

Department chair's transgender studies textbook to be used in classrooms

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By Susannah Spengler

City College's own Ardel Haefele-Thomas created a new approach to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) studies in their latest work, "Introduction to Transgender Studies," a textbook that will be used by City College and several other schools this semester.

Over the last three and a half years, the college's LGBT Studies chair worked incessantly on their new textbook, which they see as the "world's first introduction to that field of study." The course "LGBT 18: Transgender Lives, Culture, and Art" is currently using it, with the publisher providing free copies to students until its official release by Harrington Park Press on February 5.

Writing the textbook from their perspective as a white non-binary transgender person, Thomas realized that including other views and voices was crucial. They reached out to the LGBT community around the globe and asked them to be a part of their undertaking, keenly aware of the need for diverse representation.

"I really tried to get people from all over," Thomas said.

Each chapter of the textbook touches on a different facet of transgender studies, each concluding with "Writings from the Community" essays contributed by one of over 20 people. Many of the contributors are former City College students, with most of the art created by former City College student Cameron Rains.



INTRODUCTION TO TRANSGENDER STUDIES

ARDEL HAEFELE-THOMAS

WITH THE PARTICIPATION
OF THATCHER COMBS



Introduction to Transgender Studies will be released by Harrington Park Press on February 5, 2019. Stop by the LGBT Studies Department at ocean Campus for more information about it's courses. Photo Courtesy of Ardel Haeefele-Thomas.

According to its Amazon description, Thomas' textbook will leave behind the binary aspect long associated with gender, aiming instead to "encompass the brilliant spectrum of intersecting identities."

Thomas hopes their textbook will help not only transgender studies classes, but also transgender students and even "those terrified of all that."

When asked how it felt to receive the first not-for-resale copy of their work — some 500 pages of blood, sweat, and tears bound by a spiral backing — all Thomas could say was, "Wow."

Between being City College's LGBT Studies chair, an instructor for several classes and a parent, Thomas worked hard to find enough time to write their second book. This wasn't their first undertaking for the LGBT community.

Thomas taught the first Queer Rhetoric course offered at Stanford University and is also the international non-binary and intersex liaison for the LGBT Global Powerlifting Congress, which began including a third gender option for contestants. In their spare time, Thomas competes in the Gay Games, where they won gold, silver, and bronze in various sports.

Sixteen years after City College established the first LGBT Studies Department of the United States in 1989, Thomas saw a job opening in the department and applied immediately. After a year of teaching LGBT Studies and English 1A, Thomas became its chair.

City College is one of five schools teaching transgender-focused classes in this semester, and boasts more LGBT Studies courses than ever before, all of which are UC and CSU transferable. Stop by the LGBT Studies Department for more information about its courses.