

Women in the Media 2010
MIT 3210G Mondays 1230-330 pm MC 105

Instructor: Dr. Romaine Smith Fullerton

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1030-1130 am 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 or presentation done in small groups
(due in FIMS drop box by noon on the Thursday prior to your
theme's list in the syllabus) | 20% |
| • 10-12 page essay (or project) based on research presentation due in class
2 weeks after your material has been presented | 30% |
| • Surprise Readings quizzes
(in class – can be true/false, short answer, multiple choice, blanks) | 10% |
| • Final examination during regular exam period | 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 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 laptop, 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 for attendance/participation. You must contribute in a thoughtful, constructive and respectful manner. If you feel uncomfortable speaking up in class, please come see me and we will discuss what kinds of accommodation can be made.

Research Submission or Class Presentation:

Option One—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 link...). In this instance, 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 500 words per example (for a total of about 2000 words for each of you) is due in the FIMS drop box by noon on the Thursday 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 to your analyses; 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 pose to the class.

Option Two—class presentation:

Basically, I want a similar sort of package to Option One, but in this instance, your group will make your own presentation to the class, so you yourselves can control the discussions and set up the examples however you think would be most provocative and interesting. You will have an hour of class time in which to share your material with us. If you choose this option, I do not require you to write up an analysis of several of the media examples to accompany your slide show—I presume that you will offer directly to the class your own close readings of the texts that you present. I still expect, however, that each member of the group will submit an essay or project (see below for details) from some aspect of the presentation and that this essay or project will be due in class two weeks after your presentation date. If there are two groups who are presenting on a given day, it is a shared responsibility to see that your examples do not overlap.

Regardless of which option you choose—I present your material or you make the class presentation, all members of the group will receive the same mark for the group submission. There will, however, be an individual grade awarded for the individual essay or project 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. If I determine that someone in a group is not pulling her or his 'weight', that person will be required to submit a separate assignment to me and forfeits her or his group mark. The separate assignment will take its place.

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 (or project) 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. If you choose to write an 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. If you want to exercise an option to create something other than an essay to fulfill this assignment, please make your pitch to me before you undertake something different. In the past, students have done paintings, made models, created web sites, created political cartoons, written songs, and more. Please remember: it's not easier than writing a paper; it's challenging in a different way...

Readings quizzes:

In order that I know you'll keep up with your readings, there will be several pop quizzes throughout the term. I am prepared to drop the worst grade, but if you miss a quiz, that will be your 'extra' so no makeup quizzes.

Final exam:

The final exam will be in essay format. I will offer you some choice in which questions to answer. I will expect your responses to be in essay style with specific reference to at least three class readings in each question with no overlap. The questions will be broad and I will expect you to focus your answer and draw together the broader themes of the course.

Week 1: Introduction to course; meet up with a partner, exchange contact info and arrange to get together to discuss your research presentation or submission package. By the end of next class, I require you to submit (either hard copy in class or via email) a brief outline of what you plan to do and who is responsible for what. These presentations or research packages will begin on January 25 with submissions or outlines due to me the previous Thursday, depending on your theme date.

Week 2: 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 3: Theme: *Don't bet on that prince: women, fairy tales and progress*: The influence of historic fairy tale motifs, images, etc. on contemporary and postmodern representations of women
Readings: "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.

Peter & Iona Opie, "Rumplestiltskin" and "The Blue Beard" from *Classic Tales*

Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" from *The Bloody Chamber*

Week 4: Walt Disney: Do or Die?

Readings: Henry A. Giroux, "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" *Kinderculture*

Lieberman, Marcia. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female

Acculturation through the Fairy Tale."

In-class viewing of "The Mickey Mouse Monopoly"

Researchers (2):

Week 5: Theme: The 'new' princes and princesses: romancing the vampires and werewolves...

Readings: Jack Zipes, "A Second Gaze at Little Red Riding Hood's Trials and Tribulations"

Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, excerpt

Be sure to have a familiarity with *Twilight* (the first two books/movies at least)

Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves" & "The Werewolf" from *The Bloody Chamber*

Researchers (2):

Week 6: Theme: When She was bad: defining and framing the female criminal

Readings: Romaine Smith Fullerton, "Representing the Reprehensible: Fairy Tales, News Stories, and the Monstrous Karla Homolka." *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*. Fall 2006.

Judith Butler, "On Linguistic Vulnerability" from *Excitable Speech*

Patricia Pearson, "Maybe you mistook me for an Angel" from *When She Was Bad*

Researchers:

Week 7: CONFERENCE WEEK—NO CLASS!

Week 8: Theme: 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

Check out Andrea Dworkin's website at www.nostatusquo.com/ACLU/dworkin/

Researchers:

Week 9: Theme: Women are 'all talk'...Advice, talk shows, and the like: Dear Abby, Dr. Laura, Oprah, Ellen DeGeneres and others...

Readings: Corinne Squire, "Empowering Women? The Oprah Winfrey Show," *Feminism & Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1994), 63-79.

Deborah Tannen, "Gossip" from *You Just Don't Understand*

Researchers:

Week 10: Theme: BFF's (Best Friends Forever): girls/women and their girlfriends

Readings: Deborah Tannen, "Different Words, Different Worlds" from *You Just Don't Understand*

Carol Gilligan, "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle" and excerpt of "Images of Relationships" from *In a Different Voice*

Researchers:

- Week 11:** Theme: *Mothers (One): can't live without 'em...* an historical look back at representations of mothers in the media (early magazines and early television)
- Readings: Shari Thurer, "Introduction" to *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Re-invents the Good Mother*.
Jane Marcellus, "These Working Wives: Representation of the 'Two-Job' Woman Between the World Wars", *American Journalism*, 23 (3), 53-78.
Emily Spencer, "Lipstick and High Heels: War and the Feminization of Women in Chatelaine Magazine, 1928-1956. Unpublished dissertation, RMC Kingston.

Researchers:

- Week 12:** Theme: *Mothers (Two): can't live without 'em...* continue into the present
- Readings: 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:

- Week 13:** 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?
- 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*

- Week 14:** Class wrap-up and discussion about exam.