

COMM 395: GENDER, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Spring 2008

Professor: Alison Trope, Ph.D.
Office hours: T 1:00-2:00 and Th 12:30-1:30, and by appointment
ASC 332E, trope@usc.edu

T/TH 11:00-12:20 pm
ASC204

Teaching Assistants: Heather Hether <hether@usc.edu>
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Course Description:

This course examines various images of gender in media focusing on the late 20th century to the present. Using theories from cultural studies, film and gender studies, and communication studies, we will explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representations of femininity and masculinity. The purposes of the course are to gain insight into the ways in which gender, and its intersections with race, ethnicity and class, is enacted, represented and has impact on cultural formations and communication at different levels and in different contexts. We will explore the socio-cultural mechanisms that shape our individual and collective notions of identity and essentially teach us what it means to be male or female. The media plays a major role in "constructing" gender and 'popular' views of what appropriate gendering is, in turn, shaping how we communicate with each other. The fact that gender differences can only result in a "battle of the sexes," or the view that men and women are basically alien to one another ('Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus'), is a cultural myth that maintains binary differences (hence inequalities), and perpetuates stereotypes that do a disservice to both men and women. In examining these cultural myths as well as ongoing debates on gender construction, we will consider how gender is tied in with notions of power, identity, voice and other defining identity categories (race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.)

Course Readings:

All course readings (except for occasional handouts) can be found in a mandatory reader with photocopied articles available at Magic Machine in University Village. The reader includes a table of contents with full bibliographical information. Do not be alarmed by the size of the reader: My lectures as well as your discussion sections will distill the main ideas and help you make concise study notes.

Course Requirements and Attendance:

Please keep in mind this is an upper division theory course, and there is a heavy reading load. You are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes and discussion sections, complete all assignments, and participate fully in discussion both in class and in your assigned section. There will be screenings nearly each class session for which you also will be responsible. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting and in each discussion meeting. . Attendance grade may be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. You are allowed three absences without explanation (this includes attendance for TA sections as well), after which there is a deduction of half a grade off the final grade for each unexcused absence

Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. You may use a computer in the classroom ONLY for taking notes. If you abuse this privilege by checking email or going on the Internet, you will be marked as absent for that class period. All other electronic devices (cell phones, MP3 players, etc.) must be turned off and put away during class time.
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You will receive details about each assignment separately (except for class journals, see below). **All assignments must be completed and handed in on time at the beginning of class to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the term to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.**

Class Journals:

You are required to keep a journal in a POCKET folder (no spirals or 3-ring binders, please). You will turn in your journal folder FIVE times with TWO entries inside the folder each time for a total of TEN journal entries this semester. Journal due dates are marked below in the class schedule depending on the first letter of your last name. If your entries are late, they will be marked down. Journals not turned in within a reasonable time frame will receive a "0". You must keep ALL past entries in the folder each time you turn in your journals.

Each time you turn in your folder, it should include TWO entries (ONE reading entry + ONE media entry)

- 1) **READING ENTRY:** comment on, analyze or offer a balanced critique of the reading for that week found in the course reader (no class handouts). In this entry, you must demonstrate that you have done the reading and thought about it. You may choose to write on one article or more than one.
- 2) **MEDIA ENTRY:** describe and analyze a media artifact(s) (film, television, magazines, newspapers, internet) outside of class screenings. Comment on the ways gender is portrayed and constructed in/by them. Comment on whatever you find interesting, engaging, hopeful, etc. about gender relations in contemporary media culture.

Grades for the journals will be based on a 10-point scale, assessing the completeness of your discussion and analysis (approximately 1-2 pages) and your comprehension and grappling of class readings/discussions/content. The following is a list of potential/suggested questions and topics you may want to write about in your journal:

- Watch a film (in a theater or on video) or a television show and consider the ways in which gender is constructed or gender relationships are portrayed. Do these portrayals seem limiting? Or do they challenge or open up new possibilities for experiencing/understanding gender?
- Go to a magazine stand and study the display of magazines. Which are for men? Which are for women? How do race, class, sexuality come across, if at all? How can you tell? Describe the display and the covers of the various magazines in as much detail as possible.
- Watch one of the stations that shows primarily music videos (VH1, The Tube, BET, etc), until you see an all-female band. How does their video compare to the all-male bands? What type of program was it aired on? What did the VJ say about it?
- Alter one of the above suggestions with other media...use the web or the radio...

Assignments and Grading:

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms
- 3) your ability to creatively explore those theories and methodologies

All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:

- 1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class
- 2) how well it articulates and structures its argument

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	10%
Class journals (10 total)	10%
Midterm (take home)	20%
Paper Prospectus	10%
Paper	30%
Final (in class)	20%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete ONE OR MORE of them will result in an F in the class.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
C and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

Academic Integrity:

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly!

