WGSST 2230 GENDER, SEXUALITY & RACE IN POPULAR CULTURE
Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:55-5:15 pm Dreese Lab 317
Fall Semester 2013
(August 21-December 3, 2013)

University Documented Disabilities

Students with a university-documented disability certified by the Office of Disability Services should discuss with me any special accommodations needed for the course. Please make me aware of your needs as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services, located at 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307292-3307, TDD 292-0901; [http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/).

Instructor: Dr. Debra Burrington, Senior Lecturer in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies
Office: TBA
Email: burrington.6@osu.edu or debraburrington@me.com
Office Hours: By appointment in office or more flexibly via email or phone (310) 592-0854

Course Description and Objectives

This course explores how popular culture generates and articulates our understandings of gender and sexuality and their interactions with race and class. We will study a variety of theories and methods used in contemporary feminist theory, critical theory and cultural studies to study popular culture and we will examine a number of popular media texts.

The course is based on the premise that popular culture is never simply diversion or entertainment. Instead, it provides us with 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. 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 in, for example, 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 and therefore become more thoughtful and reflective consumers of popular culture.

Fulfillment of GEC Requirement:
This course fulfills the GEC requirement for Arts and Literature: Visual/Performing Arts. At the completion of WGSS 2300 students should be able to:
• Understand the basic concepts of major critical theories used in studies of popular culture.
• Make practical application of these theories to a popular text.
• Critically analyze a popular text through close attention to structure, imagery, and generic components.
• Locate, through the above, the text’s treatment of issues of gender, sexuality, and race.

Course Texts
All required readings are available on Carmen. Links to media used during our class sessions will be accessible through the electronic version of the syllabus posted in Carmen. Films assigned for viewing outside of class will be available via the OSU Secured Media Library at: https://ocio.osu.edu/elearning/services/tools
(Note: From the URL shown above find the Table of Contents and click on the Online Repositories. The Online Medial Library is the first item listed. Click on this and then scroll down to and click on “Go to Media Services Online Library.” You will be asked to log in to the site with your OSU username and password.)

A note about media:
If the syllabus says “screening in class” we will watch it together on the date it is scheduled. If the syllabus says “media” it will either be: (1) a film you can watch on your own via the OSU Secured Media Library (as noted next to the titles of films); or (2) media you can view online by clicking on the URL provided in the syllabus, or on TV.

Assignments and Responsibilities

Participation (200 pts = 20%): This is defined as your physical and intellectual presence. The success of the course depends upon both. Please arrive at each class session on time and fully prepared to take part in our ongoing discussion. Being fully prepared means that you will have completed the assigned readings and media experiences, reflected upon them, and formulated some questions and themes to contribute to the conversation. In addition to lecture-discussion where participation opportunities will be plentiful, we will also engage in small group activities to help us address aspects of the topics. Attendance will not be taken in the class; it is your responsibility to choose to be here. However, you will be asked for your own self-assessment of your presence and overall contributions to the class around the mid-point and end of the semester. The mid-point self-assessment will enable you to target areas where you feel your participation could be improved, and the end-point self-assessment will allow you to evaluate whether you met your own targets for participation. Important note: You may be called upon randomly from the course roster at any time to comment upon or respond to a question about an assigned reading or media experience. Depending upon the level and quality of class members’ contribution to discussions, the instructor reserves the right to re-purpose a portion of this scoring dimension to pop quizzes that may be administered as an alternative mechanism for assessment.
Midterm Exam (300 pts = 30%): This will be an in-class cumulative exam of several short answer and short essay questions through Part I of the syllabus. The exam will be designed to test your understanding of basic concepts and analytical frames that can be used to examine popular culture in its relationship to gender, sexuality, race and class.

Group Project (250 pts = 25%): Analysis of a Pop Culture Artifact (i.e., film, TV show, music video, advertising campaign). Students will apply an analytical framework we’ve studied in class and participate in a 20-minute interactive presentation to the class with their assigned group members.

Final Course Essay (Individual Paper related to Group Project) (250 pts = 25%): On an individual basis students will submit a 6-7 page paper with your own analysis of and perspective on the artifact chosen by the group for its presentation. This paper can incorporate elements of what the group presentation offered but must also contain reflection and analysis that is unique to you and supported by appropriate research materials.

Course Grading

Grading

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Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain complete academic integrity. Please become familiar with the Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Department’s statement 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’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. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. You should always cite your sources (I can help you with this if you are unfamiliar with proper styles of documentation). Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism. Always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher
learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!

Writing Center
The Writing Center allows you to make appointments to get assistance from trained writing tutors. To utilize this university-sponsored service, contact the Writing Center at (614) 680-4291 or visit their website at http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter. Please also note that the Resources section of the Writing Center website contains a variety of extremely helpful materials on topics such as source citation, drafting and style, editing and grammar.

