

Journalism and Mass Communication 815
Mass Media and Cultural Studies
Focus: Feminist Media Studies

Fall 2005

Wednesday, 1:30 PM – 4:10 PM, Johnston G35

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Office hours: Monday & Wednesday, 10:15 AM – 11:30 AM & by appointment

Course Description:

This course is a graduate-level introduction to feminist media studies. The course will trace an intellectual history of feminist approaches to the media, focusing primarily on the feminist tradition in film and television studies. As such, we will move from some early instances of feminist media criticism in the 1960s and 1970s through the psychoanalytic turn in feminist film theory in the 1970s and 1980s to the cultural studies approach to media analysis in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Along with our study of feminist thinking about the media, we will also necessarily explore elements of such theoretical traditions as semiotics and structuralism, psychoanalytic film theory, Marxism, cultural studies, queer theory, and post-structuralism. Among the issues we will consider are gendered representation, spectatorial positioning, studies of the social audience, intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and national identity, media historiography, and post-feminism. Although many of our readings will focus on fictional film and television, we will also consider news and non-fiction media, print media (i.e., magazines), and new media in some readings and in our discussions.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will:

- 1) understand the intellectual history of feminist media studies;
- 2) comprehend the theories and methods of contemporary feminist media studies;
- 3) improve your research, writing, and analysis skills through in-class discussions and course assignments; and
- 4) deepen your understanding of mass media as a cultural force and as an object of scholarly inquiry.

Required Readings:

Books:

Charlotte Brunson, Julie D'Acci, and Lynn Spigel, eds., *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). ISBN: 0-19-871153-0

This book is out of print. Please attempt to get a copy from a used bookseller or use the copy on reserve at Golda Meir Library.

Available at the UWM bookstore:

Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (Three Rivers Press, 1995). ISBN: 0812925300

Sue Thornham, *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). ISBN: 0-7486-0890-7

Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997). ISBN: 0-631-19825-3

Reader:

- Ien Ang with Joke Hermes, "Gender and/in Media Consumption," *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 109-129.
- Lauren Berlant, selection from "Introduction: The Intimate Public Sphere," *The Queen of America goes to Washington City* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 15-21.
- Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," in Jennifer Scanlon, ed., *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 226-244.
- Julie D'Acci, "Television, Representation, and Gender," in Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill, eds., *The Television Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 373-388.
- Amy Erdman Farrell, "Readers Writing *Ms.*," *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 151-178.
- John Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television,," in Robert C. Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992),
- Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, selection from "Psychoanalysis, Film, & Television," in Robert C. Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 204-216.
- Betty Friedan, "The Happy Housewife Heroine," *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963), 28-61.
- Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," in Contemporary Centre for Cultural Studies, *Culture, Media, Language* (Hutchinson, 1980), 128-138.
- Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, "Introduction," in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1-24.
- Michele Hilmes, "Desired and Feared: Women's Voices in Radio History," in Mary Beth Haralovich and Lauren Rabinovitz, eds., *Television, History, and American Culture: Feminist Critical Essays* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 17-35.
- Elana Levine, "From Romance to Rape: Sex, Violence, and Soap Operas," *Wallowing in Sex: The New Sexual Culture of 1970s American Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, under contract)
- Amanda D. Lotz, "Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes," *Feminist Media Studies* 1:1 (2001), 105-121.
- Sarah Projansky, "The Postfeminist Context: Popular Redefinitions of Feminism, 1980-Present," *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001), 66-89.
- Janice Radway, "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context," in Gail Dines and Jean Humez, eds., *Gender, Race & Class in Media* (Sage, 1995), 202-214.
- Erica Rand, selection from "Barbie's Queer Adult Accessories," *Barbie's Queer Accessories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 149-161.
- Jennifer Reed, "Ellen Degeneres: Public Lesbian Number One," *Feminist Media Studies* 5:1 (2005), 23-36.
- Yeidy M. Rivero, "The Performance and Reception of Televisual 'Ugliness' in *Yo soy Betty la fea*," *Feminist Media Studies* 3:1, 2003, 65-81.
- Ksenija Vidmar-Horvat, "The globalization of gender: *Ally McBeal* in post-Soviet Slovenia," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8:2 (2005), 239-255.

All readings are also on paper and electronic reserve at the Golda Meir Library.

Evaluation:**Class participation and Attendance – 15%**

Since this course is a graduate seminar, it is designed to maximize your participation. This means that all students are expected to contribute to class discussion, to listen attentively to fellow students, and to put thought into their comments and questions. Come to class prepared to discuss readings, to connect readings to each other, and to apply theoretical concepts to concrete examples. Students are expected to attend each class session. If you need to miss class, please let me know in advance so that we can arrange a separate time to discuss that week's material.

Discussion leading – 10%

Students will work in pairs to lead class discussion one day of the semester. You will be responsible for leading our discussion for half the class period (one hour and 15 minutes), although I may have you continue to lead discussion if you have more material to cover and it is going smoothly. I may also step in before or after you lead to help clarify concepts and keep everyone on the same page.

