

Queers are mostly but not universally marginalized. At the institution where I teach—which Fox News recently singled out as “The Most Radical University in America”—queers have claimed the mainstream, replacing hetero-hegemony with homocentric sensibility. Taking this particular institutional situation as a kind of test case, I argue that the productive and mutually-beneficial marriage between Classics, on the one hand, and Gay and Lesbian Studies and activism, on the other, must now turn to a nascent field, Transgender Studies.

From this upended perspective, I will address specific pedagogical experiences teaching notoriously “homosexual” or “queer” Greco-Roman with an eye toward maintaining the gains of traditional Gay and Lesbian Studies approaches while incorporating the insights of Transgender Studies—when gay and lesbian equality is already presupposed, instructors are free to teach the cutting edge. The axioms, methodologies, goals and disciplinary practices of this field differ from, yet draw heavily on, those of Gay and Lesbian Studies and Queer Theory, their relationship being part progression narrative, part dialectic. In simplest terms, Gay and Lesbian Studies recuperates same-sex acts and identities, Queer Theory exposes and destabilizes power dynamics, and Transgender Studies pushes further to denaturalize biological and social normativities. Because instructors at “The Most Radical University in America” need not apologize for the ancients to the current generation of undergrads who grasp “acts vs. identities,” social constructs, and sexual self-fashioning better than their older instructors, a queer classroom may explore the liberating potential of antiquity without projecting fantasies of gay utopia onto Greco-Roman culture. By employing reception theory, deconstruction, and historicism, the queer or Classics classroom might investigate the ways in which these texts de-center sexual object choice, and interrogate gender expression in a way that permits the fruitful intersection of the field of Classics and the framework of Transgender studies.

As teachers and scholars, how and with which texts do we teach transgender issues in antiquity? How do we include transgender students in our discipline? Queer classicists are especially suited to this newest activist project, but I also emphasize that queer native experience does not translate into *other* insider knowledge: we must match empathy with expanded, rigorously inclusive research agendas. Over the last several decades, gays and lesbians have been rescued from the obscurity of the unspeakable by their open-minded straight colleagues; now it is time for gender-normative gay and lesbian academics to do the same.