Gender, Sexuality and Race in Popular Culture
Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies 2230
Fall 2013

Instructor:
Sierra Austin

E-mail
austin.261@osu.edu

Office:
037
University Hall

Office Hours:
Wednesday 11:00-1:00pm & by appointment
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/.

Required Texts:
All readings for the course will be made available on Carmen. **You will, however, need an active Netflix account.** A membership is $7.99 per month. If you sign up as a new member, your first month of viewing is free. You will be able to terminate your membership at the conclusion of the course (you will receive an e-mail notification terminating your subscription).

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

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Project: Critical Reading Assignments (10pts ea.)
After reading and/or viewing media texts for each unit (excluding unit 1), complete a 2-3 page paper addressing the following:

• **ARGUMENT:** What is the author’s central point? Do you agree or disagree with the author’s thesis/argument? Why or why not?
• **CONCEPTS:** What key concepts/theories does the author engage with?
• **METHOD:** What tools aid the author’s development of his/her argument? Does the author utilize surveys, textual analysis, statistics?
• **CONNECTIONS:** How are aspects of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity/nation, class, (dis)ability, etc... evident or absent? How does a reading from the beginning of the course relate to something we’re discussing towards the end of the course? Remember *all of the texts build off one another.*
• **CONCLUSIONS:** What conclusions does the author make? How do these conclusions relate to broader themes discussed in the class? What is the impact of these conclusions?
• **PERSONAL REFLECTION:** How/why does a particular text resonate with you? What were some of your favorite aspects of the reading/documentary/movie? Why?

_These assignments must be submitted via the appropriate dropbox by 11:59pm every Tuesday and Thursday._ If you have questions regarding the theories/concepts covered in readings, please post them to the discussion board BEFORE e-mailing me directly as others may have the same questions. Because this is a learning community, I expect that everyone to be polite and make attempts to respond to your peers’ extra credit reflections and theory/concept questions. **You are also required to post at least ten (10) comments about readings/screenings of your choice (i.e. what you found most compelling about particular units, what you found problematic, how it relates to you personally, etc...)**

**Extra Credit:** Throughout the quarter, I will announce and post to CARMEN, various events occurring around campus/ Columbus. You may attend two of these events and submit a short write-up (2 pages) within one week of attending, connecting the event with our course material. Students are permitted to submit only two extra credit event assignments (worth ten points each). Students are also encouraged to share relevant extra credit opportunities to the class.

You may also sign a petition on Change.org regarding a social justice issue of your choice at any time throughout the semester. Submit a 1 page write up explaining why you chose that specific petition, and how the course influenced your decision to do so (worth five points). Students are permitted to submit only one Change.org petition write up.
Project: Music Video Analysis (Short) Paper (100pts)
For this written project, you must analyze a hip-hop music video. You should analyze how the music video draws upon hegemonic and/or counterhegemonic views on race, sexuality, gender, disability, class, etc. I realize this prompt is broad. Please take this assignment as an opportunity to focus on theories discussed in class that you find interesting. This five (5) page paper should allow me to see your understanding of a critical analysis of popular culture. Make sure you cite the relevant course readings within your paper. All papers are expected to be typed, double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. All papers must adhere to the standard MLA research paper format and should include in-text citations as well as a Works Cited page. Your thesis statement must be underlined. Your papers should not merely repeat class discussion or consist of plot summaries or descriptions; your papers should argue a thesis from a definite position about a pop cultural text. Papers should be submitted via the appropriate dropbox (not emailed to the instructor).

ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SAVED IN MICROSOFT WORD FORMAT. THE INSTRUCTOR WILL NOT ACCEPT PAPERS SAVED IN OTHER FORMATS.

Project: Advertising Scrapbook (20pts)
For this written project, you must collect a sampling of five (5) advertisements that utilize the following identity categories or stereotypes to sell a product: race/ethnicity/nation, gender, class, (dis)ability and/or sexuality. Respond to each advertisement with a two (2) paragraph critical analysis that utilizes the theories and ideas you have learned in the course thus far. Be creative! This digital scrapbook can be in the form of a Powerpoint or PDF. This assignment must be submitted via the appropriate dropbox.

Project: Feminist Blog (50pts)
The paper is your opportunity to apply the analytical skills and theoretical approaches we have learned. This blog will serve as an analysis of at least seven (7) popular culture texts (i.e. film, music video, television show, magazine article etc...). Please see the project guidelines and rubric for more information.

Grading Scale:

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Plagiarism/ Academic Misconduct:
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. 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. 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. 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.

Resources:
The Writing Center offers free, ungraded assistance with assignments and writing concerns. Even strong writers can benefit from this service, and I encourage you to schedule an appointment with a trained tutor. For more information about available services, call 614-688-4291 or explore the website at http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/about.cfm

Please feel free to contact me at any time over the course of the quarter if you are struggling with papers, course work, etc. I am more than happy to assist you! E-mail is the best way to contact me. Also, I encourage you take advantage of office hours. If you have concerns about the course or find yourself struggling with content or assignments, it is your responsibility to seek help from me as soon as possible.

Schedule of Classes:
The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule at any time. Additionally, please check CARMEN for Powerpoint lectures (note: not every unit is accompanied by a Powerpoint).

UNIT 1 Thursday 8/22: Why Study Pop Culture?
- Become familiar with course syllabus and CARMEN site
- Smith, “It’s Just a Movie: A Teaching Essay for Introductory Media Classes”
  No critical reading assignment due
Cultural Studies

Unit 2-Tuesday 8/27: Popular Culture and Hegemonic Ideology
- Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture”
- Lull, “Hegemony”
  
  Become familiar with vocabulary terms and begin incorporating them into your written assignments.

