

Women and the Media
Media 384, Fall 2015
Room HN 502
Hunter College, CUNY
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Course website: <http://opencuny.org/womenmedia>

This course explores how our understanding of the category “women” depends, in large part, on cultural mediation. Through different forms of media, cultural narratives (stories) are created that determine what it means to be a woman (who counts and who doesn’t). This process is never-ending as our understanding of ‘women’ is constantly being challenged and re-made. In our course on women and the media, we will spend the semester exploring this broad topic along the following three axes: representation, labor, and critique. The axis of representation includes both images and narratives. We will consider the work (labor) women do, both as creators and as audience, within various media. Conversely, we will think about the work our cultural mediations do: by creating narratives about different groups of people (women, men etc), people are sorted into different and unequal categories. And, throughout the entire semester, we will consider women’s (or, more accurately, feminist) critiques of the media. Race, class, ability, appearance, age and sexual identity (to name a few) determine who is a woman and who is not—and these categories, in turn, are made and remade through the media.

Some of the questions we’ll ask and work on answering:

- ~What do we mean by the term “woman”? Who is included in this category?
- ~How does the form of media interact with gendered representations therein?
- ~Does media produced by women influence gender representations?
- ~What are viable careers and options for women working in the media industry?
- ~How do gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability alter the experience and reception of various media?

Readings:

Our main texts are:

Gender and Media by Rosalind Gill (I have pdfs of the first two chapters).
Gender, Race, and Class in Media ed by Gail Dines and Jean Humez (4th Edition). Listed as GRCinM on the schedule below. (I can make pdfs available, let me know. We’ll discuss first class period)

When not listed with a URL on the syllabus, additional readings will be available via the course website: <http://opencuny.org/womenmedia>

NOTE: The course website is your first place to check for information! Please bookmark the URL and check it frequently. I'll add ideas, summaries, and readings. I will also post the master list of student presentation dates (see below). Part of our education is staying up on current events, learning how to interpret them, and staying attuned to the world. Digital media makes this possible in new ways—so keep an eye on the course site.

Please see me immediately if accessing the Internet or course website is a problem.

Course Workload:

Media Project (20%): For this final project you will create some form of media—a `zine, blog, movie, short story, short film, quilt—you name it! You will present and share these with the class (at the end of the semester). We will spend a considerable amount of class time working, alone and together, on these. The goal of this project is two-fold: 1. To make media that takes up the ideas from our coursework, and 2. To create the kind of media you want to see (or see more of) in the world. These do not have to be formal papers, unless that is what you want. Your project can be a critique of an idea, your interpretive manifestation of something we read—we will discuss this throughout the semester. I want you to use this project to create something useful, for yourself (for portfolios, resumes, digital identity) or for the world.

Media Tracking Project (20%): For this portion of the course, you will choose one media object, event, campaign (again, you name it!) to study. This project is a sustained exercise in deconstructing and analyzing media. I suggest you track something you're interested in—your favorite TV show, a twitter hashtag, an advertising campaign for a product you love (or hate!), a blogger you already follow. You will need to report, (in the form of a short paper/write-up) on the following (5 points for each successful report):

1. **SEPT 21:** What is the media object? Describe it and tell us who produces it? What medium does it take (film, tv, twitter)? What is the explicit message? How do you plan on tracking it? (following twitter account/hashtag, collecting advertisements, watching a tv show and taking notes). Why did you choose this object?
2. **OCT 19:** Audience Analysis: who do you think the intended audience is? Explain why? Who else may be part of the audience? Who do you think is not a part of the intended audience? What does the media object offer the audience, how do they interact with it? You may have to do research for this—be sure to cite everything you find/use.
3. **NOV 16:** What does your media object do? Does it create a community? Describe? Does it isolate people? Does it shame people or make them feel good? What are some of the messages the media object is conveying, both explicitly and implicitly? What work does it do in the sphere of media in which it operates? What does your media object NOT do?

4. **DEC 7: Final analysis**—propose a larger study of this media object. Describe your initial findings and write up a defense of why we need a more in-depth study. Pretend you have all the time and money to do this project—what would you do to continue it? What would you do to answer some of the questions that arose? Describe and defend your claims and choices.

