

**Women in the Media 2009**  
**MIT 3210 Mondays 1230-330 pm SH 3315**

**Instructor:** Dr. Romyne Smith Fullerton

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**Office:** 218 North Campus Building; Phone extension: 86663.

**Office Hours:** Mondays 11am-1230 pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

In this course, we will explore representations of women in the media. The term 'media' is understood and employed in its broadest context and is used to mean any vehicle for communicating ideas, values, ideologies, philosophies, culture, et cetera. We will explore film, television, print and broadcast stories, advertisements and internet sites to analyse how women are and have been depicted by men, women and institutions. It's become cliché to say 'it's much better for women now;' we'll see.

**Texts:**

Photocopy course readings (listed below)—for details about location, please check our site on WebCT.

**Course Objectives**

This course will:

- Enable you to develop your close reading and evaluative skills on a variety of media representations of women in contemporary Western society
- Expose you to a wide range of theory and criticism about current images of women in the media
- Encourage you to examine the attitudes and beliefs that inform representations of women today

**Assignments and Grading**

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| • Attendance and participation                                                                                                             | 10% |
| • Research submission done in small groups<br>(due in FIMS drop box by noon on the Thursday prior to your<br>theme's list in the syllabus) | 15% |
| • 10-12 page essay based on seminar presentation due in class<br>2 weeks after your material has been presented                            | 30% |
| • Readings test<br>(in class – true/false, multiple choice, fill in blanks (Mar. 16/09))                                                   | 15% |
| • Take home essay/exam due final week of class<br>(topics to be assigned)                                                                  | 30% |

**Important Information:**

- Please do not email me questions about course material. If you would like to talk about what we cover in class or in the readings, come and see me during office hours; I cannot respond to detailed questions via email. My typing is not that good and I love to chat—really!
- **Plagiarism:** you must write all your assignments in your own words. Whenever you take an idea, or a passage from another author, you must acknowledge this debt both by using

quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. **Plagiarism includes submitting the same assignment in two separate courses.** Plagiarism is a major academic offence that is taken seriously. Claims of ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse. You are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf) All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

- If you are seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, assignments or participatory components worth 10% or more of your final grade for the course, you must apply to the Academic Counseling Office of your home faculty and provide documentation in the form of a Student Medical Certificate. Your counselor will contact me with details about your accommodation.
- FIMS undergraduate programs have implemented a policy requiring that the average final grades in most courses fall within prescribed ranges. This was done to curb grade inflation. The grading policy is intended to ensure that our undergraduate programs do not acquire a reputation among graduate programs, professional schools, or prospective employers for routinely awarding high grades. Since Western publishes grading data on its Web site, the MIT grading profile is there for all to see.
- Electronic devices are not permitted in class at all; they can be disruptive to me and other students. **You may not use a lap top, a cell phone, or any other electronic communications device in this classroom** unless you have made arrangements through the office for students with disabilities.
- While every attempt will be made to follow the topics and readings as outlined below, it is possible that changes to the readings or the weekly themes may be emended or adjusted. Please note that any such changes will be noted on our Web CT and made clear to you in class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are up to date with any and all changes made to our schedule.

### **About the Assignments**

#### **Attendance and Participation:**

I expect that you will make every effort to attend class, keep up with your readings and contribute to the discussions. Please note that merely showing up will not necessarily even garner you a passing grade. You must contribute in a thoughtful, constructive and respectful manner.