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

Disability

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

ESL Students

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

Please complete the form attached to the back of this syllabus, attesting to the fact that you have read and understood all of these course policies.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (open to revision)

<u>Week 1:</u>	<u>Nature-Nurture: Questions of Biology and Social Construction</u>
<u>January 15</u>	Introduction
<u>January 17</u>	Judith Lorber, "Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology"
<u>Week 2:</u>	<u>Gendering Children: Formations of Gender Identity</u>
<u>January 22</u>	Michael Messner, "Barbie Girls and Sea Monsters: Children Constructing Gender"
<u>January 24</u>	Ellen Seiter, "Buying Happiness, Buying Success: Toy Advertising to Parents"
	Journals 1-2 due in class (A-L)
<u>Week 3:</u>	<u>Theorizing Gender, Power and Desire</u>
<u>January 29</u>	Sturken and Cartwright, "Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge"
<u>January 31</u>	Geena Davis Institute on Gender & Media Conference: Open Forum Town & Gown (all day—REQUIRED attendance and write up of one panel)
	Journals 1-2 due in class (M-Z)
<u>February 1</u>	<u>Last day to drop without receiving a "W"</u>
<u>Week 4:</u>	<u>Foucault and Theories of Resistance</u>
<u>February 5</u>	Michel Foucault, from <i>The History of Sexuality, Volume I</i> ("We Other Victorians," "The Repressive Hypothesis," "Scientia Sexualis")
<u>February 7</u>	continue Foucault
<u>Week 5:</u>	<u>Applying Foucault to Gender Studies and Media</u>
<u>February 12</u>	Susan Bordo, "Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body"
<u>February 14</u>	Victoria Pitts-Taylor, excerpt from <i>Surgery Junkies</i>
	TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED
	Journals 3-4 due in class (A-L)

Week 6: **Defining Masculinity**

February 19 Carol Cohn, "War, Wimps and Women"
Susan Faludi, "The Son, the Moon and The Stars: The Promise and Power of
Manhood"

February 21 Susan Bordo, "Can a Woman Harass a Man?"

Journals 3-4 due in class (M-Z)

Week 7: **Male Sex(uality)**

February 26 Richard Dyer, "Male Sexuality in the Media"
Richard Meyer, "Rock Hudson's Body"

February 28 Mary MacDonald, "Safe Sex Symbol? Michael Jordan and the Politics of
Representation"

MIDTERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS

Week 8: **Defining Femininity**

March 4 Susan Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"

March 6 Sandra Lee Bartky, "Femininity, Foucault and the Modernization of Patriarchal
Power'

MIDTERM EXAM DUE AT 11 AM

Week 9 **Unruliness and Containment**

March 11 Kathleen Rowe, "Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess"

March 13 Cynthia Duquette Smith, "Discipline—It's a 'Good Thing': Rhetorical Constitution and
Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia"

*******SPRING BREAK: MARCH 17-21*******

Week 10: **Production, Consumption and Empowerment**

March 25 Alison J. Clarke, "Tupperware: Suburbia, Sociality and Mass Communication"
Mary Kearney, "Producing Girls: Rethinking the Study of Female Youth Culture,"

March 27 Catherine Driscoll, "Girl Culture, Revenge and Global Capitalism: Cybergirls, Riot Grrls, Spice Girls"

TERM PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE IN CLASS 11 AM

Week 11: **Feminism and Other Dirty Words**

April 1 Susan Douglas, "I'm Not a Feminist But..."
Sarah Projansky, "The Post-feminist Context"

March 3 Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, "Feminism and Femininity: Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong"

Journals 5-6 due in class (A-L)

Week 12: **Constructing Images of Race**

April 8 Ruth Frankenberg, "Questions of Culture and Belonging"

April 10 Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Fade to White: Racial Politics and the Troubled Reign of Vanessa Williams"

Journals 5-6 due in class (M-Z)

Week 13: **(E)raced Bodies**

April 15 Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images"
Tricia Rose, "Bad Sistas: Black Women Rappers and Sexual Politics in Rap Music"

April 17 Herman Gray, "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture"

Journals 7-8 due in class (A-L)

<u>Week 14:</u>	<u>Troublesome Sexualities</u>
<u>April 22</u>	Larry Gross, "The Mediated Society"
<u>April 24</u>	Danae Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism"
	Journals 7-8 Due in class (M-Z)
<u>Week 15:</u>	<u>Course Conclusion</u>
<u>April 29</u>	TERM PAPER DUE at 11 am
<u>May 1</u>	course conclusion
	Journals 9-10 due in class (everyone)
<u>May 3-6</u>	Study Days
<u>May 13</u>	<u>FINAL EXAMINATION 11 am-1 pm</u> ASC 204 (unless otherwise indicated)

*Please note: No student in a course with a final examination is permitted to omit or anticipate a final examination, and no instructor is authorized to permit a student to do so. Students are advised to plan in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts in their final examinations. Please schedule all travel for after 1 pm on May 13.

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Please complete this section and return it by the end of the second day of class for my records. Thank you.

Please print the information in capital letters so it can be read clearly, except in the case of your e-mail address, which should be reproduced exactly as it appears:

Your name:

E-mail address:

Address:

Daytime phone:

Evening Phone:

How often do you check e-mail (Circle one):

Daily Once in two days Weekly Infrequently

What is your major?

What is your class standing? (i.e. freshman? sophomore?)

Have you ever taken a class in gender studies or a related field before? If so, what was the course?

Why are you taking this course?

Do you have a learning disability that has been reported to the Learning Center on campus?

Are you an ESL student?

Do you have an athletic, debate, or other schedule that may add to your absences? Please specify.

Is there any other information/concerns that you would like to share?

I certify that I have read and agreed to the terms specified in the attached syllabus:

Signature

Date