

COMM 465: GENDER IN MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND PRODUCTS

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

ASC 232
T 3:30-6:30

Course Description:

This course will examine the popular representation and negotiation of gender roles in a range of media industries and products, specifically film, television, radio/recording and popular journalism. It is the aim of this course to show how key media institutions construct and define gender through various media artifacts in a range of historical periods. We will therefore begin the semester with an historical perspective, examining the place of gender at the beginning of the 20th century in the early film industry's construction of a star system. Using this historical frame as a point of departure, we will consider how these early industry-driven representations of gender continue to manifest themselves in (and sometimes depart from) a variety of genres and within a range of diverse media. We will discuss the role of producers and consumers, considering how men and women are figured and re-figured by media industries to suit changing audiences. Finally, we will consider how we can push these questions of gender to new and perhaps more challenging positions within contemporary media industries and products.

Course Readings:

- Marita Sturken, *Thelma & Louise* (available at USC bookstore)
- Course reader with photocopied articles is mandatory and available at Magic Machine.
- Handouts distributed periodically in class.

Course Requirements and Attendance:

Students are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in class discussion. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting. Attendance grade may be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. You are allowed two absences without explanation, 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.

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. **All assignments must be completed and handed in on time 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 semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.**

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 demonstrated 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%
Oral presentations (2)	10%
Paper 1 (star/film reception analysis, 6-8 pages)	30%
Paper 2 (TV network or program, 6-8 pages)	30%
Final	20%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete one of them will result not only in an F for that assignment, but a failing grade in the course.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and insightful work and analysis, showing an ability to think beyond the basic course material
A-/B+	above average work, demonstrating effort and keen understanding of conceptual ideas
B/B-	average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
C+/C	shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
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 as per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-95	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	= 59-00

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 48 hours 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 WEEKLY SCHEDULE (open to revision—all guest speakers tentative/TBD)

.....

Week 1 **1/15** **Introduction to Gender Representation in Media Industries and Products**

Week 2 **1/22** **Gender in Early Cinema and the Classical Era**

Readings: Shelly Stamp, excerpts from *Movie Struck Girls*
Miriam Hansen, excerpt from *Babel and Babylon*
Tina Olsen Lent, "Romantic Love and Friendship: The Redefinition of Gender Relations in Screwball Comedy"

Week 3 **1/29** **Making Stars**

Readings: Richard Dyer, "Stars as Types" and "Stars as Specific Images"
B. Ruby Rich, "Never a Victim: Jodie Foster, A New Kind of Female Hero,"

Geena Davis Institute on Gender & Media Conference

Paper 1 Assigned

February 1 Last day to drop without receiving a "W"

Week 4 **2/5** **Male Stars and Masculine Spectacle**

Readings: Steven Cohan, "Masquerading As the American Male in the Fifties: *Picnic*, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film"
P. David Marshall, "The Cinematic Apparatus and the Construction of Celebrity" (Tom Cruise, pp. 94-118)

Week 5 **2/12** **Gendering Genres**

Readings: Carol Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film"
Peter Kramer, "Women First: 'Titanic' (1997), Action-Adventure Films and Hollywood's Female Audience"

Week 6 **2/19** **Reading *Thelma & Louise***

Readings: Marita Sturken, *Thelma and Louise* (entire book)

Paper 1 due

Readings: Judith Marlane, "Paradox and Perception"
Linda Steiner, "Newsroom Accounts of Power at Work"

Guest: tbd

Week 14 4/22 Men's Lifestyle Magazines

Readings: Kenon Brazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer"
Tim Edwards, "Consuming Masculinities: Style, Content and Men's Magazines"

Paper 2 DUE

Week 15 4/29 Selling Gender: Makeup, Shopping, Sex and Celebrities

Readings: Kathy Peiss, "Identity and the Market"
Angela R. Record, "Born to Shop: Teenage Women and the Marketplace in the Postwar United States"
Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels, "Attack of the Celebrity Moms"

Guest: tbd

May 3-6: Study Days

May 13 FINAL EXAMINATION 2-4 PM

COMM 465: GENDER IN MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND PRODUCTS

SPRING 2008

Please complete this section and return it at 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:

Do you prefer to be contacted by phone or e-mail?

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 that has dealt with gender issues?

Why are you taking this course?

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

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