#### **Research Submission:**

You and a partner will work on an area that correlates with the outline below. I want you to come up with and then offer a written analysis of, a selection of media examples following the theme for that week. In consultation with me, you will decide what sorts of media examples you want to find and decide how best to present them to me to share with the class (a disk, a series of

overheads, a website....). In most instances I will present your information as part of my lecture, but you will be responsible to pose questions, add information to the discussion, and generally help get things going on your research day in particular. Your submission package—media examples plus written analysis of about 300-500 words per example (to a total of about 2000 words) is due in the FIMS drop box by noon on the Monday prior to topic's date as listed in this syllabus. To be clear, the package will consist of

- 1) a variety of media examples in an easily accessible format. If I can't (with your help) make your material work in class, I can't give you a grade....
- 2) Several pages of analysis (per person and per example) or 'close readings' of about three (maybe more) of the media examples you provide. I'm looking for a word count that would be the rough equivalent of a 10-page essay from EACH of you. There need not be an overall thesis or controlling idea; they may be discrete analyses of the media examples you find provocative. Also, please do NOT research your examples. Instead, tell me what you think is interesting about them and what they might 'mean' in your own words and how the examples relate to the theme of the week.
- 3) Some detailed questions about the individual examples
- 4) A detailed list of what resources you consulted and who did what in your group
- 5) A general introduction might be helpful and perhaps some overall thematic questions you would like to raise.

All members of the group will receive the same mark for the group submission, but there will be an individual grade awarded for the individual essay you will submit after your package has been presented. Please let me know immediately if there are any problems in the groups. If I don't know there is a problem, your grade may suffer.

Note: spelling and grammar always count. Please, no jargon. Write in plain English about ideas that you clearly understand and can convey to others. If I'm not following your meaning, your mark will reflect my difficulty.

### **What about the paper generated from the seminar?**

The paper is due in class two weeks after your presentation date. It should focus on some particular aspect of the presentation that was meaningful to you. For the essay, I would like you to come up with a thesis statement, make an argument with some textual support, and present me with a 10-12 page (2500-3000 word) essay in MLA style. I like papers that are provocative and show original thought. Do not offer me only a synopsis of others' thoughts or writings or a synopsis of your presentation. Theory or criticism may form a portion of the paper, but that must not be the bulk of your work. Papers must be clearly written without jargon and in proper English. This is a relatively formal submission so please make sure your paper conforms. Late penalty is 5%/day and weekends count as two days. Please submit papers in hard copy, not via email.

### **Readings test:**

This will be a short in-class test made up of true/false and multiple choice style and/or fill in the blank questions to ensure that you have kept up with your readings. The date is March 16/2009. It will take only about a half an hour and if you have done your readings to date, it should be easy.

### **Take home exam:**

I will offer you two questions, choose one and answer in essay style with reference to at least three class readings. The questions will be broad and I will expect you to focus your answer and draw together the broader themes of the course. You will have one week to complete your answer.

Week 1: Introduction to course; meet up with a partner, exchange contact info and arrange to meet the following Monday in class time to brainstorm your research project.

Week 2: Meet with your partner to discuss your research project; please submit to me a brief outline of what you are planning to do, who is responsible for what, and what kind of format your presentation will use. Presentations will start on January 26 with submissions to my by the previous Thursday, January 22.

Week 3 Theme: "Through a glass darkly": a consideration of feminist approaches and 'frames.'

Readings: Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, Chapter 1, "News as Frame"  
Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*.  
"Introduction: The Variety of Feminist Thinking."  
Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, "'New' Themes."

Week 4 Theme: *Don't bet on that prince: women, fairy tales and progress*: The influence of fairy tale motifs, images, etc. on contemporary representations of women

Readings: Lieberman, Marcia. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale." *Don't Bet on the Prince*. Ed. Jack Zipes. London: Gower, 1986. 186-208.  
Elizabeth Wanning Harries. "Introduction." *Once Upon a Time: Women and the History of the Fairy Tale*. Princeton, UP: 2005.  
Jenny Diski, "Shit and Gold" and "The Old Princess" from *The Vanishing Princess*.

Researchers:

Week 5 Theme: When She was bad: women we love to hate

Readings: Romaine Smith Fullerton, "Representing the Reprehensible: Fairy Tales, News Stories, and the Monstrous Karla Homolka." *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*. Fall 2006.  
"On Linguistic Vulnerability" Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech*  
Patricia Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, "Maybe you mistook me for an Angel"

Researchers:

Week 6 Theme: Reading the Romance

Readings: Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, excerpt  
In-class viewing of *Forbidden Love*: the unashamed stories of Lesbian Lives

Week 7: Where is the 'love'? From romance to porn and some thoughts in between...

