



Nora Kassner

Lecturer, Program in Writing and Rhetoric

Bio

BIO

Nora Kassner (she/they) is a career-track Lecturer in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University. Educated at the University of California, Santa Barbara with a Ph.D. in history and a concentration in feminist studies, Nora's research explores the operation of race, gender, and sexuality in 20th century U.S. child welfare policy. Her dissertation, "Hard to Place: Gay and Lesbian Foster Families and the Remaking of U.S. Family Policy," won the 2024 John D'Emilio award for the best dissertation in U.S. LGBTQ studies from the Organization of American Historians. Nora is currently in the process of adapting this dissertation into a monograph. Prior to their academic career, Nora worked as a community organizer, and a commitment to public engagement remains central to their work.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Lecturer, Program in Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara , History of Public Policy (2023)
- M.A., University of California, Santa Barbara , United States History (2017)
- B.A., Macalester College , Classical Languages and Literatures (2014)

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Nora Kassner's current book project, *Hard to Place: Homosexuality, Foster Care, and the Remaking of the American Family*, places gay and lesbian foster parents at the heart of the transformation of American family policy in the late twentieth century. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, gay and lesbian foster parents won the right to care for 'homosexual' teens, then children with HIV-AIDS, and then laid the groundwork for the legalization of gay parenthood across the United States. The book traces the rise of two interconnected myths in American life, that gay people were "good parents" lying in wait, and that, at any given point "thousands of children" were just waiting to be adopted. Rooted in oral history, archival research, and feminist theory and queer of color critique, Kassner's work interrogates the racialized, gendered, and sexual boundaries of the family.

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Writing & Rhetoric 1: Rhetorics of Childhood: PWR 1NK (Aut)

- Writing & Rhetoric 2: Speaking and Writing for a Better World: PWR 2NK (Win, Spr)

2024-25

- Writing & Rhetoric 1: Rhetorics of Childhood: PWR 1NK (Aut, Win, Spr)