

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 617 S01
Representation and Identity: Mediated Femininities
Winter 2020

Seminar: Thursdays, 2pm – 4:45pm in SS 202

Instructor: Dr. Jessalynn Keller
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Office Hours: Thursdays 10AM – 12PM (via Skype or Zoom) – please use
online booking tool: keller-jessalynn.youcanbook.me

Revisions Due to COVID-19: As of March 19, 2020 this syllabus has been revised to reflect changes in course delivery and assignment completion due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We will continue our class online using the Zoom platform (March 19, 26, April 2, 9) instead of meeting in-person. Assignments will be submitted via email to the professor, and an extended deadline for the final research paper has been implemented. See below for further details.

Course Description

Issues of representation and identity have been a central concern for media and cultural studies scholarship for the past three decades. This course will focus on this research, tracing the evolution of how representation and identities within media cultures have been studied and theorized as a way to interrogate power structures within social life. As such, this course will take a critical feminist cultural studies approach to media cultures, contextualizing issues of representation and identity within media production, distribution, and reception contexts.

Due to the large scope of this body of work, this course will be focused around “mediated femininities,” concentrating on the ways in which feminine identities are produced, represented, circulated, and consumed within popular Western-Anglo media cultures, including television, film, video games, social media platforms, magazines, and celebrity culture. In particular, we will pay attention to how femininities are shaped by other identities, including race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age. Required reading will include foundational

writing in the field, recently published research that grapples with “hot button” issues, and the occasional piece of popular writing.

Additional information

In addition to readings, students will be asked to occasionally prepare for class by engaging with other forms of media. Students should arrange to have access to streaming services or iTunes for the duration of the course.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Understand the historical trajectory of media and cultural studies scholarship on representation and identities
- Articulate key theoretical and methodological frameworks for studying media representation
- Apply this knowledge to interrogate and critique media texts and cultures
- Conduct independent research on representation and identities in media cultures

Textbook and Readings

Readings will be available on D2L. Books can be ordered on Amazon, or can be found in the University of Calgary library.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops may be used for notetaking purposes only.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the permission of the professor.

Assignments:

In addition to the descriptions below, assignments will be introduced and discussed extensively in class. There will be time allotted in class for peer and professor feedback as you prepare your assignments.

WEIGHT	COURSE COMPONENTS	DUE
15%	Participation The success of a graduate seminar is determined by the active participation of students. Therefore, I ask that you arrive at class having read the required reading and prepared with ideas to contribute to discussion of the materials. I expect quality contributions that advance the discussion and encourage you to bring questions to pose to your classmates.	Ongoing

20%	<p>Seminar leadership and response paper</p> <p>Students will work in pairs to “lead” 75-90 minutes (approximately half) of one seminar period. In addition to facilitating this portion of class, each presenting student will also submit a 3-4 page critical response paper that addresses the readings assigned for that session. REVISED: Paper can be submitted via email to the professor.</p>	As assigned
15%	<p>Research paper proposal (5 -7 pages)</p> <p>Students will produce a proposal that comprehensively outlines their semester research project. The proposal should include: brief introduction to topic (including relevant literature), research question, object(s) of analysis, theoretical orientation, methodological approach, and a short bibliography (5-7 sources). The proposal must make clear how the research relates to issues of representation and identity as taken up in the course. Therefore, you do not need to study femininities, however you must utilize the course theories and methods to interrogate your object of analysis. We will discuss these expectations in class.</p>	February 13
10%	<p>Final research paper presentation (10 minutes)</p> <p>At the end of the term you will be required to give a short presentation (10 minutes) to your classmates based upon your research paper. REVISED: Due to the switch to online teaching, we will conduct presentation via Zoom, as decided through class consensus.</p>	REVISED: April 2 and April 9
40%	<p>Final research paper (15 - 20 pages for MA students, 20 – 25 pages for PhD students)</p> <p>In consultation with the professor, you will produce a research paper that focuses on some aspect of representation and identity in media culture. Your paper topic may be related to your thesis topic, but should be original work produced for this seminar. REVISED: Paper should be submitted via email to the professor.</p>	REVISED: April 24

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used by the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Gradaute Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding performance
A	4.00	Excellent performance
A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass
C+	2.30	Failure. All grades below B- are indicative of failute and will not count toward graduate program requirements.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed

by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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Recommended Texts

For those students who are new to media studies, or would like to “brush up” on issues of representation and identity that may be studied at the undergraduate level, I'd recommend the following texts:

1. Rosalind Gill: *Gender and the Media*
2. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon: *Representation*
3. Raymond Williams: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*
4. Michael Kackman and Mary Celeste Kearney (eds): *The Craft of Criticism: Critical Media Studies in Practice* (focuses on methods)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Week 1 Thursday, January 16: Studying Media Representations

Read:

Liesbet van Zoonen – *Feminist Perspectives on the Media* (1991)

Douglas Kellner – *Cultural studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture* (2010)

Mary Beltrán – *Representation* (2018)

