at SMCM

# Terminology

gender identity - the gender a person expresses and would like other people to recognize them as

gender expression - the manner in which someone outwardly relates to their gender identity

trans(\*)gender - a person whose gender identity and/or expression does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

cisgender - someone whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth

# So...what does that mean for students?

- many trans\* students face difficulty in their home environment, with emotional struggles relating to being trans\*, healthcare, and other students and faculty
- all trans\* students' difficulties **don't** necessarily stem from their gender identity
- however, being aware of and sensitive to these factors can help you be aware of classroom conduct and better understand your student's background and work

# Keep in mind...

Students may be going through...

- physical transition
- coming out to friends, family, and other faculty/staff
- harassment or alienation by peers
- questioning their identity
- pressure to “pass” and/or be “stealth”

Students may come to you with...

- trouble with the way other students are gendering/reacting to them
- housing, family, friend, and/or healthcare issues
- request to cover a gender or body -related topic or assignment differently in class or than assigned

# Awareness/Think About...

- **Always and only use preferred name and pronouns**  
(when in doubt, ask!)
- **Ask “what”, not “why”**  
(don’t question or argue with a student’s identity)
- **Let the personal stay private**  
(don’t tell anyone about the student’s identity or ask invasive questions)
- **Watch your binary!**  
(try to avoid jokes and comments that perpetuate stereotypes)

# And in the classroom

## (Being proactive!)

- think about being trans\* inclusive (or at least respectful) in any lecture/discussion covering gender, sex, and/or gender-related healthcare
- be aware of student comments that might be disrespectful or harmful of trans\* students and issues, and use them as a teaching moment
- just like discussions of abuse, violence, and mental illness can be triggering for some students, prolonged/graphic discussions about trans\*/homophobia and gender/sex related body acceptance and health can be triggering for trans\* students

**your \* There's no way to know if you have a trans\* student in class. And even if you don't, doing these things anyway promotes awareness and respect!**

# Resources at SMCM

- There are currently **5** gender neutral bathroom locations on campus:
  - Glendenning Annex
  - WC entrance
  - Margaret Brent
  - Art Annex (brick building next to PS)
  - outside St. Mary's Hall
- Open (gender neutral) housing (lower and upper class) is available for **all** undergrads; minors must have parent permission
- Students can have their name changed on their e-mail and One Card without having it legally changed. This can be done through **tech services** and/or the **Registrar**.
- Legal name and gender marker changes can be taken to the Registrar to be changed in Portal.
- the **WGSX department**, **STARS**, **Meghan Root** in Counseling and Health Services, and **LGBTQ Student Services** provide options for help and support for trans\* students

# Want to do more?

- let students know that you are an available and safe resource (You can do this by putting up a sign or symbol on your office door, verbally, or in a note on your syllabus )
- look up academic and/or non-academic literature, blogs, groups, etc. to learn more about the trans\* community, current commentary on gender theory, variety of identities, and other challenges facing the trans\* community today
- consider ways to challenge students' perceptions of gender
- try to use “they” when talking about a theoretical person or someone of whose gender identity you aren't 120% certain



# Thanks!

Remember – just like all students (and people, for that matter), trans\* individuals are diverse. What works for one person and their identity might contrast with someone else.

When in doubt, ask.

feel free to contact me for resources/questions/etc.:

Gilligan: [aegilligan@smcm.edu](mailto:aegilligan@smcm.edu)