WGSS 2230: Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Popular Culture
Instructor: MacRorie Dean
dean.1003@osu.edu
Dulles 030 office hours Monday 12-3
WF 2:20-3:40
Jennings Hall 0160

Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:
Students who have verification from Disability Services are responsible for contacting the instructor as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies. Contact the ODS at 614.292.3307, TDD 614.292.0901, http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/.

Course Description
This course explores how popular culture generates and articulates our understandings of gender and sexuality and their intersections with race and class. We will study a variety of theories and methods used in contemporary gender/sexual scholarship on popular culture, and we will examine a number of popular media texts.

This course is based on the premise that popular culture is never simply diversion or entertainment. Instead, pop culture provides us with the stories, images, and scripts that enable us to imagine and practice femininities, masculinities, and sexualities. These images and practices, in turn, are imbued with class and racial values and characteristics (e.g. the whiteness of brides in bridal magazines). The sex and gender norms generated by popular culture are evident in the clothes we buy, the “looks” we aspire to, and the ways we think of love and romance. We absorb these norms from the ads we see, the movies/television we watch, and the celebrity stories we see on the news. This course enables us to do critical thinking about these images, practices, and stories. The point is to enable students to do this thinking on their own.

Fulfillment of GEC requirement:
This course fulfills the GEC requirement for Arts and Literature: Visual/Performing Arts. At the completion of WGSS 2230, students should be able to
- Understand the basic concepts of major critical theories used in studies of popular culture
- Make practical applications of these theories to popular texts
- Locate, through the above, the text’s treatment of issues of gender, sexuality, and race
Students will achieve these goals by reading and discussing articles on pop culture, race, gender, and sexuality; viewing and analyzing many examples of pop culture; and writing responses in the form of online posts and a critical essay.

**Required Readings:** All course readings are available on Carmen, or using a quick Google search. Films will be available through the Secured Media Library

**Graded Elements**

**Participation:** You will be graded for your participation in class and on the class’s community page. While we all participate differently, it’s important you demonstrate your engagement with the concepts and media we approach. There will be pop quizzes throughout the semester to help boost your participation grade. **20%**

**Class Community/Weekly Assignments:** You will need to create a google account asap in order to access our class’s community online. On days when the required reading says, “Community Material,” you’ll find the required reading on our class’s community page. If you are not leading discussion, write a comment on any one of the posts. Your comments should be thoughtful, grounded in Wednesday’s readings, and about a paragraph long. (Please, no longer than 350 words) **15%**

**Leadership of Discussion:** Throughout the semester you will facilitate a class discussion in groups of four or five. The discussion should be framed around cultural artifacts your group has chosen to discuss in the context of Wednesday’s readings. It is your group’s responsibility to post relevant media to our Class’s Community Page for the week. The media can be any cultural artifact including: blogs, buzzfeed posts, music videos, music, radio, television, film, reddit threads, etc. Additionally, your group must provide historical context. The best sources may be from OSU’s online resources, news sources, and credible blogs (including Feminist Blogs!) Choose artifacts and sources you are genuinely interested in, as these will be our required readings for Friday’s class.

In class, your group should be prepared to lead discussion about Wednesday’s Readings and your posts online. You should prepare at least six questions designed to foster critical thinking. Remember, your group’s role is to facilitate discussion, but it is not a presentation. **20%**

**Short Response Paper:** You will write a 2-3pg response to a cultural artifact you’ve encountered on campus using theories/methods from class to ground your response. This paper can be submitted any time throughout the semester, but must be submitted no later than Wed, Dec 3rd. The artifact you analyze can be an on-campus art exhibition, a film screening, an online campus space, etc. Be sure to include direct quotes from the readings. This is a less formal method of responding to culture as you approach it. It’s ok for your ideas to be incomplete, or for you to express interest in further exploration of a topic. **10%**
**Midterm Paper:** For your midterm, you will write a 4-5 pg. paper using a theory/method we’ve learned to analyze a cultural artifact of your choice. Be sure to draw from at least two readings for full credit. A handout with more guidelines will be available in October. **20%**

**Final Exam:** The final exam will take a nontraditional form, TBD **15%**

**Grade Scale**

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**House Rules**

**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Plagiarism includes direct copying and paraphrasing from another author without acknowledging your source. For your own protection, please take the time to understand OSU’s policy on plagiarism:

As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.”

Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university.

Always cite your sources. Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism. Always see your instructor if you are having difficulty with an assignment.

**If you have reached a point where you feel you need to plagiarize in order to complete an assignment, please contact me so we can figure out a better alternative.**

**Attendance:** I don’t grade based on attendance, because you are adults. However, it is almost impossible to get a good participation grade without frequent attendance. Additionally, notes, due dates, syllabus changes, etc. will be mentioned in class, and may not be available online. If you need to miss class, please get caught up by another student. I will not respond to emails asking “what we did in class today.”

