

COMM 395: Gender, Media and Communication

Fall 2017/ TTH 12:30-1:50PM/ASC 328

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Office Hours: M/W 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course questions cultural myths about gender that is based on two-sex/two-gender categories. Using gender as a category of analysis, we will examine how normative ideas about masculinity and femininity influence the way individuals behave and communicate and how the media play a major role in “constructing” gender and shape (as well as reflect) cultural understandings of being a “female” and “male.” As an interdisciplinary course, we will use theories from cultural studies, gender studies, film and communication studies and explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representations of femininity and masculinity. Rather than thinking of gender as an isolated concept, this course incorporates an intersectional approach to the study of gender in relationship to other aspects of identity – including race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and sexuality. By examining various ongoing debates on gender construction and how they characterize the depictions of masculinity and femininity in media, we will consider how gender is tied in notions of power, identity, voice and other defining identity categories (race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.), explore possibilities of challenging the conventional way we ‘think about’ and ‘do’ gender, and envision a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse society that these transformations can bring.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify how media construct, represent, and discuss gender, particularly in relation to race, class, and sexuality
2. Examine the cultural, political, and institutional contexts of the production and consumption of these media representations of gender
3. Develop critical and innovative thinking skills about how media can be used for gender equality, social inclusion, and new social relations that challenge conventional notions of what it means to be female or male

Class Readings

This class has no required textbooks. All readings are posted on Blackboard. You are expected to complete readings by the start of lecture and be prepared to actively participate in class discussions.

Course Requirements

Attendance: Required

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class. Considering that a significant amount of material covered in lecture is not in the reading it is important that you attend class regularly. You will be given **two** free pass in case you need a personal day. Documents for medical/family emergencies and travels for scheduled athletic competition and observances of religious holidays will be excused as long as you explain your circumstances prior to class. All other absences will negatively impact your participation grade. **Missing more than seven classes without discussing the situation with the instructor will result in a failing grade for the course.**

Participation (10%)

I expect you to come to class on time and be prepared to ask questions, discuss the assigned readings, and make insightful and substantive contributions in every class. You are **required** to come to class with at least 3 questions from the reading(s) for class discussions, informal in-class writing assignments, and group activities. The quality of your group activities, questions from the course materials, and discussion leading will all factor into your grade. In other words, your mere presence in class **does not** constitute participation in class. Poor attendance will adversely affect your participation grade. Be aware that if you miss more than two classes, you **will not** receive the full participation grade.

10 Discussion Question Assignments (10%)

You will prepare thought-provoking discussion questions based on the class reading(s) for 10 classes over the course of the semester. Be aware that your discussion questions can be used in class. Therefore, your discussion questions need to be substantive by raising interesting points, engaging with basic ideas in the text, or clarifying confusions in arguments. You will submit the questions in the beginning of class.

2 Gender in Media Analysis Paper (15% each – 30%)

You will be required to write two 5 page papers that critically analyze the ways in which gender is constructed or gender relationships are represented in a media space of your choice (film, television, magazines, newspapers, social media, etc.). However, you will have to pick a text that was not screened or discussed in class for this assignment. Further details about this assignment will be provided in a supplemental handout.

Mid-term Exam (25%)

Final Research Paper (Proposal: 5%/Final Paper: 20%/ Total: 25%)

Instead of a final exam, you will and write a 10 page final research paper incorporating topics and theories you learned in class. This paper will be due at the end of the semester. In the first half of the semester, you will submit a 1-2 page proposal that clearly explains your research topic, research questions, and methods you will use to answer those research questions. Your research topic must be approved by the instructor in advance. Further instructions on these assignments will be provided in a supplemental handout.

* Late Policy: No extensions will be given unless you have truly extenuating circumstances. Assignment extensions will **only** be granted for documented medical emergencies and ongoing serious illnesses, family emergencies, natural disasters, and religious holidays. If your circumstance fits any of these and you need to request a deadline extension, you need to let me know ASAP and **at least 24 hours before the assignment is due** so we can make arrangements. Technology excuses are not acceptable. **Assignments turned in late**

without an approved extension will be marked down a letter grade for every day late. After five days late, the assignment will earn a 0! Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss assignments.

Course Grading Policy

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. **All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time 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 no wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.**

In order to pass this class you will need to complete ALL of the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.

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 won the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-94	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.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to

report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

Annenberg School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy

Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. You cannot turn in someone else's work and you cannot turn in material you have used in other classes, whether at USC or elsewhere. You should also properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor.

The Annenberg School of Communication maintains a commitment to 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 for this course, will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

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 120 Grace Ford Salvatori Hall and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Sexual Assault Resource Center

The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711

between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

ESL Students

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

Other Classroom Policies

Email

Feel free to email me if you have any questions but give me 24 hours to reply. Include the course number in the subject line and sign your full name. I will only answer emails about assignments up to **24 HOURS** before the deadline.

Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment)

The University as well as this class will not tolerate discriminatory conduct. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Such behavior will not be allowed in this classroom.