Course Topic Outline and Reading Schedule

Th 8/22 Introduction
Spheres of Popular Culture: Advertising, News, TV, Film, Music/Music Video, Public Art, Internet
Frameworks for analysis
Discussion of expectations and desires

Screening in class:
Dreamworlds 3 (excerpt): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDMo5cIJN3A

Media:
Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Videos (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library) (Please view prior to our next class session.)

Part I. READING POPULAR CULTURE

What is Popular Culture?

T 8/27
Andi Zeisler, “Pop and Circumstance: Why Pop Culture Matters,” from Feminism and Pop Culture (1-21)
http://philosophynow.org/issues/64/Pop_Culture_AnOverview
What is Popular Culture - Women’s Magazines:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU8WYxx7MCY
High Culture vs. Low Culture: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnk3gR3kB1
Cultural Politics: Resources for Critical Analysis, access at: http://culturalpolitics.net/
And at ‘culturalpolitics.net’ especially: http://culturalpolitics.net/cultural_theory and http://culturalpolitics.net/popular_culture
Reading Popular Culture Through Feminism

Th 8/29
Douglas Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture,” from Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader (7-18)
James Lull, “Hegemony,” from Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader (33-36)
bell hooks, “Oppositional Gaze,” from Black Looks: Race and Representation

Media:
Feminist Frequency: http://www.youtube.com/user/feministfrequency
Technofeminist Utopia: http://www.youtube.com/user/technofeministutopia

Screening in class:
Miss Representation (official trailer): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gkIiV6konY

Media:
Miss Representation (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

T 9/3

Media:
A Makeover Story at: http://www.tv.com/shows/a-makeover-story/
Here Comes Honey Boo Boo at: http://www.tlc.com/tv-shows/here-comes-honey-boo-boo
Toddlers and Tiaras at: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7CE10A9178856F91

Reading Popular Culture Through Queer Theory

Th 9/5
Marnie Pratt, “‘This is the Way We Live…and Love!’: Feeding on and Still Hungering for Lesbian Representation in The L Word,” from Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Critical Reader (341-348)

Media:
The ‘L’ Word: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZgL0C4L164
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1WqnGDqokk
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0Cx95ir8lE
The Real ‘L’ Word: http://www.youtube.com/show/thereallword
The Parallax Tranny: [http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL099827F65152ED8A](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL099827F65152ED8A) (Episode 1 in three parts)

**Reading Popular Culture Through Critical Race Theory**

**T 9/10**
bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance,” from *Black Looks: Race and Representation*  

Screening in class:  
*Paris is Burning* (trailer): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78TAbjx43rk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78TAbjx43rk)

Media:  
Check out ‘racilicious’ at: [www.racialicious.com](http://www.racialicious.com)  
*Paris is Burning* (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

**Reading Popular Culture Through Postcolonial Theories (and Globalism)**

**Th 9/12**  

Screening in class:  
*Slumdog Millionaire* (trailer): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlzbwV7on6Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlzbwV7on6Q)

Media:  
*Slumdog Millionaire* (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

**Reading Popular Culture Through Disability Studies**

**T 9/17**  

Screening in class:  
*The Sessions* (trailer): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy2y7UlpgP4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy2y7UlpgP4)
Media:  
The Sessions (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)  
AXIS Dance Company:  
www.axisdance.org  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7L7obgfb18  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1LFMOAzP6Q  
Candoco Dance Company:  
www.candoco.co.uk  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Utpg6A5fnWo  
http://vimeo.com/40491803

Th 9/19  
****In-Class Midterm Exam****

II. SITES OF DISRUPTION AND RESISTANCE

Advertising

T 9/24  

Screening in class: Killing Us Softly 4 (YouTube, trailer):  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTlmho_RovY

Media:  
Killing Us Softly 3 (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

Th 9/26  

Media:  
Jeanne Kilbourne speech on Killing Us Softly http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cakLF_16I4  

Film

T 10/1
Kathleen Rowe, “Introduction” and “Pig Ladies, Big Ladies, and Ladies with Big Mouths: Feminism and the Carnivalesque,” from *The Unruly Woman*

Screening in class:
*Identity Thief* (trailer, YouTube): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL0ssv6opo8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL0ssv6opo8)
*The Heat* (trailer, YouTube): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO9EggZtJ8k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO9EggZtJ8k)

Media:
*Bridesmaids or Identity Thief or The Heat* (Bridesmaids & Identity Thief are available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library; *The Heat* is still in theaters)

