

Communication 347: Race, Class, and Gender in American Media

Fall 2008, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3-5PM (A&C S121)

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Office: W208 A/C (424-3132); Office Hours: 11AM-1PM Tuesdays & 3-5PM Wednesdays

Course Overview:

This course emphasizes the development of analytical and critical thinking skills to examine representations of race, class, and gender in American media. We will primarily focus on film and television, emphasizing historical perspectives on representations of identity and identity politics in these forms of media.

Throughout the course of the semester, we will discuss sensitive issues, some of which will touch on deeply held individual beliefs about the nature of identity. I expect that everyone in this class will address others (and the ideas of others) thoughtfully, and with respect.

Basic Objectives:

- to understand textual representations in terms of their audiences, as well as industrial and social contexts
- to understand the principles of textual analysis of media, particularly in terms of how media representations address issues of difference, including race, gender, class and sexuality
- to develop critical and analytical skills to examine depictions of minority stereotypes in the media
- to develop research skills to interrogate the reception of media texts

Required Materials:

- 1) *America on Film*, Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin, Wiley-Blackwell, 2003

Important Resources:

- Desire2Learn: Materials such assignments and review sheets will be posted here.
- Electronic Reserves: Readings labeled "ER" on the syllabus are available through Polk Library e-reserves.
- Office Hours: I encourage you to visit office hours. I am also available by appointment as my schedule allows. E-mail is fine for short questions, but to discuss papers or exams it is necessary to meet in person. Plan ahead to make appointments for the busy weeks before assignment deadlines.
- Writing Center: For additional help with papers, visit the university's Writing Center at any stage during the writing process. There are a variety of resources available—including workshops, handouts, and consultations with writing instructors—to help you craft strong papers marked by clear, concise, fluent, mechanically sound writing. Stop by the center in Radford Hall, call for an appointment (424-1152), or consult the Center's resources online at <http://www.english.uwosh.edu/wcenter>.

Policies:

- Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. More than one absence will affect your ability to perform well in this class. Absences of two or more days will be penalized. You are also expected to attend the entire class; partial absences will be counted in the formulation of your attendance and participation grade. If you have to miss a class or part of a class, please notify me in advance and arrange to make up the work covered during your absence. If you know that you will be absent during the term for religious holidays, athletics, or other reasons, *please me know in writing during the first two weeks of the semester* so that we can make sure that you can meet the course requirements. Excessive absences can lead to failing this course.
- E-mail: Do not submit assignments or drafts as e-mail attachments. When e-mailing me with a question, please remember to:

*** Include an informative subject header (begin it “Comm347”), and include your full name and section number in the message;**

* Proofread for clarity;

* Allow a response time of 24 hours.

Evaluation:

Participation/Attendance	20%
Analysis Paper 1	20%
Analysis Paper 2	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Presentation	10%
<hr/> Total:	100%

Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one grade per day (e.g., A to AB). All assignments and tests must be completed to receive a grade for this class. Make-up exams and paper extensions will be granted only in cases of well-documented hardship.

- Readings: You are expected to read the course material by the day listed in the syllabus. The assigned readings provide necessary preparation for each class. You will find it helpful to your coursework if you take notes and write summaries of the readings as you complete them (exam questions will draw directly from the readings, as well as class material).
- Participation: Your active involvement is crucial to the success of this class. Your participation grade will reflect the quantity and quality of comments made in class and how diligently you work to connect your own ideas to each week’s readings and themes in class. On most Thursdays, I will post screening questions on our d2l course page on Thursdays, and you will be required to submit responses by 5pm on the following Monday.
- Papers: These brief (four-to-five page) analysis papers will give you practice using critical skills that you are learning and will help with formulating your ideas about arguments found in class materials. Each assignment will be an opportunity to analyze a cultural representation in light of course themes. You will draw on readings to inform your analysis and to show your proficiency with course concepts; you are encouraged to draw on your own perspective, as well, to support your points. *Analysis Paper 1 is due on 10/21 and Paper 2 is due on 12/9 or 12/11, after you present your work.*

How are papers evaluated? Papers are assessed for their understanding of course materials, depth of critical insight, originality of thought, and clarity of expression (this includes writing mechanics).

- Exams: The exams will ask you to synthesize arguments and apply critical concepts encountered in this course. There will be different question types (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, essay) covering key ideas from class and readings. A review sheet will be provided, but the notes you take on the readings and during class will help you review and prepare in advance. *The midterm exam will be held on 10/28 during class.*

Important Deadline: The last day to drop courses is October 17th.

Assignments and due dates are subject to change, but I will give you at least 48 hours notice of any alterations to the schedule included in this syllabus.