Readings: Barbara Creed, "Women and Post porn: Romance to Annie Sprinkle." *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*. B. Creed. Allen & Unwin, 2003.  
Linda Williams, "Speaking Sex" in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and The Frenzy of the Visible*  
Check out Candide Royalle's website at [www.royalle.com](http://www.royalle.com)  
Check out Andrea Dworkin's website at [www.nostatusquo.com/ACLU/dworkin/](http://www.nostatusquo.com/ACLU/dworkin/)

Researchers:

Week 8: CONFERENCE WEEK so no class.

Week 9 Oprah: I still can't decide whether I am 'for' or 'against' her...

Readings: Corinne Squire, "Empowering Women? The Oprah Winfrey Show," *Feminism & Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1994), 63-79. There's also a chapter on Oprah in Beretta E. Smith-Shomade's *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television* (Rutgers, 2002) that I have taught with some success along with the Squire.

Janice Peck, "Talk about Racism: Framing a Popular Discourse of Race on Oprah Winfrey" *Cultural Critique*, No. 27 (Spring, 1994), pp. 89-126

Dana L. Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in 'Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, v13 n2 p115-37 Jun 1996

Researchers:

Week 10 Theme: Belinda Stronach and political women: do they 'run like girls?'

Readings: Mary Ellen Brown and Darlaine Gardetto, "Representing Hillary Rodham Clinton: Gender, Meaning, and News Media" from Sreberny and Van Loonen's *Gender, Politics and Communication*

Liesbet Van Zoonen, "Broken Hearts, Broken Dreams? Politicians and Their Families in Popular Culture" from Sreberny and Van Loonen's *Gender, Politics and Communication*

Patricia Sullivan and Lynn Turner, "Politics, Power and Gender" from their book, *From the Margins to the Center Contemporary Women and Political Communication*

Researchers:

Week 11 Theme: *Lara Croft and video games*

Readings: Anne-Marie Schleiner, "Does Lara Croft wear Fake Polygons?" available at <http://www.opensorcery.net/lara2.html>

Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford, and Greig De Peuter, "Designing Militarized Masculinity: Violence, Gender and The Bias of the Game Experience" from *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture And Marketing*.

Elizabeth Buchanan and Thomas Lipinski, "Strangers in the 'Myst' of Video Gaming: Ethics and Representation"

Researchers:

Week 12 Theme: *Mothers: Can't live with 'em and we all gotta have at least one...*

The problematic mother in the media

Readings: Shari Thurer, "Introduction" to *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Re-invents the Good Mother*.

Rich, Adrienne. Excerpt from *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*.

Rubin, Lois. "We Have Deeper Selves to Write From: Motherhood and Writing." *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 4 (2) (Fall/Winter 2002): 19-35.

Researchers:

Theme: *Gender and orientation: Long Live the Queen: Queering and Drag*

Week: If those sexed male dress as women, or those sexed female dress as men, is that empowering? Is it insulting? Are drag queens/kings challenging or reaffirming patriarchy?

Film: please rent and watch on your time *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*

Readings: Carol-Anne Tyler, "Boys Will Be Girls" from *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*.

Barbara Creed, "Queering the Media: A Gay Gaze" from *Media Matrix Sexing the New Reality*

#### Theme14: *Women in Sports: The Jock-Strap Ceiling*

Week: Where are the women in the sports pages? Why/do women watch/read sports? Are the motivations for sports viewing different between men and women? Are the 'rewards' different?

Readings: Excerpt from Laura Robinson's *She Shoots, She Scores: Canadian Perspectives on Women and Sport*

Varda Burstyn. *Masculinity in Sport*. Excerpt.

Romayne Smith Fullerton. "Not Playing Fair: Coverage of Women and Minorities in the Sports Pages." *Simile* available online at [utpjournals.com](http://utpjournals.com).