

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

FILM 307.7 L01: Topics in Cinema and Gender Studies (Funny Women)

Winter 2023: January 3 – January 7, 2023

Lecture: TWRFS 09:00 to 17:00

Location: ES 054

Instructor:	Marissa Spada
Email:	marissa.spada1@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Zoom appointments by email request

Course Description

In 2007, *Vanity Fair* published a provocative editorial titled, “Why Women Aren’t Funny.” Indeed, from slapstick to satire, comedic genres and performance styles have been traditionally dominated by men. Nevertheless, “funny women” have been around since the early days of cinema, from the silent screen’s Marie Dressler to the ensemble cast of *Bridesmaids*. This course invites you to explore how humor, power, and femininity intersect in historical and contemporary cinema. We will consider how the “funny woman” subverts and parodies patriarchal filmic conventions, defies the male gaze, and challenges normative representations of women on screen.

Additional Information

This is a block week course, taught in-person, that runs five days. Attendance is required for the full five sessions and will be recorded every morning and afternoon. If you experience a medical or personal emergency, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

Because this is an intensive course, you should plan to spend up to two hours each evening preparing for the following day’s session. Assigned readings will prepare you for the following day’s activities, including group discussion, screenings, and reading quizzes. Reading quizzes are held during the first hour of class each day and cannot be deferred.

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

The course objectives are to...

- Discuss and critique “funny women” in historical and contemporary media, engaging with these figures as embodiments of larger cultural, social, and industrial trends.
- Acquire a set of theories and methods to conduct textual analyses of various media cultural artifacts (i.e., movie posters, promotional materials, film sequences).
- Identify common themes, tropes, and genre conventions governing comedic representations of women.

Textbooks and Readings

Links and downloads available on D2L.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for zoom office hours).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

You are welcome to use your electronic device for notetaking and in-class activities. Any unauthorized browsing, emailing, or texting will jeopardize your participation grade.

Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
40 %	<p>Reading Quizzes (4)</p> <p>There will be four (4) reading quizzes this week (Tuesday-Saturday). Be prepared to respond to five (5) short answer questions based on</p>	Daily

	the day's reading material. Quizzes will be 25 minutes in duration and scheduled in the first hour of class.	
20 %	Free-Write Exercises (5) Each day, you will have a 30 minute "free-write" session. Prompts will be provided. Free-write sessions will give you an opportunity to reflect on the material, process your thoughts, and prepare for the final essay. Free-Writes will be submitted at the end of every class. They do not need to be "polished," but they should effectively respond to the prompt. Each response should be about 250 words (1 page, double spaced).	Daily
10 %	Attendance and Participation Each class will involve a mix of lectures, group discussions, screenings, and collaborative activities. Your active engagement and participation in these discussions and activities is required.	Daily
30 %	Essay For your final essay, you will be asked to respond to one of two prompts. 1500-2000 words. More details to follow.	Feb. 3, 2023, 11:59pm

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No.

Note: You must complete all assignments or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of

accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors.

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage or numerical grades will be used for exams, quizzes, and participation grades.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%

2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Day 1, January 3, 2023

Why Women Aren't Are Funny: Course Introduction

Readings:

- Christopher Hitchens, "Why Women Aren't Funny," *Vanity Fair*, January 1, 2007.
- Robert J. Burdette, "Have Women a Sense of Humor?" *Harper's Bazaar*, July 1902.
- Jonathan Gray, "Text," in *Keywords for Media Studies*, edited by Laurie Oullette and Jonathan Gray (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 196-200.

Screenings:

- *Late Night* (Nisha Gantra, 2019)
- *Death Becomes Her* (Robert Zemeckis, 1992)

Excerpts:

- *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953)

Day 2, January 4, 2023

Comedy and the Feminized Body: Prettiness, Funniness, and Gendered Archetypes

Readings:

- Linda Mizejewski, *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 1-25.

Screenings:

- *Miss Congeniality* (Donald Petrie, 2000)
- *I Feel Pretty* (Abby Kohn, Marc Silverstein, 2018)

Excerpts:

- *Girls Trip* (Malcolm D. Lee, 2017)

Day 3, Thursday, January 5
Comedy, Power, and the Male Gaze

Readings:

- Kristen Anderson Wagner, *Comic Venus: Women and Comedy in American Silent Film* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 73-90.
- Michele White, "Gaze," in *Keywords for Media Studies*, edited by Laurie Oulette and Jonathan Gray (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 75-76.

Screenings:

- *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959)
- *I'm No Angel* (Wesley Ruggles, 1933)

Excerpts:

- *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (Mack Sennett, 1914)
- *The Patsy* (1928)

Day 4, Friday, January 6
Feminist Camp and Gender Parody

Readings:

- Pamela Roberston, "The Stereotype of the Gold Digger" and "Gold Digging and the Masquerade" in *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 74-79.
- Deborah H. Holdstein, "Tootsie: Mixed Messages," *Jump Cut* no. 28, April 1983.
- Whitney Peoples, "(Re) Mediating Black Womanhood: Tyler Perry, Black Feminist Cultural Criticism, and the Politics of Legitimation," in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions*, edited by L. Manigault-Bryant, et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 149-154.

Screenings:

- *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001)
- *Tootsie* (Sydney Pollock, 1982)

Excerpts:

- *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953)
- *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1933)
- *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (Darren Grant, 2005)

Day 5, Saturday, January 7

Genre/Gender: Feminism, Post-Feminism, and the Chick Flick

Readings:

- Jason Mittell, "Genre," in *Keywords for Media Studies*, edited by Laurie Oullette and Jonathan Gray (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 81-83.
- John Alberti, "Genre and/as Gender Theory" in *Masculinity in the Contemporary Romantic Comedy* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 8-11.
- Caryn Murphy, "Case Study—Misogyny in the Romantic Comedy," *Misogyny in American Culture: Causes, Trends, and Solutions*, 2022.
- Sara Ditum, "Nora Ephron was a prophet of desire," *UnHerd*, 2011.
<https://unherd.com/2021/05/nora-ephron-was-a-prophet-of-desire/>

Screenings:

- *Bridesmaids* (Paul Feig, 2011)
- *How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days* (Donald Petrie, 2003)

Excerpts:

- *Knocked Up* (Judd Apatow, 2007)