Disability Services provides assistance to students with physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disabilities. You may contact their office at 424-3100 or www.uwosh.edu/dean/disability for more

information on the services it provides. **If you need special accommodations, please speak to me about it as soon as possible.**

Academic Conduct: All work submitted should be entirely your own. According to the UW System Administrative code, misconduct includes any instance in which a student “seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation” or “uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data.” Internet plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct. As stated by the Dean of Students’ web pages, this includes “cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation” and “paraphrasing from the web without crediting the source.” Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) copying any author’s phrasing without correct quotation and citation—this applies to course readings as well as outside materials.

UW-Oshkosh considers academic misconduct a serious violation. The university’s rules in regard to academic honesty will be strictly enforced. Academic misconduct may be grounds for failing an assignment or the course.

If you have any questions about what constitutes misconduct, you may ask me or refer to www.uwosh.edu/dean/conduct.htm and Chapter 14 of your student handbook. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the university’s policies.

Weekly Schedule

WEEK ONE

Thurs., 9/4 Introduction; Social Construction Theory

WEEK TWO

Tues., 9/9 Film Narrative Form and Industry Structure
B&G: Chapters One and Two (p.1-45)

Thurs., 9/11 Narrative Form
Screening: *It Happened One Night*

WEEK THREE

Tues., 9/16 Concepts of Race and Ethnicity: Whiteness
B&G: Intro and Chapter Three (p.47-73)

Thurs., 9/18 African Americans and American Film
B&G: Chapter Four (p.75-94)
Screening: *Do the Right Thing*

WEEK FOUR

Tues., 9/23 Representations of Native American and Asian American Identity
B&G: Chapters Five and Six (p. 96-133)

Thurs., 9/25 Latinos and American Film
B&G: Chapter Seven (135-153)
Screening: *Real Women Have Curves*

WEEK FIVE

Tues., 9/30 **Class Difference in American Film**
B&G: Intro to Part III and Chapter Eight (p. 155-176)

Thurs., 10/2 **The “Woman’s Film” and Class Struggle**
B&G: Chapter Nine (178-199)
Screening: *Stella Dallas*

WEEK SIX

Tues., 10/7 **Representing Gender on Film: Femininity**
B&G: Part IV Intro and Chapters 10 and 11 (201-247)

Thurs., 10/9 **Screening: *Thelma and Louise***

WEEK SEVEN

Tues., 10/14 **Masculinities and Feminisms**
B&G: Chapter Twelve (p.249-270)

Thurs., 10/16 **Hollywood Cinema and the Backlash Against Feminism**
B&G: Chapter Thirteen (p.271-289)
Screening: *Working Girl*

WEEK EIGHT

Tues., 10/21 **Sexuality and Film**
***Analysis Paper 1 is Due**
B&G: Part V Intro and Chapter Fourteen (p.293-316)

Thurs., 10/23 **New Queer Cinema**
B&G: Chapter Fifteen (p.318-337)
Screening: *Far From Heaven*

WEEK NINE

Tues., 10/28 **Midterm Exam**

Thurs., 10/30 **Race and Ethnicity in Early Television**
ER: Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory”
Screening: *TV Revolution*

WEEK TEN

Tues., 11/4 **Race, Gender and the Classic Network System**
ER: Mittell, “The ‘Classic Network System’ in the U.S.” and Conners, “Color TV? Diversity in Prime-Time TV”
Screening: *TV Revolution*

Thurs., 11/6 **Television as a Cultural Forum in the Classic Network Era**
ER: Levine, “U.S. Networks in the 1970s and 1980s”
Screening: *All in the Family, Mary Tyler Moore, Maude, and Sanford and Son*

WEEK ELEVEN

Tues., 11/11 **Race, Representation and The Netlets**
ER: Zook, excerpt from *Color by Fox*

Thurs., 11/13 **Netlets and Target Audiences**
***Proposals for Analysis Paper 2 are Due**
ER: Gray, "Recodings: Possibilities and Limitations in Commercial Television Representations of African American Culture"
Screening: *In Living Color* and *Frank's Place*

WEEK TWELVE

Tues., 11/18 **Postfeminism and Broadcast Television**
ER: Bellafante, "Is Feminism Dead?" and Vavrus, "Putting Ally on Trial"
Screening: *Ally McBeal*

Thurs., 11/20 **Race and Ethnicity on Cable**
ER: Jacoby, "Adjust Your Sets"
Screening: *Resurrection Boulevard* and *Soul Food*

WEEK THIRTEEN

Tues., 11/25 **Current Trends on Broadcast TV: "Reality"**
ER: Murray, "I Think We Need a New Name For It"
Screening: *Survivor*

THANKSGIVING BREAK: 11/26-11/30

WEEK FOURTEEN

Tues., 12/2 **Television, Convergence, and Audiences**
ER: Becker, "Prime-Time Television in the Gay Nineties"
Thurs., 12/4 **Current Trends on Broadcast TV: Discussing Diversity**
Screening: *The Office* and *Reaper*

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tues., 12/9 **Presentations (Analysis Paper 2 is due on the day that you present)**

Thurs., 12/11 **Presentations**