Reading summaries/questions – 20%

Each week, students will submit brief (1 to 3 sentence) summaries of each reading's essential "nugget" or argument. Should you find a reading too challenging to summarize you should instead write up 1-3 substantive questions you have about what the author is saying. There will be a few exceptions (readings for which you will not write a summary), but you should plan to summarize each reading each week. It is important that each "nugget" be as concise as possible. This exercise will help you read more efficiently and effectively.

Research project (55%)

Each student will engage in a semester-long project in which s/he will research and write about a media or culture-related topic of her or his own choosing. The project should draw on some aspect of the feminist media theory that we cover in class, however you are free to apply those theories in ways different than the authors we read. Your project should also include some original research. You might analyze a media or cultural product as a text, you might analyze the popular or critical or industrial discourse around a media or cultural product, you might analyze the audience response to a media or cultural product. There are many possible options and I encourage you to be creative in choosing an object of study and the theories/methods that best allow you to address the questions you have about it. I am happy to work with you to shape your projects throughout the semester. The project breaks down as follows:

Proposal – 10%

You will first hand in a 2-4 page proposal of what you plan to study. This proposal should set forth the research questions you hope to answer, as well as explaining your object of study. You should also discuss the approach you plan to take to answer your questions (in other words, what kind of research do you plan to do?) and, if possible, what argument you think you might make to answer your questions. This argument may very well change as you work on the project, but it is helpful to recognize what ideas you already hold before you begin to fully research your subject. In addition, this proposal should include a partial bibliography, one that covers some secondary and some primary sources that you might consider in your project. A bibliography of about 1 page would be appropriate at this stage.

In-class Presentation

Each student will present his or her project to the rest of the class in the final two weeks of the semester. We may add a third presentation date during finals week if necessary. You will share your argument and main points, describe any new or unfamiliar theories or information you have learned, and entertain questions and comments. Be prepared to generate class discussion with talking points or questions. Each presentation will run 20-25 minutes (including discussion).

Final Paper – 45%

The final paper should be approximately 20 pages long (double-spaced, with 1 inch margins), should cite sources properly (in any citation style—just pick one and stick with it), and should include a full bibliography. Each paper should have a clearly stated argument/thesis that is supported with evidence (much of which can be your own analyses) throughout the paper.

In order to pass the course, all work must be completed. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 grade per day (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+). All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due date. Assignments handed in later in the class period or later the same day will be considered late.

Academic misconduct/Plagiarism

Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Any instances of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will receive the full penalties, per the policies and practices of the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, the College of Letters & Science, the Graduate School, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Special accommodations

If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

Weekly Schedule

Week One

9/07/05 – **Introduction**

Week Two

9/14/05 -- **Early feminist media criticism**

Thornham, Part I (Introduction, Smith, Haskell, Johnston, Rich)

Reader: Friedan

Week Three

9/21/05 – **Psychoanalytic feminist film theory I**

Reader: Flitterman-Lewis

Thornham: pp. 53-54, Mulvey, Clover

Recommended: Weedon, pp. 42-53

Week Four

9/28/05 -- **Psychoanalytic feminist film theory II**

Thornham: Citron et al., Doane (“Film and the Masquerade”), Kuhn

Brunsdon et al: Modleski

Week Five

10/05/05 – **Feminist cultural studies**

Reader: Fiske, Hall, D’Acci

Thornham: Gledhill

Week Six

10/12/05 -- **Feminist cultural studies**

Reader: Radway (Recommended: Weedon, pp. 53-60)

Brunsdon et al: Gray, Mankekar

Thornham: Walkerdine, Staiger

Proposal Due

Week Seven

10/19/05 -- **Post-structuralism**

Weedon: Chs. 1,2, 5 & 7

Reader: Ang & Hermes

Week Eight

10/26/05 -- **Intersections: Gender/Race/Class**

Thornham: Gaines, hooks

Brunsdon et al: Rose, Bobo & Seiter

Reader: Rivero

Week Nine

11/02/05 – **Intersections: Sexuality and Queer Theory**

Reader: Doty, Berlant, Rand, Reed

Thornham: pp.290-291, Butler

Week Ten

11/09/05 – **Feminist media histories**

Brunsdon et al: Spigel

Reader: Hilmes, Breazeale

Douglas: Introduction-Chapter 6

Week Eleven

11/16/05 – **Feminist media histories**

Brunsdon et al: D'Acci

Reader: Farrell, Levine

Douglas: Chapter 7-Epilogue

Week Twelve

No class

Week Thirteen

11/30/05 – **Third Wave feminism/Post-feminism**

Reader: Heywood & Drake, Projansky, Lotz, Vidmar-Horvat,

Brunsdon et al: Probyn

Week Fourteen

12/07/05 – **Presentations**

Week Fifteen

12/14/05 – **Presentations**

Final Paper Due: Monday, December 19, 2005 – Noon

Possible third presentation date during finals week, to be announced at a later date