Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies 230:  
Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Popular Culture  

M/W 11:30-1:18 pm  
0240 Stillman Hall  
Instructor: Amanda Rossie

Office Hours:  
By appointment  
Office location: Dulles Hall 030

Contact Information:  
rossie.4@osu.edu  
Campus mailbox: 286 University Hall

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
Students who have verification from Disability Services are responsible for contacting the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 614.292.3307; 614.292.0901) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

Course description and objectives:
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 feminist theory, critical theory, and cultural studies to study 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. 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 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 WS 230, 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.
Required Texts:
All reading assignments are available on Carmen. When applicable (and available), there will be links to media also posted to Carmen.

How to succeed in this course: In order to do well on the quizzes and exams, you should:
- **Print out the essays from Carmen** and prepare for class by using a highlighter to mark significant passages and main ideas in the readings.
- **Bring the readings with you to class every day.** You will want to make notes based on our class discussion and it is important that you have the readings on hand so that you may refer to passages and points specifically.
- The Powerpoint presentations will be available **on Carmen by 10 p.m. the night before class.** Print them out in order to have an outline for your notes.
- **Take notes during class.** These will be invaluable to you as you study for your exams and write your papers.

Class Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

**Student Participation (10%)**
This course is dialogue-intensive. It is crucial that students come to class having read all assignments and prepared to participate meaningfully in class discussions. Class discussions are meant to encourage us to think critically about both the content of this course and the world around us. Together, we will be producing knowledge rather than merely consuming it. The inclusion of multiple, and even contrasting, viewpoints will help us with this, and participation is required from everyone.

**Quizzes (15%)**
There will be 5 pop quizzes given throughout the quarter. Your lowest quiz grade, including zeros due to absence, will be dropped before averaging final grades.

**Written Projects (40% total – each assignment is 20%)**
You will be asked to complete two independent, written projects over the course of the term. The project will be due at the start of class on the day it is due. In order to receive full credit, you must engage all aspects of the paper prompt, relating your assertions to course materials.

**Detailed prompts for each written project are available on Carmen.**

- **Project 1: Methods of Analysis (Due April 16)**
For this written project, you will be asked to choose one popular culture text of your choice and complete a **2-3 page analysis** using one of the following methods: ideological criticism, semiotics, genre, oppositional or queer gaze. [See handout for more specific information]

- **Project 2: Advertising Scrapbook (Due May 21)**
For this written project, you must collect a sampling of **five** advertisements that utilize the following identity categories or stereotypes to sell a product: race/ethnicity, class, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. **Respond to each advertisement with a 1-2 paragraph** critical response that utilizes the theories and ideas you have learned in the course so far. [See handout for more specific information].
Midterm Exam (15%)  
The midterm will cover all material from the first half of the class, including assigned readings, films, lectures, handouts, and any speakers.

Final Exam (20%)  
The final exam will not be comprehensive; it will cover material presented after the midterm. Like the midterm, the final will cover screenings, readings, and class discussions, as well as definitions of terms and theories discussed in class.

House Rules:  
Your presence is important: You have two “free” absences to be used for any reason. After you have used these excused absences, regardless of reason, your participation grade will go down one-third of a grade for each day missed after the free absences were used (for example, a B would become a B-). If you have a serious medical emergency that requires you to miss class for more than two days, please contact the instructor immediately or as soon as possible to discuss a plan of action. Please note that for your attendance to be counted, you must attend the whole class, not a portion of it. You are responsible for getting your name on the attendance sheet!

Engage only in respectful discussion: We represent a multitude of different personalities, and diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and opinions. Please do not attack your fellow students for voicing their opinions. Class discussion will be limited to relevant information only; personal anecdotes related to class material and topics are encouraged but discussion will be redirected if we get off course.

No laptops or cell phones allowed in the classroom: As a former student, I know how distracting these devices can be to your undivided attention and participation (If you need your computer to take notes, please see me individually.) Also, cell phones are to be put on silent/vibrate when class begins. Absolutely no texting during class.

Please do not be late to class: If you have a class before/after this one and it is hard to make it to/from class on time, please let me know so that we can arrange an undisruptive mode of entry/exit. If you are accidentally late to class, please be as quiet and undisruptive as possible.
Plagiarism and 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 (your or professor can help with this).
- Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism.
- Always see your professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Scale</th>
<th>B+ 87 – 89%</th>
<th>C+ 77 – 79%</th>
<th>D+ 67 – 69%</th>
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<tr>
<td>A 93 – 100%</td>
<td>B 83 – 86%</td>
<td>C 73 – 76%</td>
<td>D 63 – 66%</td>
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<td>A- 90 – 92%</td>
<td>B- 80 – 82%</td>
<td>C- 70 – 72%</td>
<td>D- 60 – 62%</td>
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SPRING 2012 Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule at any time.

