REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Representations of women abound in our media-saturated culture. From the sexualized images of women in advertising and music videos, to the action babes of TV-shows like Xena: Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, to news stories of victimized and oppressed women in the global south, we are bombarded with contradictory representations of women. This course will explore these representations in U.S. media culture and in global contexts to consider how they shape the modern mind. Some of the questions we will discuss in class include: How have representations of women changed over the past couple of decades—and how haven't they? Are contemporary images of warrior women empowering—or fantasies of empowerment? How do representations of women impact women and men, girls and boys? How do representations relate to power within and across cultures? How do Western representations of women from non-Western cultures compare to the lived experience of these women? The course will develop what scholars call critical media literacy—the ability to interrogate the relationship between media, ideology, and power.

HON 200: Seminar 002. Class meets MW in Honors 180, 9:30-10:45.
Professor Pia Møller, Visiting Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies, Honors House 125
Office hours:   Monday 11-noon
               Tuesdays 9:0-13:30
               Wednesday 2:00-3:30
Email: moller@uwm.edu
READINGS
Course Reader: our reader contains scholarly articles and book chapters and is available for Purchase at Clark Graphics (corner of Locust & Oakland Ave). Present course title, and professor’s name. Estimated cost: $12-15. All texts marked * are in the Reader.

In addition we will watch and analyze visual material (some of which is posted on D2L).

REQUIREMENTS
Active class participation (15%)  
6 prep papers (1 page single-spaced) (20%)  
Contributions to online discussion on D2L (15%)  
First formal paper (25%)  
Second formal paper (25%)  

These requirements (and their rationale) will be specified during the first two weeks of class. Formatting guidelines can be found under Course Matters on D2L.

PARTICIPATION
Participation accounts for 15% of your overall grade. It is difficult to earn a grade of A or B+ in the class unless you participate in the seminar on a regular basis. “Perfect attendance” (mere presence in the class) and occasional participation that demonstrates familiarity with the material will earn you a passing participation grade (C). To earn a participation grade in the B range, you need to participate on a regular basis in meaningful, relevant, and substantial ways that demonstrate real engagement with the material and with the ideas and questions under consideration. This includes volunteering interpretations and questions about the reading; sharing observations about the material; responding respectfully to other students’ perspectives and interpretations; and synthesizing the ideas shared by others; connecting texts to earlier texts and to events outside the classroom. Students who excel in these areas will earn a participation grade in the A range. I expect you to ask for clarifications when you need them and to take notes. Lingerering questions and loose ends from class discussions are excellent material to pursue on D2L; notes from the seminar will help you do so. Interrupting and acting arrogant or disrespectful towards other students or the professor during class discussions will detract from your grade as will any unauthorized cell-phone use or habitual tardiness.
ABSENCE POLICY

Make every effort to attend all classes. Three unexcused absences means you will not receive a participation grade. More than 3 absences mean you will not receive a course grade (your grade automatically becomes a grade of F). If you miss one class (or know that you’re going to miss one), do not email me to explain why. Instead, contact a class mate to find out what was discussed in class, get their notes, and do what you need to catch up. If you have concerns or questions, come see me during office hours. If you miss multiple classes or if you are facing a health issue or family emergency that prevents you from attending or affects your participation and concentration, you should come talk to me. Your medical issues need to be attended to and you may need documentation in case you want to withdraw from a course.

MIDTERM SEMINAR EVALUATION

Around midterm we do a brief anonymous evaluation of the course and the class as a learning community. I use feedback to make adjustments and changes so as to improve seminar discussions etc. In some of my classes, we have an open discussion based on our experiences and assessments. This will be at your initiative.

CONTACTING YOUR PROFESSOR

If you email me, mention your full name in the email (unless we already know each other from previous classes) and always note which class you’re in. Expect a response within 24 hours unless it’s the weekend. Feel free to email me to:

- Schedule an appointment
- Share relevant news stories, or bring campus events and other events to my attention
You may also speak to me directly before or after class about these things; sometimes that saves us from a strong of emails. You may also use D2L to publicize relevant events.

Please do not email me to:

- Ask questions that you can answer by consulting the syllabus/D2L documents. Always consult the syllabus first.
- Notify me that you will be missing class or explain why you missed a class. Unless you suffer more serious illness or face a family emergency, you do not need to notify. bsence
- Find out your current grade. If you have sincere concerns about your progress in the course, come see me during my office hours. I hope the conversation will be about how you can improve your grasp of a particular issue, your writing, etc., rather than about how to get you from one grade to another.
- Ask me to explain my comments on your paper—come see me during office instead.
GRADE
A+ 97-100   A  93-96   A - 90-92   B  87-89   B  83-86   B- 80-82
C+ 77-79   C  73-76   C - 70-72   D  60-69
Note: B- is the lowest course grade that will count toward Honors credit.

WORKLOAD
This is a 3-credit class. UWM estimates that a 3-credit class will take 147.5 hours of your time. Our class meets twice weekly for 75 minutes, for a total of 37.5 hours of required seminar time. That leaves 110 hours of work outside class. This averages out to around eight hours a week to be spent on reading, taking and reviewing notes, preparing questions, exploring representations, completing small assignments, and writing formal papers. Eight hours is of course an average; as a general rule, expect to spend at least two hours studying and preparing for each class session.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT
UWM expects each student to be honest in academic performance. Failure to do so may result in discipline under rules published by the Board of Regents (UWS 14). Sanctions imposed by the university in response to academic misconduct range from reprimands to expulsion. The most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism. Plagiarism includes: (1) directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them; (2) using sources of information (published or unpublished) without identifying them; and (3) paraphrasing materials or ideas of others without identifying the sources.