Reading Presentation (20%): At least once a semester you will present the main arguments of our scheduled readings, prepare questions for discussion, and make connections to some outside media. As a discussion leader you'll need to simplify the reading into its main points and connect it to a current event (or a historical event, it's open for your interpretation!). Let me know if you have problems with a reading BEFORE your scheduled date! Do not show up and say you don't get it. If you feel especially lost, then contact me, and work on explaining one idea that makes sense. We'll all help each other out! Have your peers' backs on this and you'll all do well.

Weekly quizzes over scheduled readings (40%): We'll have a brief quiz over the readings 10 of the 13 weeks (and they'll be about 4-5 questions/points each). These will never ever be able to be made up! If you miss a class, you miss the quiz. This is FIRM. We're doing this instead of midterms and a final, so pace your self accordingly and keep up on the readings!

If you miss 0-1 classes (which is perfect attendance) you may add 5 points to your quiz total (which would cover a missed quiz). If you miss 2-3 classes and you participate regularly and thoughtfully, you may add 3 points to your quiz total.

Grading Procedures/Evaluations:

Grades are as follows: 100-90 = A; 89-80 = B; 79-70 = C; 69-60 = D; below 59 = F. I do not give incompletes.

Guidelines for my course:

*****I reserve the right to change, delete or ADD readings to this schedule. I will always give you notice but you must come to class to stay abreast of any changes.

*****Please turn off all electronic devices when class starts—these hours are a texting time-out. AND NO COMPUTERS DURING CLASS—TAKE NOTES WITH PEN AND PAPER, TYPE UP LATER.

*****Do not be offended if I call you and do not be offended if I do not call on you! I will try to call on everyone at least once over the course of the semester so be prepared.

*****Please email me if you are having trouble with the course material in anyway.

*****Plagiarizing in anyway, shape or form will result in a zero for that assignment or test. I take this very seriously so please see me if you're nervous about properly citing your work.

Tentative Reading Schedule (THIS WILL CHANGE):

- August 31: first day of class; introductions, media deconstruction kit
- Sept 7: Labor Day, no class
- Sept 10: ***Women On The Media/Feminist Critiques and Theories***
Monday schedule: Gill Chapter 1-2
“The Economics of the Media Industry” (found on course website)
- Sept 14: no class
- Sept 21: Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)
bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” (1992)
Douglas Kellner “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, Media Culture” (GRCinM)
Media Tracking #1 due
- Sept 28: Robin James excerpt from “Resilience and Melancholy” (website)
Angela McRobbie, “Postfeminism and Popular Culture” (found here:
http://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23586_02_McRobbie_Ch_01.pdf)
- Oct 5: Tania Modleski, excerpt from “Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women” (1982) (found on course website)
Lauren Berlant, “The Female Complaint” (found on website)
Anne Helen Peterson “That Teenage Feeling: *Twilight*, Fantasy, and Feminist Readers” (GRCinM)
- Oct 12: no class
- Oct 19: ***Women in the Media: Representation, then and now***
Kimberly Springer, “Divas, Evil Black Bitches, and Bitter Black Women: African American Women in Postfeminist and Post-Civil-Right Popular Culture” (found on website)
Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes” (GRCinM)
Media Tracking #2 due
- Oct 28: Robin James, “MRWaSP” and “Look, I Overcame!” (found on website)
- Nov 2: Sarah Banet-Weiser and Laura Portwood-Stacer, “I just want to be me again!” (found on website)
Kay Siebler “Transgender Transitions: Sex/Gender Binaries in a Digital Age” (GRCinM)
- Nov 9: ***Women Make Media: Free labor, Hope labor***

Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labor” (website)

- Nov 16: Kathleen Kuehn, Tom Corrigan “Hope Labor” (website)
Kate Losse, “Feminism’s Tipping Point: Who wins from leaning in?” found here:
https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/feminisms-tipping-point-who-wins-from-leaning-in
Media Tracking #3 due
- Nov 23: “To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice On Twitter” (GRCinM)
TBA (Most likely an article by ME!)
- Nov 30: Laura Portwood-Stacer “Care work and the Stakes of Media Refusal”
<http://www.newcriticals.com/care-work-and-the-stakes-of-social-media-refusal>
- Dec 7: **Media Tracking #4 due**
Course wrap up!
- Dec 14: presentations