

COMM 465: Gender in Media Industries and Products

Spring 2018 / MW 2:00-3:20/ASC 228

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Office Hours: W 11:00-11:50 and by appointment

Course Description

Media products are not gender neutral. Rather, social categories such as gender and race shape and in turn, are shaped by media products. This course will critically examine the relation between gender and media products and how they mutually constitute each other. The goal of this class is to interrogate how media industry defines and constructs gender via media products it develops and how media industry's marketing, advertising, audience research, distribution, exhibition, and employment and work practices sustain, reinforce, and sometimes challenge gender stereotypes and gender norms. We will also think about new ways of bridging the gender gap and bringing gender equity to the media industry.

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 (2)** free unexcused absences. **Three or more absences will result in an automatic half grade deduction from your overall grade for each unexcused absence. Missing more than seven classes without discussing the situation with the instructor will result in a failing grade for the course.**

* Excused absences are granted *only* for the following reasons: serious illness (which must be documented with a doctor's certificate), a death in the family (again, documentation is required), or, in very rare cases, a school-related event that requires your presence and that you have arranged with the professor well in advance (e.g. an out-of-town university competitive event in which you are required to participate, a religious holiday, or a job interview). For an absence to be excused, documentation must be provided (a note from a coach, letter scheduling the interview, etc.).

The following types of situations are NOT considered excused absences: social events, meetings of Greek or service organizations, entertaining out-of-town visitors, holiday plans, going to weddings or to visit relatives, or any other circumstance that is extracurricular and at which your attendance is optional and secondary to your schoolwork.

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 should be able to respond to questions about the assigned readings and offer opinions and insights into the topics addressed. Poor attendance will adversely affect your participation grade. If you have a good attendance record but don't actively participate in class discussions, you can't expect to get a good participation grade (in other words, participation grade will not be based solely on attendance). Each class participation will be graded based on the demonstration of your preparation and the level of involvement and contribution to class discussions.

Discussion Leading (10%)

Early in the semester, you will sign up to be a discussion leader for a topic of your interest. You will prepare 3 thought-provoking questions that we can use for class discussion. The questions must cut across class readings, integrating their contributions to a particular theme. The quality of our class discussions will depend on your discussion points that not only nicely summarize but also reflect and engage critically with the assigned readings (as well as previous class readings, lectures, and discussions). You will prepare a study guide that contains a short summary of the readings (a paragraph for each reading) with your discussion questions and upload it to the discussion forum available on the class blackboard before coming to class on the day of your discussion leading.

Reading Responses (20%)

There are five required short reading responses (2 full pages/double spaced) that include not only a brief summary of the reading(s) but also your personal reaction to the reading materials. You will need to explain what the author's main argument(s) is/are and explain whether you agree or disagree with the author, identify the readings' purpose, and critique the text(s). There is no right or wrong response to the reading. However, it is important that you demonstrate an accurate understanding of the reading and clearly explain and support your reactions.

2 Short Paper Assignments (15% each – Total: 30%)

You will write two short papers (5 full pages), which will require you to make connections between the course reading materials and your own observations and experiences of media products and industry. Further instructions on this paper assignment will be provided later in the semester.

Final Research Paper (Proposal: 5%/ Presentation: 5%/ Final Paper: 20%/ Total: 30%)

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 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. In addition to the proposal, you will be required to give a 6-8 minute presentation to the class on the last two weeks of the semester. You will need to prepare a visual aid (e.g. Power Point, Keynote, etc.) for the presentation. 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/academicssupport/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.

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

Monday, 8 January / Wednesday, 10 January: Course Overview

Week Two: Politics of Design

Monday, 15 January:

Martin Luther King's Birthday – No Class!

Wednesday, 17 January:

Week Three: Politics of Design / Domestic Technologies

Monday, 22 January:

- Elizabeth F. Churchill (2010). “Sugared Puppy-Dog Tails: Gender and Design” in *Interactions* (March & April), pp. 52-56.
- Langdon Winner (1989). Chapter 2. “Do Artifacts Have Politics?” in *The Whale and the Reactor* (pp. 19-39).

Wednesday, 24 January:

- Judy Wajcman (1991). Chapter 4. “Domestic Technology: Labor –saving or Enslaving?” in *Feminism Confronts Technology* (pp. 81-109).
- Victoria Leto (2005). ““Washing, Seems It’s All We Do’: Washing Technology and Women’s Communication” in *Technology and Women’s Voices: Keeping in Touch* (pp. 136-153).

Week Four: Gender Scripts

Monday, 29 January:

- Ellen van Oost (2003), Chapter 9. “Materialized Gender: How Shavers Configure the Users’ Femininity and Masculinity” in *How Users Matter: The Co-Construction of Users and Technologies* (pp. 193-208).
- Leslie Regan Shade (2007). “Feminizing the Mobile: Gender Scripting of Mobiles in North America” in *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 21(2), pp. 179-189.