**Email:** I will do my best to respond promptly to emails sent between 9am and 9pm M-F. Emails sent on the weekends will not necessarily be responded to before Monday. In your email, please include a greeting (“Dear MacRorie…”), use professional language, and include a salutation (“Sincerely, Leslie...”)
Knope.” I will not respond to emails asking for information that is easily available from another source, like this syllabus.

I communicate with the class frequently through email. Be sure to read my emails all the way through and respond if requested. If you do not respond to an email from me calling for a reply, I will dock points from your participation grade. **Technology:** This classroom is an open space for technology, please refrain from texting, checking facebook, and doing other course work. Respect each other by following these rules and holding each other accountable.

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**Course Schedule**

**Why Study Pop-Culture?**

Wed, Aug 27th  
First class

Fri, Aug 29th  
Excerpt from *The Social Construction of Reality* Berger, Luckmann  
“Women, Representation, and Culture.” Judith Mayne  
“The oppositional Gaze” hooks

**Current Events: Ferguson, Missouri**

Wed, Sept. 3rd  
Video: “‘no rights which the white man must respect’” Melissa Harris Perry  
“Michael Brown Shooting: Amnesty International Deployed…” The Independent  
“When the Media Treats White Suspects and Killers Better than Black Victims” Huffington Post  
“On Ferguson, Missouri: History, Protest, and Respectability” Clarence Lang  
“School District Bans Discussion on Ferguson, Michael Brown” Valerie Strauss  
“Poem For The Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, An Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe In The War Between Races” Lorna Dee Cervantes

**Constructed Identities**

Fri, Sept 5th  
Short excerpt from *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler

Wed, Sept 10th  
Excerpt from “Advertising: The Magic System.” Raymond Williams  
“Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture,” Kellner
“Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture” Jhally

Fri, Sept 12th
- Film: *Killing Us Softly 4*
- “Ways of Seeing” John Berger

Wed, Sept 17th
Community Material
*Leaders: please include newer information about ads, body ideals, and navigating the world of advertising. Are things like the “Real Beauty” campaign helping? How do people respond to companies who don’t Photoshop? Do people understand the media they’re consuming?*

**Female Sexuality and Race**

Fri, Sept 19th
- “Trial by Media: Black Female Lasciviousness and the Question of Consent” Mukhopadhyay
- “A Woman’s Worth” Harris
- “Where My Girls At?: Negotiating Black Female Sexuality in Music Videos” Emerson
- Film: *Dreamworlds 3*
Try to watch the videos mentioned in the readings as well!

Wed, Sept 24th
Community Material
*Leaders, this is a great week for music video analysis*

Fri, Sept 26th
“White Rappers in a Black Genre” Alex Wen
- Additional blog sources about Cultural appropriation, Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus, and Iggy Azalea TBD

Wed, Oct 1st
Community Material
*Leaders, use music videos, but focus on other types of appropriation.*

Fri, Oct 3rd
TBD
Wed, Oct 8th
Community Material

Fri, Oct 10th

No Class
Midterm Paper Due Online by 5pm

Feminist Film Analysis
Wed, Oct 15th
“Six Annoying Women Character Tropes in Black Romantic Comedies” Bitch Media
“Visual Pleasure” Laura Mulvey
“The Whites of Their Eyes” Stuart Hall
Film: *Imitation of Life*

Fri, Oct 17th
Community material
Leaders, *use a film as your main cultural artifact. Contact me if you need to find a source online.*

Wed, Oct 22nd
Community Material
Leaders, *Use a film as your main artifact. Contact me if you need to find a source online.*

Masculinities, Femininities, Sexualities
Fri, Oct 24th
Film: *Tough Guise* Jackson Katz
“Black Men on Our Screens” Ed Guerrero
“Hegemony” James Lull
“Female Chauvinist Pigs” Ariel Levy

Wed, Oct 29th
Community Material
Leaders, *focus on masculinity and male sexuality in film/television or other media*

Fri, Oct 31st
TBD readings/media on sexualities
Wed, Nov 5th
Community Material

The Importance of Expression
Fri, Nov 7th
“Poetry is not a Luxury” Audre Lorde
“Tilli, Tlappali/The Path of Red and Black Ink” Gloria Anzaldua
hooks, TBD
Guerilla Girls TBD

Wed, Nov 12th
Community Material
Leaders, use theories/methods we’ve learned on different forms than we’ve used so far including visual art, poetry, prose, online art, etc.

TBD
Fri, Nov 14th
TBD

Wed, Nov 19th
Community Material

Fri, Nov 21
TBD

Wed, Nov 26
Break
Fri, Nov 28th
Break

Wed, Dec 3rd
TBD

Fri, Dec 5th
Last Day of Class!
Review, continued discussion, etc.

Final Exam
TBD, Individual exam, multiple exam times.