

THIS SYLLABUS IS OPEN TO REVISION

COMM 395: GENDER, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

FALL 2012

Instructor: Alison Trope, Ph.D.
Office hours: TBA
ASC 204, trope@usc.edu

T/TH 2-3:20
ASC 321F

Teaching Assistants: TBA

Course Description:

This course examines various images of gender in media focusing on the late 20th century to the present. Using theories from cultural studies, film and gender studies, and communication studies, we will explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representations of femininity and masculinity. The purpose of the course is to gain insight into the ways in which gender, and its intersections with race, ethnicity and class, is enacted, represented and has impact on cultural formations and communication. We will explore the socio-cultural mechanisms that shape our individual and collective notions of identity and essentially teach us what it means to be male or female. The media plays a major role in "constructing" gender and 'popular' views of what appropriate gendering is, in turn, shaping how we communicate with each other. The fact that gender differences can only result in a "battle of the sexes," or the view that men and women are basically alien to one another ('Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus'), is a cultural myth that maintains binary differences (hence inequalities), and perpetuates stereotypes that do a disservice to both men and women. In examining these cultural myths as well as ongoing debates on gender construction, we will consider how gender is tied in with notions of power, identity, voice and other defining identity categories (race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.)

Course Readings:

Course readings can be found on [Blackboard](#). If you have problems downloading or accessing, please let me know asap.

Course Requirements and Attendance:

Please keep in mind this is an upper division theory course, and there is a heavy reading load. You are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in discussion. There will be screenings nearly each class session for which you also will be responsible. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting and in each discussion meeting. Attendance grade may be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. You are allowed one absence without explanation, after which there is a deduction of half a grade off the final grade for each unexcused absence

All assignments must be completed and handed in on time at the beginning of class to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment or take an exam due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the term to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.

Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today's technological culture, but they also can distract you and your peers from the class discussion and dampen participation. You may bring your laptops to class for note-taking ONLY. Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. If you abuse this privilege, you will be marked absent for that class period and laptops may be banned from the classroom and impact your final grade in the course.

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Class Journals:

You are required to keep a journal in a POCKET folder (no spirals or 3-ring binders, please). You will turn in your journal folder FIVE times with TWO entries inside the folder each time for a total of EIGHT journal entries this semester. Journal due dates are marked below in the class schedule depending on the first letter of your last name. If your entries are late, they will be marked down. Journals not turned in within a reasonable time frame will receive a "0". You must keep ALL past entries in the folder each time you turn in your journals.

Each time you turn in your folder, it should include TWO entries (ONE reading entry + ONE media entry)

- 1) **READING ENTRY:** comment on, analyze or offer a balanced critique of the reading for that week found in the course reader (no class handouts). In this entry, you must demonstrate that you have done the reading and thought about it. You may choose to write on one article or more than one. This entry should be 1-2 pages.
- 2) **MEDIA ENTRY:** describe and analyze a media artifact(s) (film, television, magazines, newspapers, internet) outside of class screenings. Comment on the ways gender is portrayed and constructed in/by them. Comment on whatever you find interesting, engaging, hopeful, etc. about gender relations in contemporary media culture. This entry should be 1-2 pages.

Grades for the journals will be based on a 10-point scale (9.5-10 being the highest grade), assessing the completeness of your discussion and analysis (approximately 1-2 pages) and your comprehension and grappling of class readings/discussions/content. The following is a list of potential/suggested questions and topics you may want to write about in your journal:

- Watch a film (in a theater or on video) or a television show and consider the ways in which gender is constructed or gender relationships are portrayed. Do these portrayals seem limiting? Or do they challenge or open up new possibilities for experiencing/understanding gender?
- Go to a magazine stand and study the display of magazines. Which are for men? Which are for women? How do race, class, sexuality come across, if at all? How can you tell? Describe the display and the covers of the various magazines in as much detail as possible.
- Watch one of the stations that shows primarily music videos (VH1, The Tube, BET, etc), until you see an all-female band. How does their video compare to the all-male bands? What type of program was it aired on? What did the VJ say about it?
- Alter one of the above suggestions with other media...use the web or the radio...

Assignments and Grading:

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms
- 3) your ability to creatively explore those theories and methodologies

All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:

- 1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class
- 2) how well it articulates and structures its argument

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The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	10%
Class journals	15%
Midterm (take home)	20%
Paper Prospectus	10%
Paper	25%
Final (in class)	20%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete ONE OR MORE of them will result in an F in the class.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
C and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100		
A	= 96-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

Classroom Conduct and Respect

All students are encouraged to use the classroom as a safe space in which to speak and voice their opinions. My expectation is that you respect not only the professor, but also your classmates when they participate in discussion.

Academic Integrity:

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly!