Wednesday, 31 January:

- Mary Celeste Kearney (2010). “Pink Technology: Mediamaking Gear for Girls” in *Camera Obscura* 25(2), pp. 1-39.

Week Five: Gender Marketing and Toys

Monday, 5 February: In-class Screening, “The Toys That Made Us – Barbie”

- Ellen Seiter (1993). Chapter 5. “Toy-Based Videos for Girls: *My Little Pony*” (pp. 145-171) and Chapter 6. “Action TV for Boys: Slimer and the Real *Ghostbusters*” (pp. 171-192) in *Sold Separately*.
- Elizabeth Sweet (2012). “Guys and Dolls No More?” in *The New York Times* (21 December). <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/opinion/sunday/gender-based-toy-marketing-returns.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=81C4663CA552696793E31C7E7DBE10E9&gwt=pay&assetType=opinion>

Wednesday, 7 February:

- Gry Høngsmark Knudsen and Erika Kuever (2015). “The Peril of Pink Bricks: Gender Ideology and LEGO Friends” in *Consumer Culture Theory* 17, pp. 171-188.
- Adrienne Lafrance (2016). “How to Play Like a Girl!” in *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/05/legos/484115/>

Week Six: Gendering Technology

Monday, 12 February:

- Vicki Mayer (2013). “To Communicate is Human; To Chat is Female: The Feminization of US Media Work” in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender* (pp. 51-60).
- Lana F. Rakow (2005). “Women and the Telephone: The Gendering of a Communications Technology” in *Technology and Women’s Voices: Keeping in Touch* (pp. 179-199).

Wednesday, 14 February:

- Jessi Hempel (2015). “Siri and Cortana Sound Like Ladies Because of Sexism” in *Wired* (28 October).
- Alexis C. Madrigal (2011). “Siri: The Perfect Robot for Our Time” in *The Atlantic* (12 October).
- Rebecca J. Rosen (2011). “Siri and Her Girls: Why So Many Robot Helpers Are Ladies” in *The Atlantic* (14 October).
- AO Roberts (2015). “Echo and the Chorus of Female Machines” in *Sound Out!* <https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/03/02/echo-and-the-chorus-of-female-machines/>

Week Seven: Gender and Sports Media

Monday, 19 February:

President’s Day – No Class!

Wednesday, 21 February:

- Cheryl Cooky, Michael A. Messner, & Michela Musto (2015). ““It’s Dude Time!”: A Quarter Century of Excluding Women’s Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows” in *Communication & Sport* 3(3), pp. 261-287.

- Michela Musto, Cheryl Cooky, & Michael A. Messner (2017). ““From Fizzle to Sizzle!”: Televised Sports News and the Production of Gender-Bland Sexism” in *Gender & Society* 31(5), pp. 573-596.

Week Eight: Femvertising – Marketing to Women?

Monday, 26 February:

- Andi Zeisler (2016). “The Corridors of Empower” in *We Were Feminists Once* (pp. 3-28).
- Ann Marie Nicoloso (2017). “Don’t You Love Being a Woman?: Advertising, Empowerment, and the Women’s Movement” in *Feminists, Feminisms & Advertising: Some Restrictions Apply* (pp. 85-106).

Wednesday, 28 February:

- Sarah Banet-Weiser (2012). ““Free Self-Esteem Tools?”: Brand Culture, Gender, and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign” in *Commodity Activism* (pp. 39-56).

Paper Assignment #1 Due

Week Nine: Targeting Gendered Audience

Monday, 5 March:

- Gerald Walton & L. Potvin (2009). “Boobs, Boxing, and Bombs: Problematizing the Entertainment of Spike TV” in *Spaces for Difference: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2(1), pp. 3-14.
- Carolyn Bronstein (1994). “Mission Accomplished? Profits and Programming at the Network for Women” in *Camera Obscura* 11-12(3-1 (33-34)), pp. 212-241.

Wednesday, 7 March:

- Katherine Sender (2007). “Dualcasting: Bravo’s Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences” in *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting* (pp. 302-318).
- Julia Himberg (2017). “Visibility: Lesbian Programming and the Changing Landscape of Cable Television” in *The New Gay for Pay: The Sexual Politics of American Television Production* (pp. 17-49).

Week Ten:

Spring Break – No Classes (March 12 & March 14)!

Week Eleven:

Monday, 19 March:

- Denise D. Bielby (2009). “Gender Inequality in Culture Industries: Women and Men Writers in Film and Television” in *Sociologie du Travail* 51, pp. 237-252.
- Tonny Krijnen & Sofie van Bauwel (2015). “Power and Gender in the Media Industry” in *Gender and Media: Representing, Producing, Consuming* (pp. 93-106).