Seating and Discussion

Since this is a discussion-oriented class, I encourage you frequently participate and add value to class discussions. Feel free to raise your hand during lecture and ask questions, make comments, or ask for clarification of points you may not have understood. When you do ask a question or make a comment, please speak up – even if the professor can hear you, your classmates need to be able to as well.

Noise-Making Devices and Computer Use in Class

All noise-making electronic devices (cellphones, mp3 players, etc.) are disruptive. Please remember to set your cellphones into mute or vibrate at the beginning of class. Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. You may use a computer in the classroom only for note taking and not recreation. Any other uses will result in a reduced participation grade.

Schedule of Classes, Topics & Readings

Week One: Introduction

Tuesday, 22 August: Course Overview

Thursday, 24 August:

- Judith Lorber (1993). "Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology" in *Gender & Society* 7(4), pp. 568-581.
- Rebecca Jordan-Young & Katrina Karkazis (2012). "[You Say You're a Woman? That Should be Enough](#)" in *The New York Times*.

Week Two: Sex/Gender Roles as Social Constructs

Tuesday, 29 August:

- Candace West & Don Zimmerman (1987). "Doing Gender" in *Gender & Society* 1(2), pp. 125-151.

Thursday, 31 August:

- Lise Eliot (2010). "The Truth About Boys and Girls" in *Scientific American* (1 May). Accessed at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-truth-about-boys-and-girls/>
- Michael A. Messner (2000). "Barbie Girls and Sea Monsters" in *Gender & Society* 14(6), pp. 765-784.

Week Three: Performing Gender

Tuesday, 5 September:

- Judith Butler (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Gender Theory" *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519-531.
- Maya Singer (2017). "[Gigi Hadid and Zayn Malik are Part of a New Generation Who Don't See Fashion as Gendered](#)" in *Vogue*

Thursday, 7 September:

- Eir-Anne Edgar (2011). "Xtravaganza!: Drag Representation and Articulation in *Rupaul's Drag Race*" in *Studies in Popular Culture*, pp. 133-146.

Week Four: Foucault and Discourse of the Body

Tuesday, 12 September:

- Michel Foucault (1978). Part I. "We "Other Victorians"" and Part II. "The Repressive Hypothesis" in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (pp. 3-49).

Thursday, 14 September:

- Sandra Lee Bartky (1997). "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (pp. 129-154).
- Susan Bordo (2003). "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity" in *Unbearable Weight* (pp. 165-184).

Week Five: Beyond Gender: Understanding Intersectionality

Tuesday, 19 September:

- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1997). "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew" in *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader* (pp. 246-263).

- Bim Adewunmi (2014). “[Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality](#)” in *New Statesman*.

Thursday, 21 September:

- Susana Loza (2014). “[Hashtag Feminism, #SolidarityIsForwhiteWomen, and the Other #FemFuture](#)” in *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media & Technology*.

Week Six: Ambivalent Representations

Tuesday, 26 September:

- Joshua K. Wright (2014). “Scandalous: Olivia Pope and Black Women in Primetime History” in *Black Women and Popular Culture: The Conversation Continues* (pp. 15-32).
- Jane Mulkerrins (2017). “[So Much of the Media Presents Blackness as Fierce and Flawless. I’m Not](#)” in *The Guardian*

Thursday, 28 September:

- Mary Beltran (2002). “The Hollywood Latina Body as Site of Social Struggle: Media Constructions of Stardom and Jennifer Lopez’s “Cross-over Butt”” in *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 19(7): 71-86.
- Jane Chi Hyun Park (2014). “The Failure of Asian American Representation in *All-American Girl* and *The Cho Shon*” in *Gender, Place & Culture*, pp. 637-649.

Paper #1 Due

Week Seven: Theorizing Power, Desire, and the Gaze

Tuesday, 3 October:

- Laura Mulvey (1999). “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Film Theory and Criticism* (pp. 833-844).

Thursday, 5 October:

- Paula Marantz Cohen (2010). “What Have Clothes Got to Do With It?: Romantic Comedy and the Female Gaze” in *Southwest Review* 95 (1/2), pp. 78-88.
- MsCinephile (2014). “[The Male Gaze vs. The Female Gaze](#)” in *CinemaVerite*

Week Eight: Strong Women and Action Heroes

Tuesday, 10 October:

- Eliana Dockterman (2017). “[The Evolution of the Female Action Hero](#)” in *Time*
- Yvonne Tasker (2002). “Women Warriors: Gender, Sexuality and Hollywood’s Fighting Heroines” in *Spectacular Bodies* (pp. 14-34).
- Sophia McDougall (2013). “I Hate Strong Female Characters” in *New Statesman* (August 15). Accessed at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2013/08/i-hate-strong-female-characters>

Thursday, 12 October:

Mid-term Exam!

Week Nine: Funny Women and Feminist Humor

Tuesday, 17 October:

- Alessandra Stanley (2008). "[Who Says Women Aren't Funny?](#)" in *Vanity Fair*.
- Linda Mizejewski (2014). "Pretty/Funny Women and Comedy's Body Politics: Funniness, Prettiness, and Feminism" in *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics* (pp. 1-26).