Unit 3- Tuesday 8/29: Theories of Spectatorship
- hooks, “Oppositional Gaze”
- Emerson, “Where My Girls At?”

Hip-Hop Studies: Feminism, Literacies and Gender Socialization

Unit 4- Tuesday 9/3: Hip Hop (Feminist) Politics and the Black Power Movement
- Pough et. al, excerpts from “Home Girls Make Some Noise: Hip Hop Feminism Anthology”
- Screening: Black Power Mixtape (Netflix)

Unit 5- Thursday 9/5: African American Female Hip-Hop Literacies & Identity Development
- Richardson, “She Was Workin Like Foreal: Critical Literacy and Discourse Practices of African American Females in the Age of Hip Hop”
- Stephens & Few, “The Effects of Images of African American Women in Hip Hop on Early Adolescents’ Attitudes Toward Physical Attractiveness and Interpersonal Relationships”

Unit 6- Tuesday 9/10: African American Women & Singleness Crisis Rhetoric
- Screening: ABC Nightline [click here]
- Austin, “A man is only a man among other men, but to his woman he is all things”: Hip Hop Video Vixens’ Impact on Singleness Crisis Rhetoric”

Unit 6- Thursday 9/12: African American Hip-Hop Masculinities
- Majors and Billson, excerpts from “Cool Pose: The Dilemma of Black Manhood in America”
- Screening: Tough Guise [Click here]
- LUPE FIASCO-TBD
Unit 7- Tuesday 9/17: The Performative Politics of Jay Z
- White, excerpts from “Jim Crow to Jay Z”

Unit 8- Thursday 9/19: The Performative Politics of Jay Z (cont’d)
- Jay Z, excerpts from “Decoded”
- Audio: Murder to Excellence (click here)

Tuesday 9/24: Music Video Analysis Paper Due

“Post-Racial” America: Intersectionality, Politics and Representation

Unit 9-Thursday 9/26: Controlling Images & Resistance
- Harris Perry, excerpts from “Sister Citizen”

Unit 10- Tuesday 10/1: The First Lady
- Williams, “The First (Black) Lady”

Unit 11- Thursday 10/3: Latina Representation: Stereotyping or Subversion
- Padilla, “Domesticating Rosario: Conflicting Representations of the Latina Maid in U.S. Media”
- Screening: Devious Maids (click here)

(Re)Conceptualizing Power

Unit 12- Tuesday 10/8: Enlightened Sexism
- Douglas, excerpts from “Fantasies of Power”
- Screening: Miss Representation (click here)

“Beauty,” Body and Representation

Unit 13- Thursday 10/10: Advertising & Consumption
- Jhally, “Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture”
- Wolfe, “The Beauty Myth”
- Screening: America the Beautiful (Netflix)

Unit 14- Tuesday 10/15: Advertising & Consumption (cont’d)
- Kilbourne, “The More You Subtract, the More You Add: Cutting Girls Down to Size”
Screening: *America the Beautiful 2* (Netflix)

**Unit 15- Thursday 10/17: Feminism & Fashion**

**Unit 16- Tuesday 10/22: Makeover Culture & Neoliberalism**
- Connolly, “Girlie-girls: Toddlers & Tiaras, Makeover TV and the Promotion of Hegemonic Femininity” (chapter 2 ONLY)
- Screening: *Toddlers & Tiaras* (Netflix; “America’s Best Pageant,” season 3 ep. 4)

**Unit 17- Thursday 10/24: The Politics of Hair**
- hooks, “Straightening Our Hair”
- Screening: *Tyra* “What is Good Hair?”
  - Part 2 (click here)
  - Part 3 (click here)

**Tuesday 10/29: Advertising Scrapbook Due**

**Unit 18- Thursday 10/31: Feminist Disability Theory**
- Garland-Thompson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory
- Screening: *Lady Gaga’s Paparazzi* (click here)
- Screening: *Push Girls* (Episode 1, season 1 Netflix)

**Unit 19- Tuesday 11/5: Matrimania & Wedding Culture**
- DePaulo, “Singlism: The Twenty-First Century Problem That Has No Name”
- Engstrom, “Unraveling The Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media”
- Screening: *Say Yes to the Dress* (Netflix: “The Art of Negotiation,” season 3, ep. 10)

**Representations of Homosexuality**

**Unit 20- Thursday 11/7: Gay Visibility**
- Clarkson, “The Limitations of the Discourse of Norms: Gay Visibility and Degrees of Transgression”
- *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (Netflix: Season 1, episode 1)

**Unit 21- Tuesday 11/12: Counterhegemonic Representations of Latino Masculinity**
- Saez, et al., “Factors Influencing Masculinity Ideology among Latino Men”
- Screening: *La Mission* (Netflix)
Unit 22- Thursday 11/14: Representations of Lesbianism in “The L Word”
Beirne, “Fashioning The L Word” (no writing assignment due)

Tuesday 11/19: Representations of Lesbianism in “The L Word”
Screening: The L Word (Netflix: Season 1, episode 1)
(writing assignment on content from 11/12 AND 11/14 due)

Final Project Preparation (no writing assignments due)

Thursday 11/21: Blog Guidelines
CARMEN handout

Tuesday 11/26- Thursday 11/28: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tuesday 12/3- Work on Blog Project

Thursday 12/5- Blog Project Due