Communication 395: Gender, Media and Communication

Spring 2012
T/Th 11:00-12:20

Professor Sarah Banet-Weiser
Office hours: Tuesday 1-3
and by appointment.
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Teaching Assistants:
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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 an 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, shape how we communicate with each other. In examining cultural myths about gender 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 Requirements:
Please keep in mind this is an upper division theory course, and there is a significant reading load. Students are required to attend class regularly, attend all discussion sections, to contribute to class discussions, and to do weekly reading. Attendance in lecture is important: there is significant material covered in lecture that is not in the reading and you cannot pass the course if you do not attend most of the lectures. In addition, there will be frequent screenings in lecture for which you will be responsible. There are several writing assignments for this class, and because the lectures, discussions, reading assignments and course assignments are all vitally linked, it is critical that you keep up with the schedule. Students who miss more than four lectures or two discussion sections will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course.
You will receive details about each assignment separately (except for class blog posts, see below). 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 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.

Class blog posts:
You are required to post 7 blog posts/journal entries on the course blackboard site. The blog post due dates are marked in the syllabus. If your entries are late, they will be marked down. Entries not posted within a reasonable time frame will receive a “0”.

Each time you post, it should include TWO components (reading + media)

1) READING: comment on, analyze or offer a balanced critique of the reading for that week found in the course reader. Here, 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.

2) MEDIA: 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.

Grades for the post 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 posts:

- 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

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:
Class participation 10%
Class posts (7 total) 15%
Midterm (take home) 25%
Paper 25%
Final (in class) 25%

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:

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\begin{align*}
A &= 100-94 \\
A- &= 93-90 \\
C &= 76-74 \\
C- &= 73-70
\end{align*}
\]
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.

**Required Texts:**

*The Gender and Media Reader*, edited by Mary Celeste Kearney, Routledge, 2011. Available at the USC bookstore (marked in syllabus as GMR)

Additional readings posted on Blackboard (marked in syllabus with *)

**Annenberg School for Communication Academic Integrity Policy:**

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major.

In addition to the formal academic integrity policy, our pedagogical policy is based on mutual respect; all students are encouraged to use the classroom as a space in which to speak and to voice their opinions. Our expectation is that you will respect not only the professors but also your fellow classmates when they are participating in discussion.

Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. You may use a computer in the classroom ONLY for taking notes. If you abuse this privilege by checking email or going on the Internet, you will be marked as absent for that class period. All other electronic devices (cell phones, MP3 players, etc.) must be turned off and put away during class time.

**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.
Schedule of Classes, Topics & Readings:

**Week One: Defining Gender**

Tuesday 1/10: Introduction to the Course

Thursday 1/12:
- Judith Lorber, “Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology” *

**Week Two: Why Study Gender and Media?**

Tuesday 1/17:
- Mary Celeste Kearney, “Introduction” in GMR

Thursday 1/19:
- Gaye Tuchman, “The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media” (GMR)
- Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (GMR)

**BLOG POST 1 DUE**

**Week Three: Gender, Desire, and Power**

Tuesday 1/24:
- Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (GMR)

Thursday 1/26:
- Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, “Spectatorship, Power and Desire” *
- Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” (GMR)

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

Tuesday 1/31:
- Michel Foucault, from The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 (“We Other Victorians, “The Repressive Hypothesis, “Scientia Sexualis”) *
Thursday 2/2:

- Foucault, “Two Lectures” from Power/Knowledge *

**BLOG POST 2 DUE**

**Week Five: Applying Foucault to Gender**

Tuesday 2/7:

- Susan Bordo, “Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body” *
- Sandra Lee Bartky, “Femininity, Foucault and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” *

Thursday 2/9:

- Brenda Cooper, “Boys Don’t Cry and Female Masculinity: Reclaiming a Life and Dismantling the Politics of Normative Heterosexuality” (GMR)

**Week Six: Masculinity and the Media**

Tuesday 2/14:

- Michael Messner, Michele Dunbar, and Darnell Hunt, “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula” (GMR)

Thursday 2/16:

- Robert Walser, “Forging Masculinity: Heavy-Metal Sounds and Images of Gender” (GMR)
- Karen Lee Ashcraft and Lisa A. Flores, “Slaves with White Collars: Persistent Performances of Masculinity in Crisis” (GMR)

