

**Report for**  
**“Transforming Digital Storytelling:**  
**How to Frame, Share, and Discuss Transgender Narratives”**

*Short Project Description:* This project had two broad goals: 1) to discuss how to accurately and inclusively frame and discuss transgender narratives and 2) to showcase examples of how to discuss transgender narratives via a digital platform, such as podcasting and video blogging. Specifically, this project aimed to address the inclusive representation of transgender narratives in digital spaces, while also providing our campus community with the tools to discuss such narratives in an inclusive way.

In support of those two broad goals, this project hosted a digital storyteller, Rebecca Kling (she/her), from the National Center for Transgender Equality for a multi-day visit to Kenyon College’s campus. This visit contained the following components: 1) a talk directed toward faculty, staff, and the broader Kenyon community, 2) a workshop directed towards a general audience, 3) a closed dinner and discussion meeting with student leaders from Kenyon’s transgender community, and 4) multiple class visits.

*Learning Objectives:* In pursuit of the two aforementioned goals, this project had a number of specific learning objectives for members of our campus community. Some of these learning objectives included the following:

- 1) To recognize how to inclusively frame transgender narratives in digital spaces, such as television shows, films, podcasts, social media websites, blogs, and more;
- 2) To recognize how to inclusively share transgender narratives in digital spaces, such as television shows, films, podcasts, social media websites, blogs and more;
- 3) To identify the ways in which transgender inclusion in digital spaces has shifted over time;
- 4) To consider how to integrate transgender narratives into a variety of spaces (i.e. classroom discussions, on-campus events, etc.);
- 5) To practice applying concepts of sharing transgender narratives in a variety of digital contexts, such as news reporting;
- 6) To discuss the importance of inclusive and authentic transgender narratives in digital spaces like film, television, and gaming; and
- 7) To review the impact of inclusive transgender narratives in digital spaces, particularly as these narratives pertain to the current sociopolitical climate.

*Collaborating Partners:* Funded by the Center for Innovative Pedagogy, the primary partners who submitted the grant application were Dr. Timothy R. Bussey (he/him), Assistant Director for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Dr. H. Abbie Erler (she/her), Chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program and Associate Professor of the Dept. of Political Science. Additionally, the Crozier Center for Women, Unity House, and Gender Group also sponsored various aspects of this broader project.

*A Brief Overview of the Project and Its Impact:* Systemic discrimination often restricts our ability to hear narratives from marginalized communities, and this is particularly true of the transgender community. For a number of reasons including statistically high rates of poverty, violence, and discrimination, transgender narratives often go unheard. However, they are sometimes shared through major media outlets, particularly during times of tragedy. Even so, this can result in problematic portrayals of the trans community, and such portrayals may include the misgendering and/or 'deadnaming' of transgender people. This project sought to engage our campus community around dialogues of inclusive narratives for the transgender community in digital spaces through a variety of programs and class visits, so that we can better understand the importance of inclusive transgender narratives in digital spaces.

The largest event of this project was a talk, entitled "A Lecture on Framing Trans Narratives in Digital Spaces." At this event, our guest digital storyteller spoke about the history of the trans community's evolution, alongside the internet. Attendees learned about the ways in which transgender narratives--both inclusively and not--have been shared across various aspects of the internet, including social media sites, blogs, pornographic websites, online television shows, gaming platforms, and more. This event assisted the attendees with understanding both the development of the internet and the evolution of transgender narratives within this broader evolution. Roughly 50 people were in attendance at this lecture, and they ranged from Kenyon students to faculty, staff, and off-campus community members.

To continue the dialogue about how to inclusively frame transgender narratives, this project also created space for an interactive workshop, entitled "A Workshop on Inclusively Sharing Trans Narratives." At this event, our guest digital storyteller spoke about the ways in which the National Center for Transgender Equality works to provide a platform for a number of diverse, intersectional transgender narratives in their advocacy work. Attendees also learned best practices for sharing transgender narratives, while also having the opportunity to engage with a number of practical scenarios aimed at considering what this is like in practice. Roughly 15 people were in attendance at this workshop, and they consisted of Kenyon students, faculty, and staff members.

In addition to these two open events in the project, our guest digital storyteller also visited two courses at Kenyon College, and she spoke about the work being conducted at the National Center for Transgender Equality and how her background in digital storytelling supports and amplifies that work. The two class visits were made both to Dr. Abbie Erler's (she/her) WGS 481: Senior Colloquium and Dr. Ric Sheffield's (he/him) LGLS 410: Senior Seminar in Legal Studies. In each of these class visits, our guest digital storyteller also created space for interactive discussions about the importance of sharing transgender narratives in an inclusive way, and roughly 30 students took part in these class discussions.

Finally, this project also created space for more casual interactions between our guest digital storyteller and the students of Kenyon College. One example of this was our event, "A Dinner to Discuss the Importance of Trans Narratives," where 15 of Kenyon's transgender and non-binary

students were invited to a structured dinner and discussion with our guest digital storyteller. In addition to this, individualized group lunches and meetings were facilitated throughout our guest digital storyteller's visit to campus, and these lunches included student leaders involved with some of the following on-campus organizations: Queer Masculinities Society, QDubs, Gender Group, the Crozier Center for Women, Unity House, oSTEM, Athletes for Equality, and more.

*Pedagogical Benefits:* In addition to meeting the aforementioned learning objectives, this project had a clear pedagogical benefit to our campus community. In short, this multi-event project allowed for Kenyon College's faculty, staff, and students to engage with the topic of transgender inclusion in digital spaces through a variety of avenues. While the major benefit was to encourage discussions about gender diversity in on-campus programming, curricular development, and other areas of our campus community, this project also, quite literally, enabled that space to be created in a meaningfully significant way for our faculty, staff, and students.

By encouraging students to these events, this project sought to empower them to bring inclusive discussions of transgender narratives into their coursework and campus organizations, and it also provided them with opportunities to develop these skills with an expert on the topic. By providing this opportunity to faculty, this project provided them with a number of curricular tools that they can utilize in both their current and future courses, and the intent was to create opportunities for a lasting impact, regarding transgender inclusion in both curricular development and pedagogical practice.

*Final Remarks:* Overall, the project, "Transforming Digital Storytelling: How to Frame, Share, and Discuss Transgender Narratives," was highly successful, and this project was able to reach more than 100 unique people across Kenyon College's campus community. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Women's and Gender Studies Program are both thankful for the opportunity to have hosted Rebecca Kling (she/her) at these events, and we look forward to seeing the benefits of its pedagogical impact over the course of the next academic year, particularly as we continue to program around LGBTQ+ topics.