WGS 201: Gender and Popular Culture
University of Maine    Summer 2018 (June 25-April 3 online)

Instructor: Dr. Jennie Woodard
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: The gender and pop culture seminar provides an introductory look into the detailed study of mainstream entertainment and its influence on and reaction to contemporary social issues. These issues include but are not limited to: the construction of masculine and feminine identities, women in the workplace, motherhood and the family, sexuality, socioeconomics, race, violence against women, and standards of beauty. Seeing as how social media and entertainment play such an important role in our lives, students will learn not only how the social messages of the medium’s content provides insight into the role of women in society, but also learn how supplementary cues such as reviews, blogs, publicity, and interviews contribute to social commentary. The goal of this course is to teach students to regard popular culture as an institution worthy of critical discourse and gender analysis.

Required Readings:

Posted articles and links on Blackboard
Films, television episodes, music videos and any visual content will be available on Blackboard.

Grades:

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Short Paper: This paper will consist of choosing a recent film, television episode, book, or album release and comparing/contrasting three reviews on the piece.

Blogs: On Blackboard, students will keep a weekly blog. Once the student has read and viewed the week’s texts, they should answer the prompt questions provided under “Blogs.” In addition, students must respond to at least TWO other blogs per week. The student’s personal blog and responses must be posted by 11:59 PM on Sunday evening. Your original blog post should be between 200-500 words while each response to another student’s blog should be 40-60 words.
Take Home Examinations: The take-home exams will consist of short answer identifications in which the student must both define a term and explain its significance as well as a series of essay questions.

Research Paper: The explanation of the assignment will be on Blackboard.

University Policies

Academic Honesty Statement:

Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University.

Students Accessibility Services Statement:

If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services, 121 East Annex, 581.2319, as early as possible in the term. Students who have already been approved for accommodations by SAS and have a current accommodation letter should meet with me privately as soon as possible.

Course Schedule Disclaimer (Disruption Clause):

In the event of an extended disruption of normal classroom activities, the format for this course may be modified to enable its completion within its programmed time frame. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to the syllabus that will supersede this version.

Sexual Discrimination Reporting

The University of Maine is committed to making campus a safe place for students. Because of this commitment, if you tell any of your teachers about sexual discrimination involving members of the campus, your teacher is required to report this information to the campus Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Behaviors that can be “sexual discrimination” include sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, relationship abuse (dating violence and domestic violence), sexual misconduct, and gender discrimination. Therefore, all of these behaviors must be reported.

Why do teachers have to report sexual discrimination?
The university can better support students in trouble if we know about what is happening. Reporting also helps us to identify patterns that might arise – for example, if more than one victim reports having been assaulted or harassed by the same individual.

**What will happen to a student if a teacher reports?**

An employee from the Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity will reach out to you and offer support, resources, and information. You will be invited to meet with the employee to discuss the situation and the various options available to you.

If you have requested confidentiality, the University will weigh your request that no action be taken against the institution’s obligation to provide a safe, nondiscriminatory environment for all students. If the University determines that it can maintain confidentiality, you must understand that the institution’s ability to meaningfully investigate the incident and pursue disciplinary action, if warranted, may be limited. There are times when the University may not be able to honor a request for confidentiality because doing so would pose a risk to its ability to provide a safe, nondiscriminatory environment for everyone. If the University determines that it cannot maintain confidentiality, the University will advise you, prior to starting an investigation and, to the extent possible, will share information only with those responsible for handling the institution’s response.

The University is committed to the well-being of all students and will take steps to protect all involved from retaliation or harm.

**If you want to talk in confidence** to someone about an experience of sexual discrimination, please contact these resources:

For **confidential resources on campus**: Counseling Center: 207-581-1392 or Cutler Health Center: at 207-581-4000.

For **confidential resources off campus**: Rape Response Services: 1-800-310-0000 or Partners for Peace: 1-800-863-9909.

**Other resources**: The resources listed below can offer support but may have to report the incident to others who can help:

For **support services on campus**: Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention: 207-581-1406, Office of Community Standards: 207-581-1409, University of Maine Police: 207-581-4040 or 911. Or see the OSAVP website for a complete list of services at http://www.umaine.edu/osavp/

**Blackboard Assistance**

This course relies on Blackboard for readings, links, and blogs. However, I am not trained in technical support; therefore, any technical assistance needed must be addressed to IT Technical Support.
Support for students can be found at [http://support.courses.maine.edu/student-support](http://support.courses.maine.edu/student-support) or by calling 1-800-696-HELP.

**Weekly Breakdowns:**

**Week One: INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA LITERACY**

**Readings:**
- Douglas Kellner, “Media Culture and the Triumph of Spectacle”
- Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

**Visual:**
*Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*

**Assignment:**
*Blog #1 (due July 01 at 11:59 PM)*

**Week Two: REPRESENTATION AND THEORY**

**Readings:**
- Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes”
- James Lull, “Hegemony”

**Visual:**
- *The Avengers* (1972 comic book)
- *The Ultimates* (2002 comic book)

**Assignment:**
*Blog #2 (due July 8 at 11:59 PM)*

**Week Three: ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER CULTURE**

**Reading:**
- Laurie Ouellette, “Inventing the Cosmo Girl”
- Sut Jhally, “Image-Based Culture”

**Visual:**
- *Killing Us Softly 4* (documentary)
- *Vogue* (magazine)

**Assignment:**
*Short Paper Due (due July 13 by 4 PM)*
*Blog #3 (due July 15 by 11:59 PM)*

**Week Four: GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

**Reading:**
- Carol Clover, “Her Body Himself”
- Gilad Padva, “Educating *The Simpsons*: Teaching Queer Representations”

**Visual:**
*Game of Thrones*

**Assignment:**
*Mid Term Exam (due July 20 by 4 PM)*
Blog #4 (due July 22 by 11:59 PM)

Week Five: RACE AND CLASS

Reading: hooks, “Cultural Criticism and Transformation”
Shohat and Stam, “The Burden of Representation”

Visual: Scandal

Assignment: Research Paper (due July 27 by 11:59 PM)
Blog #5 (due July 29 by 11:59 PM)

Week Six: POP CULTURE AND ACTIVIST MOVEMENTS

Reading: Anita Sarkeesian, “I'll Make a Man Out of You”
Mia Consalvo, “Confronting Toxic Gaming Culture”

Visual: Damsel in Distress Part One: Tropes v. Women in Video Games

Assignment: Final Exam (due Aug 3 by 4:00 PM)
Blog #6 (due Aug 3 by 11:59 PM)