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of

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Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

Disability

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

ESL Students

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (open to revision)

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Week 1: **Nature-Nurture: Questions of Biology and Social Construction**

August 28 Course Introduction

August 30 Lise Eliot, "The Truth About Boys and Girls"
Judith Lorber, "Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology"

No discussion section this week

Week 2 **Children**

September 4 Michael Messner, "Barbie Girls and Sea Monsters: Children Constructing Gender"

September 6 Ellen Seiter, "Buying Happiness, Buying Success: Toy Advertising to Parents"

Journals 1-2 due in class (A-L)

Week 3: **Theorizing Identity, Power and Desire**

September 11 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge"

September 13 Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
L.S. Kim, "Representations of Race"

Journals 1-2 due in class (M-Z)

Week 4: **Foucault and Theories of Resistance**

September 18 Michel Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*
("We Other Victorians," "The Repressive Hypothesis," "Scientia Sexualis")

September 20 continue Foucault

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Week 5 Applying Foucault to Gender Studies and Media

September 25 Susan Bordo, "Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body"
Victoria Pitts Taylor, excerpt from *Surgery Junkies*

September 27 Screening--*Fit: Episodes in History of the Body*

Journals 3-4 due in class (A-L)

Week 6: Masculinity Rules

October 2 Carol Cohn, "War, Wimps and Women"
Susan Faludi, "The Son, the Moon and The Stars: The Promise and Power of
Manhood"

October 4 Susan Bordo, "Can a Woman Harass a Man?"
Michael Kimmel, excerpts from *Guyland*

Journals 3-4 due in class (M-Z)

Week 7: Male Sexuality

October 9 Richard Dyer, "Male Sexuality in the Media"
Katherine Sender, "*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and the Neoliberal Project"

MIDTERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS

October 11 Mary MacDonald, "Safe Sex Symbol? Michael Jordan and the Politics of
Representation"

Week 8: Disciplining the Body and the Home

October 16 Sandra Lee Bartky, "Femininity, Foucault and the Modernization of Patriarchal
Power"

MIDTERM DUE IN CLASS AT 2PM

October 18 Cynthia Duquette Smith, "Discipline—It's a 'Good Thing': Rhetorical Constitution and
Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia"

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Week 9 **Unruliness and Resisting Norms**

October 23 Kathleen Rowe, "Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess"
Roseanne Barr, "And I Should Know" (NY Magazine May 2011)

October 25 Susan Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"

Journals 5-6 Due in class (A-L)

Week 10: **Feminism, Post-Feminism, and Sexual Empowerment**

October 30 Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility"

November 1 Susan Douglas, excerpts from *Enlightened Sexism*
Lynn Comella, "Changing the World One Orgasm at a Time: Sex Positive Retail
Activism"

Journals 5-6 Due in class (M-Z)

Week 11 **Production and Consumption**

November 6 Alison J. Clarke, "Tupperware: Suburbia, Sociality and Mass
Communication"
Mary Kearney, "Producing Girls: Rethinking the Study of Female Youth
Culture"

November 8 Catherine Driscoll, "Girl Culture, Revenge and Global Capitalism: Cybergirls, Riot
Grrls, Spice Girls"
Eliza Sellen, "Missy 'Misdemeanor' Elliot: Rapping on the Frontiers of
Female Identity"

Journals 7-8 Due in class (A-L)

Week 12: **Sexualities and Discourses of Visibility**

November 13 Larry Gross, "The Mediated Society"

November 15 Danae Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism"
Brett Farmer, "The Fabulous Sublimity of Gay Diva Worship"

Journals 7-8 Due in class (M-Z)

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Week 13: Intersectionality

November 20 Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, “Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew”
Herman Gray, “Black Masculinity and Visual Culture”

PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE

November 22 Happy Thanksgiving!

No discussion section this week

Week 14: Exoticism and the Beauty of Difference

November 27 Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Fade to White: Racial Politics and the Troubled Reign of Vanessa Williams”

November 29 Isabel Molina Guzman and Anghard N. Valdiva, “Brain, Brow and Booty: Latina Iconicity in US Popular Culture”
Meenakshi Gigi Durham, “Ethnic Chic and the Displacement of South Asian Female Sexuality in the U.S. Media”

Week 15 Post-Race and other Post-Civil Rights Discourses

December 4 Joan Faber McCalister, “Trash in the White House: Michelle Obama, Post-Racism, and the Pre-Class Politics of Domestic Style”
[“Carly Jae Jepsen: Post-Gay Pop Princess”](#)
[“Anderson Cooper: The Fact Is I’m Gay”](#)

December 6 Course wrap-up and review

PAPER DUE AT 2PM

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December 8-11 **Study Days**

December 13 **FINAL EXAM, 2pm**
ASC 204 (unless otherwise indicated)

*Please note: No student in a course with a final examination is permitted to omit or anticipate a final examination, and no instructor is authorized to permit a student to do so. Students are advised to plan in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts in their final examinations. Please schedule all travel for after December 13 at 4pm.