“The Heat and Melissa McCarthy,” *The Feminist Spectator:*

**Th 10/3**
Lisa Coulthard, “Killing Bill: Rethinking Feminism and Film Violence,” from *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, Yvonne Tasker & Diana Negra (eds)

Screening in class:
*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (fight scene! YouTube):
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OxQ-2gR1DU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OxQ-2gR1DU)
*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (trailer, YouTube):
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XZH1ZOm2Es](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XZH1ZOm2Es)

Media
Pick one: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon; or Kill Bill (part I and/or II)*: (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

**Television**

**T 10/8**

Media:
Watch episodes of *The Daily Show; Law and Order: SVU* (either current episodes via the actual TV, or online at the network or through a service such as Hulu, Netflix or Amazon Prime)
Th 10/10
Jane Gerhard, “Sex and the City: Carrie Bradshaw’s Queer Postfeminism,” Feminist Media Studies, Volume 5, Number 1, 2005, pp. 37-49
Merri Lisa Johnson, “Ladies Love Your Box: The Rhetoric of Pleasure and Danger in Feminist Television Studies,” from Third Wave Feminism and Television (ed. by Merri Lisa Johnson)

Media:
Sex and the City (find an episode or two online)
Queer Carrie Project (Pop Culture Pirate)
http://www.popculturepirate.com/video/queercarriefileproject/

Music/Music Video

T 10/15
Marlo David Azikwe, “More Than Baby Mamas: Black Mothers and Hip-Hop Feminism,” from Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Critical Reader (137-143)

Screening in class: Rize (trailer, YouTube): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4RxU0FjDqY

Media:
Rize (available for streaming via the OSU Secured Media Library)

Missy Elliott, “Mommy,” YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAk1dt13yLA
Eve, “Heaven Only Knows,” YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzXhf6hOORI
Lauryn Hill, “Everything is Everything,” YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3_dOWYHS7I

Th 10/17

Screening in class:
Telephone: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVBsypHzF3U
Media:
Watch Lady Gaga and Beyoncé on YouTube: Bad Romance, Born This Way, Poker Face, Telephone (with Beyoncé), Burqa, Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It), etc.
Also check out some fan videos of Beyoncé and Lady Gaga music videos
Also see Beyoncé 2013 Fan Project here: http://thebeyonceworld.com/

Internet/Social Media

T 10/22

Media:
Pop Culture and Social Media: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPz9Al66xH4
Stuff White People Like (http://stuffwhitepeoplelike.com)
#whitegirlproblems (http://www.babewalker.com and on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m_IFjbpBJU)

Th 10/24

Media:
Webisodes (comedy, drama, science fiction, thriller, whatever)
HollyWeb Festival: http://www.hollywebfestival.com/
Search at YouTube.com for web series to find a list of options
Use Hulu Plus or Netflix to browse web series

(T 10/29 & Th 10/31) Pop Culture Artifact Group Projects [Halloween party on 10/31: dress as one of your favorite pop culture icons and bring treats to share]

(T 11/5 & Th 11/7) Pop Culture Artifact Group Projects

(T 11/12 & Th 11/14) Pop Culture Artifact Group Projects

PART III. WE ARE THE FUTURE AND THE FUTURE IS NOW: CYBORGS, POST-HUMANS, ALIENS, FLASH MOBS AND INTERNET MEMES

Is Resistance (to Mass Commodification) Futile?


Anna Feigenbaum, “Remapping the Resonances of Riot Grrrl,” from Interrogating Postfeminism (132-152)

‘Alien’ (Flash Mob) Invasions


Screening in class:
Flash Mob Gangnam Style, OSU (2012): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox8kcjeGUlg

Media:
Tate Modern Flash Mob London (2007): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWaXXpHki7o
Paris Opera Flash Mob (2009): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-zWgSGGPC4
Moment of Starlings Munich (2009): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr4dYoapr_0
Portland Shopping Mall Flash Mob (2009): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcQBE9QRFIs
Glee Flash Mob Madrid (2010): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UnNS16TkAg
Flash Mob at the Ohio Union (2010): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDNOB6TnHSI
Real Democracy Now Flash Mob (2011): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKfOHoyhJsg
Big Bang Theory Flash Mob (2012): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzoFZN9jPms

Popular Culture, the Internet and Social Activism


Media:
Hey, Girl, Call Me Maybe: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFtXG8NYz54](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFtXG8NYz54)
Feminist Ryan Gosling Meme Project: [http://feministryangosling.tumblr.com](http://feministryangosling.tumblr.com)
Texts from Hillary: [http://textsfromhillaryclinton.tumblr.com](http://textsfromhillaryclinton.tumblr.com)

**Th 11/28**
NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

**T 12/3**
Wrap-Up

***Final Course Essay Due Via Carmen Dropbox: 5pm December 10th***