(M) March 26
- Course introduction—Review syllabus and create classroom guidelines
  *Media: Miss Representation

Theories of Popular Culture

(W) March 28: Why Study Popular Culture? Theoretical Foundations
- Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, Media Culture”
- Smith, “It’s Just a Movie: A Teaching Essay for Introductory Media Classes”
  *Media: This Film is Not Yet Rated

(M) April 2: Theories of Spectatorship
- Berger, excerpt from Ways of Seeing
- hooks, “Oppositional Gaze”
- Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
  *Media: Dreamworlds III

(W) April 4: Hegemony
- Lull, “Hegemony”
- Warner, “Political Culture Jamming: The Dissident Humor of The Daily Show With Jon Stewart”
  *Media: The Daily Show

(M) April 9: Enlightened Sexism
- Douglas, “Introduction” to Enlightened Sexism
- Gerhard, “Sex and the City: Carrie Bradshaw’s Queer Postfeminism”
  *Media: Sex and the City; Queer Carrie Project (Pop Culture Pirate)
  ➔ Bring in two advertisements for next class

Body Images

(W) April 11: Advertising and Consumption
- Jhally, “Image-Based Culture”
  *Media: Feminist Frequency, “Retro Sexism and Uber Ironic Advertising”
  ➔ Partner workshops on Method of Analysis drafts

(M) April 16: Funny Women
- Rowe, Chapter from The Unruly Women
- Fey Bossypants
  *Media: Bridesmaids
  ➔ METHODS OF ANALYSIS DUE!
(W) April 18: Sporting Bodies
- Cahn, “Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women’s Sport”
- Lavelle, “A Critical Discourse Analysis of Black Masculinity in NBA Game Commentary”
  *Media: Not Just a Game

(M) April 23: Makeover & Wedding Stories
- Gallagher and Pecot-Hébert, "You Need a Makeover!": The Social Construction of Female Body Image in A Makeover Story, What Not to Wear, and Extreme Makeover”
- Engstrom, “Unraveling the Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media”
  *Media: Bridalplasty

(W) April 25: MIDTERM

**Representing Diversity in Prime Time**

(M) April 30: Gay and Lesbian Visibility
- Dyer, Essay on Representations (“Introduction” and “Stereotypes”)
- Miller, “Performing Glee Gay Resistance to Gay Representations and a New Slumpy Class”
  *Media: Glee; “Prop 8: The Musical”

(W) May 2: Multiculturalism and “Eating the Other”
- hooks, “Eating the Other”
- Sanders and Barnes-Brown, “Eat, Pray, Spend”
  *Media: Eat, Pray, Love

(M) May 7: Race, Stereotypes, and Cyberspace
- Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media”
  *Media: The Office; Stuff White People Like; #whitegirlproblems (Twitter feed)

(W) May 9: Race, Class, and the Family
- Tyson, “Marxist Criticism”
- Collins, “It’s All in the Family”
  *Media: Roseanne; Modern Family

(M) May 14: Disability
- Haller and Ralph, “Current Perspectives on Advertising Images of Disability”
- Kwan, “Navigating Public Spaces: Gender, Race, and Body Privilege in Everyday Life”
  *Media: Switched at Birth
What’s Popular in Pop Culture?

(W) May 16: Celebrity Culture
• Readings TBA
*Media: TBA

(M) May 21: Fan Culture
• Jenkins, “Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten”
• Erzen, “The Forbidden Fruit Tastes the Sweetest: The Romance of Abstinence and Smut”
*Media: Twilight: Breaking Dawn
→ ADVERTISING SCRAPBOOK DUE!

(W) May 23: Vampires and Teen Sexuality
• Platt, “Cullen Family Values” (in Bitten by Twilight)
• McGeough, “Twilight and Transformations of Flesh: Reading the Body in Contemporary Youth Culture”
• Ander, “Director Bill Condon explains why Twilight: Breaking Dawn is a uniquely female horror movie”
*Media: Finish Twilight: Breaking Dawn

(M) May 28: NO CLASS—MEMORIAL DAY

(W) May 30: Teenage Pregnancy
• Harris, “The ‘Can-Do’ Girl versus the ‘At-Risk’ Girl”
• Douglas and Michaels, “The Mommy Wars: How media turned motherhood into a catfight” (Ms. magazine)
*Media: 16 and Pregnant; Bristol Palin PSA

(Tu) August 7: FINAL EXAM 10:00-11:45 am