Wednesday, 21 March:

- Sheelah Kolhatkar (2017). “The Tech Industry’s Gender-Discrimination Problem” in *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/20/the-tech-industrys-gender-discrimination-problem>
- Liza Mundy (2017). “Why is Silicon Valley So Awful to Women?” in *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/04/why-is-silicon-valley-so-awful-to-women/517788/>
- Nina Burleigh (2015). “What Silicon Valley Thinks of Women” in *Newsweek*. <http://www.newsweek.com/2015/02/06/what-silicon-valley-thinks-women-302821.html>
- Rita Lobo (2014). “Silicon Valley’s Sexist Programmer Culture is Locking Women Out of Tech” in *The New Economy*. <https://www.theneweconomy.com/technology/silicons-sexist-programmer-culture-is-locking-women-out-of-tech>

Final Paper Proposal Due

Week Twelve: Gender and Comedy

Monday, 26 March:

- Christopher Hitchens (2007). “Why Women Aren’t Funny” in *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2007/01/hitchens200701>
- Olga Khazan (2015). “Plight of the Funny Female” in *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/11/plight-of-the-funny-female/416559/>
- Kaitlyn Mitchell (2015). “We Crunched the Numbers on How Much Stage Time Female Comedians Get” in *Bitch Media*. <https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/we-crunched-the-numbers-on-how-much-stagetime-female-comedians-get>
- Megan Koester (2015). “Why It Sucks to Be a Woman in Comedy” in *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/sv/article/yvx49x/why-it-sucks-to-be-a-woman-in-comedy-1202>

Wednesday, 28 March:

- Julia Havas (2017). “Tina Fey: “Quality” Comedy and the Body of the Female Comedy Author” in *Hysterical!: Women in American Comedy* (pp. 348-378).
- Robyn Stacia Swink (2017). “Lemony Liz and Likeable Leslie: Audience Understandings of Feminism, Comedy, and Gender in Women-led Television Comedies” in *Feminist Media Studies* 17(1), pp. 14-28.

Week Thirteen: Social Media Design and Labor

Monday, 2 April:

- Rena Bivens & Oliver L. Haimson (2016). “Baking Gender into Social Media Design: How Platforms Shape Categories for Users and Advertisers” in *Social Media + Society*, pp. 1-12.
- Amanda Friz & Robert W. Gehl (2016). “Pinning the Feminine User: Gender Scripts in Pinterest’s Sign-Up Interface” in *Media, Culture & Society* 38(5), pp. 686-703.

Wednesday, 4 April:

- Rhiannon Bury (2010). “Women, Work and Web 2.0: A Case Study” in *New Technology, Work, and Employment* 25(3), pp. 223-237.
- Brooke Erin Duffy (2015). “The Romance of Work: Gender and Aspirational Labor in the Digital Culture Industries” in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, pp. 1-17.

Paper Assignment #2 Due

Week Fourteen: Video Game Culture

Monday, 9 April:

- Tracey Lien (2013). “No Girls Allowed” in *Polygon*.
<https://www.polygon.com/features/2013/12/2/5143856/no-girls-allowed>
- Drew Harwell (2014). “More Women Play Video Games Than Boys, and Other Surprising Facts Lost in the Mess of Gamergate” in *The Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2014/10/17/more-women-play-video-games-than-boys-and-other-surprising-facts-lost-in-the-mess-of-gamergate/?utm_term=.be7007a597b3
- Amanda Ochsner (2017). “Reasons Why: Examining the Experience of Women in Games 140 Characters at a Time” in *Games and Culture*, pp. 1-20.

Wednesday, 11 April:

- Shira Chess (2013). “Youthful White Male Industry Seeks “Fun”-loving Middle Aged Women for Video Games – No Strings Attached” in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender* (pp. 168-178).
- John Vanderhoef (2013). “Magic Disguised as Technology: Microsoft’s Kinect, Gender, and Domestic Space” in *Media Fields Journal* 7, pp. 1-15.

Week Fifteen: Post-Weinstein Media Industry

Monday, 16 April:

- Ronan Farrow (2017). “From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein’s Accusers Tell Their Stories” in *The New Yorker*.
<https://www.newyorker.com/contributors/ronan-farrow>
- Time’s Up Letter of Solidarity (2018). <https://www.timesupnow.com/#into-anchor>
- Deborah Shaw (2018). “Why It’s So Important that Hollywood’s Powerful Women Are Standing Up For All Female Workers” in *The Conversation*.
<https://theconversation.com/why-its-so-important-that-hollywoods-powerful-women-are-standing-up-for-all-female-workers-89661>
- Henry Chu (2017). “#MeToo’s Worldwide Moment: Global Industry Follows Hollywood’s Lead in Combating Harassment” in *Variety*. <http://variety.com/2017/film/news/sexual-harassment-global-entertainment-companies-metoo-1202637963/>

Wednesday, 18 April: Presentation I

Week Sixteen: Final Paper Presentation

Monday, 23 April: Presentation II

Wednesday, 25 April: Presentation III

Monday, 7 May (by 5PM) – Final Paper Due!