Thursday, 19 October:

- Kathleen Rowe (1995). "Roseanne: The Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess" in *The Unruly women: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* (pp. 50-92).
- Emily Nussbaum (2015). "[The Little Tramp: The Raucous Feminist Humor of 'Inside Amy Schumer'](#)" in *New Yorker*.

Week Ten: Enlightened Sexism and Post-feminist Media

Tuesday, 24 October:

- Susan Douglas (2010). "Introduction: Fantasies of Power" (pp. 1-22) & "Sex 'R' Us" (pp. 154-187) in *Enlightened Sexism*.
- Hadley Freeman (2016). "[From Shopping to Naked Selfies: How 'Empowerment' Lost Its Meaning](#)" in *The Guardian*

Thursday, 26 October:

- Rosalind Gill (2007). "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of Sensibility" in *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10(2): 147-166.
- Alice Leppert (2015). "Keeping Up With the Kardashians: Fame-Work and the Production of Entrepreneurial Sisterhood" in *Cupcakes, Pinterest and Ladyporn* (pp. 215-231).

Proposal Duel

Week Eleven: Male Sexuality & Masculinities

Tuesday, 31 October:

- Michael Kimmel (1994). "Masculinity as Homophobia" in *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 119-141).
- Melissa Zimdars (2016). "Having it Both Ways: *Two and a Half Men*, *Entourage*, and Televising Post-feminist Masculinity" in *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1-16.

Thursday, 2 November:

- Mark Anthony Neal (2005). "There's a New Black Man in America Today" in *New Black Man* (pp. 1-30).
- Sheena C. Howard (2013). "Gender, Race, and *The Boondocks*" in *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation*, pp. 137-150.

Week Twelve: LGBTQ in Media

Tuesday, 7 November:

- Guillermo Avila-Saavedra (2009). "Nothing Queer about Queer Television" in *Media, Culture & Society* 31(1): 5-21.
- Alfred L. Martin Jr. (2011). "TV in Black and Gay: Examining Constructions of Gay Blackness and Gay Crossracial Dating on *Greek*" in *Spectator* 31(2), pp. 63-69.

Thursday, 9 November:

- Laurie Penny (2014). “What the “Transgender Tipping Point” Really Means” in *New Republic* (27 June). Accessed at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/118451/what-transgender-tipping-point-really-means>
- Jamie C. Capuzza and Leland G. Spencer (2016). “Regressing, Progressing, or Transgressing on the Small Screen?: Transgender Characters on US Scripted Television Series” in *Communication Quarterly*, pp. 1-17.

Week Thirteen: Gender and (Sub)Cultures I – Videogames and Comics

Tuesday, 14 November:

- Bonnie Nardi (2010). “Gender” in *My Life as a Night Elf Priest?* (pp. 152-175).
- Latoya Peterson (2010). “[Shocker: Warcraft Not Just for Dudes](#)” in *Jezebel*.
- Colin Campbell (2017). “[Overwatch’s Search for Diversity](#)” in *Polygon*.

Thursday, 16 November:

- Walt Hickey (2014). “Comic Books Are Still Made By Men, For Men and About Men” in *Fivethirtyeight* (13 October). Accessed at: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/women-in-comic-books/>
- Stephanie Orme (2016). “Femininity and Fandom: The Dual-Stigmatisation of Female Comic Book Fans” in *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 7(4): 403-416.

Paper #2 Due!

Week Fourteen: Gender and (Sub)Cultures II – K-Pop

Tuesday, 21 November:

- Colette Bennett (2016). “[How Male K-pop Idols Are Redefining Masculinity](#)” in *Daily Dot*.
- Eun-Young Jung (2013). “K-pop Female Idols in the West: Racial Imaginations and Erotic Fantasies” in *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global* (pp. 106-119).

Thursday, 23 November:

No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week Fifteen: Online Misogyny and Feminist Activism

Tuesday, 28 November:

- Sarah Banet-Weiser (2015). “Popular Misogyny: A Zeitgeist” in *Culture Digitally* (21 January). Accessed at: <http://culturedigitally.org/2015/01/popular-misogyny-a-zeitgeist/>
- Whitney Phillips (2015). “Let’s Call ‘Trolling’ What It Really Is” in *The Kernel*. Accessed at: <http://kernelmag.dailydot.com/issue-sections/staff-editorials/12898/trolling-stem-tech-sexism/>
- Joel Stein (2016). “[How Trolls are Ruining the Internet](#)” in *Time*.

Thursday, 30 November:

- Jessalynn Keller (2012). “Virtual Feminisms: Girls’ Blogging Communities, Feminist Activism, and Participatory Politics” in *Information, Communication, and Society* 15(3): 429-447.
- Tracy McVeigh (2013). “[Meet the New Wave of Activists Making Feminism Thrive in a Digital Age](#)” in *The Guardian*.

Week Sixteen – Finals Week

Friday, 8 December: **Final Paper Due (by 5PM)!**