Week 2 Thursday, January 23: Representing “Real” Women? Early Debates on Representation

Read:

Gaye Tuchman – *The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media* (1978)

Julie D'Acci – *Defining Women* (1992)

Bonnie Dow – *1970s Lifestyle Feminism, the Single Woman, and The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1996)

Recommended (if you have not read previously):

Laura Mulvey – *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1978)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 3 Thursday, January 30: Postfeminist Heroines

Read:

Angela McRobbie – Postfeminism and Popular Culture (2004)

Rosalind Gill – Postfeminist Media Culture (2007)

Jane Arthurs – *Sex and the City* and Consumer Culture: Remediating Postfeminist Drama (2010)

Watch in class:

Sex and the City – “A Woman’s Right to Shoes” (season 6, episode 9)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 4 Thursday, February 6: Unruly, Abject, and Monsterous Feminine Bodies

Read:

Kathleen (Rowe) Karlyn – Roseanne: The Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess (1995)

Adrienne Massanari and Shira Chess – Attack of the 50-foot Social Justice Warrior: The Discursive Construction of SJW Memes as the Monstrous Feminine (2018)

Jonathan Branfman – “Plow him like a queen!” Jewish Female Masculinity, Queer Glamour, and Racial Commentary in *Broad City* (2019)

Recommended:

Linda Mizejewski – Margaret Cho is Beautiful: A Comedy of Manifesto (2014)

Watch at home:

Broad City – “Knockoffs” (season 2, episode 4, Crave)

Watch in class:

Mohawk Girls – episode TBA

Seminar leader(s):

Week 5 Thursday, February 13: The Political Economy of Representation: Production, Distribution, and Audiences

Read:

Eileen Meehan – Gendering the Commodity Audience (2002)

Aymar Jean Christian – Beyond Branding: The Value of Intersectionality on Streaming TV Channels (2019)

Kristen Warner – [Home] Girls: Insecure and HBO’s Risky Racial Politics (2016)

Amy Villarejo – Jewish, Queer-ish, Trans, and Completely Revolutionary: Jill Soloway’s *Transparent* and the New Television (2016)

Watch at home:

Transparent – episode TBA (on Amazon Prime)

Watch in class:

Insecure – episode TBA

Seminar leader(s):

Week 6 Thursday, February 20: NO CLASS (READING BREAK)

Week 7 Thursday, February 27: Designing Digital Femininities

Read:

Shira Chess -- *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity* (2017)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 8 Thursday, March 5: Rethinking Race: Celebrity, Cultural Production, and Media Reception

Read:

Ralina L. Joseph – *Postracial Resistance: Black Women, Media, and the Uses of Strategic Ambiguity* (2018)

Recommended:

Kristen Warner – *Plastic Representation* (2017)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 9 Thursday, March 12: Politics of Visibility: Empowered Women, Confident Girls

Read:

Sarah Banet-Weiser – *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny* (2018)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 10 Thursday, March 19: Precarious Femininities: Affect, Insecurity, Failure

REVISED: SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE ON ZOOM

Read:

Rebecca Wanzo – *Precarious-Girl Comedy: Issa Rae, Lena Dunham, and Abjection Aesthetics* (2016)

Faye Woods: *Too Close for Comfort: Direct Address and the Affective Pull of the Confessional Comic Woman in Chewing Gum and Fleabag* (2019)

Amy Shields Dobson and Akane Kanai: *From “Can-do” Girls to Insecure and Angry: Affective Dissonances in Young Women’s Post-recessional Media* (2019)

Watch at home: *Fleabag* (episode TBA, Amazon Prime)

Seminar leader(s):

Week 11 Thursday, March 26: Resistant Femininities? Laughter, Joy, Rage

REVISED: SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE ON ZOOM

Read:

Mary Celeste Kearney – *Girlfriends and Girl Power: Female Adolescence in Contemporary U.S. Cinema* (2002)

Alexander Cho: *Disruptive Joy: #BlackOutDay's Affirmative Resonances* (2018)

Helen Wood: *Fuck the Patriarchy: Towards an Intersectional Politics of Irreverent Rage* (2019)

Jessalynn Keller: *A Politics of Snap: Teen Vogue's Public Feminism* (2020)

Look at:

Teen Vogue website (teenvogue.com)

REVISED: Watch at home:

Booksmart (Dir. Olivia Wilde, 2019) – available to rent on demand

Week 12 Thursday, April 2: Research Presentations

REVISED: As agreed by the class, we will begin student presentation today via Zoom. We will have six presentations (on a volunteer basis, first come, first serve) in order to shorten our presentation day the following week.

Students will present original research from their final papers via the Zoom platform. Each student will have a 15-minute time block – 10 minutes for their presentation and 5 minutes for a short Q & A period.

Week 13 Thursday, April 9: Research Presentations

REVISED: Students will present original research from their final papers via the Zoom platform. Each student will have a 15-minute time block – 10 minutes for their presentation and 5 minutes for a short Q & A period.