The Center for Research and Education on Gender and Sexuality
is pleased to present:

Cael Keegan
Transgendering the Body Politic: Transgender Embodiment and the American Democratic Ideal

Presentation Description:
This talk addresses how transgender difference and its accompanying forms of exclusion are constructed by the codes of rational deliberation that determine the limits of the body politic under American democracy. American democratic theories of consent, contract, and governance envision a political system unobstructed by inappropriate affects, irrationality, or bad feelings—foundational assumptions that render queer and especially transgender bodies as either politically incomprehensible or as mere obstructions to a functional democratic proceduralism. While much criticism is currently directed at the concatenation of a medical model enforcing normative typologies of transgender identity, little attention has been given to how the preconditions for liberal democratic discourse contribute to the simultaneous constriction and marginalization of transgender lives. Reading democratic theory as well as popular representations of transgender subjects, this talk investigates how many of the pedagogical narratives attached to trans people in our culture—such as the “trapped in the wrong body” explanation—work to reinforce the delimiting procedural structures of America’s democratic body politic. In offering us “rational” explanations for transgender difference, these narratives further entrench oppressive modes of embodiment (whiteness, able-bodiedness, autonomy) embedded in our fundamental democratic ideal.

Speaker Details:
Cael M. Keegan is Visiting Assistant Professor of History and Queer Studies at the Evergreen State College. His essays on queer aesthetics and the politics of mediated sexuality and gender have appeared in Genders, NeoAmericanist, and The Journal of Lesbian Studies. Keegan is a member of the Trans Bodies, Trans Selves book project collective as well as a teaching and research consultant on queer and transgender politics and representations. His current book project is a cultural study of 20th century queer melodramatic performance and its political function in the postwar expansion of American democratic ideology.

Friday, February 22, 12-1:30pm
SFSU Downtown Campus, 835 Market Street, Suite 599B
*This is a brown-bag lunch event; we encourage all to bring food*

Questions? Want more info? Email us [cregs@sfsu.edu] or visit us online [http://cregs.sfsu.edu]