Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Popular Culture
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 230
Winter 2012

Class meetings: M/W 3:30-5:18, Denney Hall 238

Instructor: Lauren Strand  E-mail: strand.12@osu.edu
Office: 37 University Hall  Phone: 614.292.1031
Office Hours: TBD and 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 Text:
All readings for the course will be made available on Carmen.

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 230, 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
• Critically analyze popular texts through close attention to structure, imagery, and generic components
• Locate, through the above, the text’s treatment of issues of gender, sexuality, and race
How to succeed in this course:
In order to do well on the quizzes and exams, you should prepare for class by marking significant passages and main ideas in the readings. Also, use the quiz preparations on Carmen to make sure you’ve caught important ideas. Bring the day’s reading to class. The Power-Point presentations will be available on Carmen before class. Feel free to print them out and use them as an outline for your notes. Above all, take notes.

Course Requirements:
Class Participation (15%): Come to class prepared with questions and comments on the assigned reading. You are encouraged to take an active role in classroom discussions by bringing relevant questions, concerns, and experiences to the classroom. Students who have more than two unexcused absences will have their final grade for the course lowered by a third of a grade for each additional unexcused absence (e.g. B+ → B → B-). If you would like your absence to be counted as “excused,” please provide me with documentation for your absence within one week of the date of absence.
Note: “Attendance” means being fully present for the whole class, not a portion. You are responsible for making sure that you sign the attendance sheet for every class, but if you do and I note that you have left early, you will not receive credit for that day.

In an effort to provide diverse ways for students to participate in the classroom, students are required to post one comment weekly in response to discussion questions provided on Carmen under the “Discussions” tab. This comment should be between 100-500 words and is due before 6:00pm Sunday. Students are not required to post a response to a classmate’s comment, but are encouraged to do so to supplement their participation grade. These comments and responses will be factored into your participation grade. Students who miss more than one post will have their score lowered by one-third of a grade for each additional missed post.

Midterm and Final Exams (20% each): The exams will cover Power-Points/lectures, screenings, readings, and class discussions. They will consist of multiple-choice questions of the same type used for the quizzes. There will also be matching and short answer. Questions will cover terms, theories, and examples discussed in class. Sample questions will be available on Carmen. The final exam will encompass material covered since the midterm. Make-ups will only be granted in the case of a documented emergency.

Quizzes (15%): These multiple-choice quizzes on the readings will be given at the beginning of the class on the dates noted on the syllabus. If you arrive late and students have already turned in their quizzes, you will not be able to take the quiz for that day. No make-up quizzes will be given. Instead, I will count only the highest five quizzes of the six scheduled. Quiz preparations for each quiz are posted on Carmen, as well as sample quiz questions.
Note: Quizzes may cover any material up to and including the date of the quiz.

Paper (15%): The paper is your opportunity to apply the analytical skills and theoretical approaches we have learned. Feel free to discuss with me any questions/ concerns/ ideas for these papers before it is due. Paper guidelines and examples will also be posted on Carmen. Late papers will have their final grade reduced by ten percent for each day it is late (e.g. 2 days late will result in a 20% reduction). I am happy to discuss requests for extensions before the paper is due.
1/25: This is the latest date to turn in drafts, theses, outlines, and ideas for your paper. You are required to turn in something so that I can help you with the topic and the rest of your writing process. Students who do not turn in drafts/ideas by this date will have their final paper grade lowered by 1/3 of the letter grade.
2/06: In this paper you will analyze a magazine ad of your choice, based on course material covered in the first 5 weeks of class.

*Music Video Presentation (15%)*: Each student will be part of a group, which will be responsible for presenting to the class their analysis of a music video during week 9 of the course.

*Extra Credit:* Throughout the quarter, I will announce various events occurring around campus/Columbus. You may attend one of these events and turn in a short write-up (1-2 pages) within one week of attending connecting the event with our course material. The amount of extra credit for each event may vary, but I will announce the amount of credit at the time of the event announcement.

**Grading Scale:**

- 99 – 94%  A
- 93 – 90%  A –
- 89 – 87%  B +
- 86 – 84%  B
- 83 – 80%  B –
- 79 – 77%  C +
- 76 – 74%  C
- 73 – 70%  C –
- 69 – 67%  D +
- 66 – 60%  D
- below 60%  E

**House Rules:**

- Abide by the discussion rules we will construct the first day of class
- No cell phones, either silence them or turn them off
- No e-mail or internet usage during class

**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. 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.*
**Academic Misconduct:**
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp.