**BLOG POST 3 DUE**

**Week Seven: Intersectionality**

Tuesday, 2/21:

- L.S. Kim, “Representations of Race” *
Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew” (GMR)

Thursday, 2/23:

- Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia, “Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture” (GMR)
- Eliza Sellen, “Missy ‘Misdemeanor’ Elliot: Rapping on the Frontiers of Female Identity” (GMR)

**MIDTERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS**

**Week Eight: Gender, Violence and Masculinity**

Tuesday 2/28:

- Yvonne Tasker, “Fists of Fury: Discourses of Race and Masculinity in the Martial Arts Cinema” (GMR)
- Susan Douglas, “Letting the Boys Be Boys: Talk Radio, Male Hysteria, and Political Discourse in the 1980s” (GMR)

Thursday, 3/1:

- Henry Jenkins, “‘Never Trust a Snake’: WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama” (GMR)

**MIDTERM EXAM DUE AT 11:00 (BEGINNING OF CLASS)**

**Week Nine: Producing Gendered Media**

Tuesday 3/6:

- Denise D. Bielby and William T. Bielby, “Women and Men in Film: Gender Inequality among Writers in a Culture Industry” (GMR)
- Stacy Smith, “Representations of women in Hollywood”*

Thursday 3/8:

- Elana Levine, “Fractured Fairy Tales and Fragmented Markets: Disney’s Weddings of a Lifetime and the Cultural Politics of Media Conglomeration”
Kristen Shilt, “‘I’ll Resist With Every Inch and Every Breath:’ Girls and Zine Making as a Form of Resistance” (GMR)

**BLOG POST 4 DUE**

**SPRING BREAK: MARCH 12-16**

**Week Ten: Gendered Consumption, Fans and Empowerment**

Tuesday 3/20:

- Annette Kuhn, “Women’s Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera, and Theory” (GMR)
- Bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” (GMR)

Thursday 3/22: **NO CLASS**

**Week Eleven: Gendered Consumption and Post-Feminist Culture**

Tuesday 3/27:

- Jackie Stacey, “Feminine Fascinations: Forms of Identification in Star-Audience Relations” (GMR)
- Brett Farmer, “The Fabulous Sublimity of Gay Diva Worship” (GMR)

Thursday 3/29:

- Rosalind Gill, “Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility” (GMR)
- Sarah Banet-Weiser and Laura Portwood-Stacer, “‘I Just Want to Be Me Again!’ Beauty Pageants, Reality Television and Post-Feminism” (GMR)

**BLOG POST 5 DUE**

**Week Twelve: Post-Feminism and Constructing Queer Images**

Tuesday 4/3:

- Steven Cohan, “Queer Eye for the Straight Guise: Camp, Postfeminism, and the Fab Five’s Makeovers of Masculinity” (GMR)
Thursday 4/5

- Alexander Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here” (GMR)
- Michael R. Schiavi, “A ‘Girlboy’s’ Own Story: Non-Masculine Narrativity in Ma Vie en Rose” (GMR)

Week Thirteen: Bodies of Difference

Tuesday 4/10:

- Ralina Joseph, “Not by This Outside: Selling Post-Race on America’s Next Top Model” *

Thursday 4/12:

- Meenakshi Gigi Durham, “Ethnic Chic and the Displacement of South Asian Female Sexuality in the U.S. Media” *

BLOG POST 6 DUE

Week Fourteen: Gender Online

Tuesday 4/17:

- Neils van Doorn, Sally Wyatt, and Liesbet van Zoonen, “A Body of Text: Revisiting Textual Performances of Gender and Sexuality on the Internet” (GMR)
- Sharon Cumberland, “Private Uses of Cyberspace: Women, Desire, and Fan Culture” (GMR)

Thursday 4/19:

- Pam Royse, Joon Lee, Undrahbuyan Baasanjav, Mark Hopson, and Mia Consalvo, “Women and Games: Technologies of the Gendered Self” (GMR)
- Esther MacCallum-Stewart, “Real Boys Carry Girly Epics: Normalising Gender Bending in Online Games” (GMR)

Week Fifteen: Branding the Gendered Self
Tuesday 4/24:

- Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Branding the Post-Feminist Self: Girls’ Video Production and YouTube” *

Thursday 4/26: Final Exam Review

BLOG POST 7 DUE