**Questions or Concerns:**
Please feel free to e-mail me or speak with me individually if you have questions about the material, or if you have personal concerns that will affect your class performance. I am happy to arrange appointments to discuss issues at greater length.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**
*Note: All course readings are posted on Carmen.*

**Week 1**  
**Wed. 1/04**  
*Introduction to the Course and to Fundamental Concepts*

**Week 2**  
**Mon. 1/09**  
*Hegemony/Counter-hegemony*
*Hegemony and Ideology*
- “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture,” Kellner
- “Hegemony,” Lull
- “The Whites of their Eyes,” Hall
- “Unraveling the Knot,” Engstrom

*Screening: Clips from Bridalplasty*

**Wed. 1/11**  
*Hegemony/Counter-hegemony*
- “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” Morris/O’Mara
- “Taking the Nation ‘From Drab to Fab’,” Heller

*Screening: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*

**QUIZ 1**

**Week 3**  
**Mon. 1/16**  
*Picturing the Body*

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO CLASS**

**Wed. 1/18**  
*Picturing the Body: Femininities*
- “Image-Based Culture,” Jhally
- “The More You Subtract, the More You Add,” Kilbourne
- “Never Just Pictures,” Bordo

*Screening: Killing Us Softly 3*

**Week 4**  
**Mon. 1/23**  
*Picturing the Body, cont.*

*Picturing the Body: Masculinities*
- “Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body,” Bordo
- “The Impact of Media Exposure on Males’ Body Image,” Agliata/Tantleff-Dunn

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**Wed. 1/25**  
**Makeover Culture**  
*“Beauty, Desire, and Anxiety: The Economy of Sameness in ABC’s Extreme Makeover,”* Weber  
*Screening: Extreme Makeover*  
QUIZ 2  
PAPER TOPIC/ DRAFTS DUE

**Week 5**  
**Mon. 1/30**  
**Picturing Disability**  
* “Current Perspectives on Advertising Images of Disability,” Haller/Ralph  
* “Fame and Disability: Christopher Reeve, Super Crips, and Infamous Celebrity,” Goggin and Newell  
*Screening: Glee*

**Wed. 2/01**  
**Confronting the Stereotypes Surrounding Disability**  
* “From The Rule of Normalcy,” Davis  
* “From Sex and Death and the Crippled Body: A Meditation,” Mairs  
* “Gawking, Gaping, Staring,” Clare  
* “From Public Transit,” Hockenberry  
*Screening: Murderball*  
QUIZ 3

**Week 6**  
**Mon. 2/06**  
**MIDTERM**  
PAPER DUE

**Wed. 2/09**  
**Virtual Spaces, Virtual Bodies**  
* “Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites,” Boyd  
* “Video Games and Machine Dreams of Domination,” Sanbonmatsu  
* “Sex Lives in Second Life,” Brookey and Cannon

**Week 7**  
**Mon. 2/13**  
**Prime-Time Queer Sexualities**  
* “Popular Culture and Queer Representations,” Raymond  
* “Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces,” Battles/Hilton-Morrow  
*Screening: Will and Grace*

**Wed. 2/15**  
**Queering Sexuality**  
* “Sex and the City,” Gerhard  
*Screening: Trans Generation*  
QUIZ 4

**Week 8**  
**Mon. 2/20**  
**Women/Femininities in Music Videos**  
* “Lady Power,” Bauer  
* “Girl Pop’s Lady Gaga Makeover,” Caramanica  
*Screening: Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex, and Power in Music Videos*
**Wed. 2/22**  Men/Masculinities in Music Videos  
* “Owning Black Masculinity,” Balaji  
In-class group meeting time to work on presentations  
QUIZ 5  

**Week 9**  Music Video Presentations  
**Mon. 2/27**  Music video presentations (Groups 1, 2, 3)  

**Wed. 2/29**  Music video presentations (Groups 4, 5, 6)  

**Week 10**  Vampires and Global Implications  
**Mon. 3/05**  Vampire Phenomenon  
* “Twilight of an Idol: Our Fatal Attraction to Vampires,” McMahon  
* “Bella Swan and Sarah Palin: All the Old Myths Are Not True,” Zack  
* The Religion of Twilight,” Erzen  
* “Dirty Pretty Things,” Maerz  
  Screening: True Blood  

**Wed. 3/07**  Globalization  
* “The Future of Childhood in the Global Television Market,” Lemish  
* “La Princesa Plastica,” Goldman  
* “Pop Cosmopolitanism,” Jenkins  
QUIZ 6  

**FINAL EXAM: MONDAY MARCH 12, 3:30-5:18 PM**