DISABILITIES
UWM is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is university policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any class activity, denied the benefits of any university program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination. The Student Accessibility Center (SAC) determines qualified disability status and assists students in obtaining appropriate accommodations and services by issuing a Verified Individual Services and Accommodations record. Please refer to: http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/

ACCOMMODATIONS
UWM faculty will make reasonable accommodation of observance of religious holidays. I will make every effort to accommodate students who face conflicts between their academic responsibilities and their religious commitments. The same goes for students who might be called to military service.
READING SCHEDULE

Week 1:
Jan 25:

Jan 27
  Andi Zeisler, “Pop and Circumstance: Why Pop Culture Matters” (1-21) D2L

  Read syllabus carefully, formulate questions.

  Due: Bechdel Test & Report.
  In class: begin screening Generation M.

POPULAR CULTURE AND FEMINISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Week 2
Feb 1
  Susan Douglas, “Girls Gone Anti-Feminist,” (5 pp.) online:
  http://inthesetimes.com/article/5575/girls_gone_anti-feminist

  Rebecca Walker “Feminist Infighting,” (2 pp.) online:
  http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-walker/feminist-infighting_b_89339.html

  Martha Rampton, “The Three Waves of Feminism” online:
  http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/three-waves-feminism

  In class: finish Generation M. Brainstorm questions and prepare to discuss online.

Feb 3
  Owen, Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Chapter Three “Leaving the Mothership” (91-129)

  Prepare: Try to apply what you’re reading to the cultural landscape that you are in:

    Which television shows illustrate the points in Owen at al?
    Which contradict their arguments?
    What shows do you think offer the most valuable representations of women?
    What new questions do you have after “applying” Owen et al.’s ideas?
Week 3

Feb 8
Melissa Klein, “Duality and Redefinition: Young Feminism and …” (207-225)*

Feb 10
bell hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression” (238-240)*

bell hooks, “Introduction: Come Closer to Feminism” (1-6)*

WOMEN IN CONTROL / CONTROLLING IMAGES

Week 4
Feb 15
Owen, Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Chapter One: “Hijacking Feminism” (21-62)

Monday Feb 15 or Tuesday Feb 16: 6-8 PM screening: Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979).
If you cannot make this screening, arrange to watch the film beforehand. Even if you’ve already seen the film, you should view it again.

Feb 17

Our main text for today is Alien – make sure to have watched it before class.

Week 5
Feb 22
Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images" (67-89)*

Task: find 3 examples/counter-examples of what Collins outlines from recent popular/news culture

Feb 24
Tricia Rose, “Hip Hop Demeans Women” (113-132)*

In-class: Segments of Hip Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes
Week 6  
Feb 29  
Tricia Rose, “Hip Hop is Not Responsible for Sexism” (149-165) and “There are Bitches and Hoes (167-186)*  
In-class segments of Hip Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes  

March 1  
Leah Perry: “I Can Sell My Body if I Wanna: Riot Grrrl Body Writing and Performing Shameless Feminist Resistance” Online:  
http://csalateral.org/wp/issue/4/i-can-sell-my-body-if-i-wanna-riot-grrrl-body/  
Mychal Denzel Smith, “Nicki Minaj’s Butt and the Politics of Black Women’s Sexuality”  

Week 7  
March 7-9  
Class does not meet this week: work on your papers and submit a draft to me by 10 AM the day BEFORE we meet. Final Papers are due Friday March 11, by noon (D2L)  

Week 8  
SPRING BREAK.  

HAS BABY COME A LONG WAY? WOMEN AND DIGITAL CULTURE  

Week 9  
March 21  
Watch Anita Sarkeesian’s “Damsels in Distress,” Parts 1 and 2 from Feminist Frequency: (50 minutes)  
http://feministfrequency.com/2013/03/07/damsel-in-distress-part-1/  
http://feministfrequency.com/2013/05/28/damsel-in-distress-part-2-tropes-vs-women/  

Prepare: What are her main arguments? Is her evidence adequate?  
Apply: Can you think of video games that complicate or contradict what Sarkeesian describes?  
Do you think her online critique is a good format for what she wants to do?  

March 23  
Owen, Bad Girls, Chapter 5: “Designing Women as Consumers”
REPRESENTATIONS OF VEILED WOMEN

Week 10
March 28
Owen, Bad Girls, Epilogue 231-245
Introduce new topic.

March 30
Azar Nafisi, Reading Lolita in Tehran pages*

Week 11
April 4
Mohja Kahf, “Spare me the Sermon on Muslim Women” (short article online):
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/03/AR2008100301968.html

Kahf, Emails from Scheherazade poems:
“My Babysitter Wears a Face Veil”
“The Marvelous Women”
All five “Hijab Scene” poems

April 6
Kahf poems:
“My grandmother washes her feet in the Sink of the Bathroom at Sears” (26-28)
“E-mail from Scheherazad”
“I Can Scent an Arab Man a Mile Away”

Week 12
April 11
Homa Hoodfar, “The Veil in Their Minds and On Our Heads” (248-272)*

April 13
Kahf poems:
“My Body is Not Your Battleground”
“My Queenly Daughters”
“Thawrah des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective”
“Finding Poems for My Students”
Week 13
April 18
Uma Narayan, “Cross-cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and ‘Death by Culture’” (81-118)*

April 20

Week 14
April 25
Stabile & Kumar, “Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender and the War on Afghanistan” (765-779)*

April 27
The case of Malala Yousafzai. Readings to be posted on D2L. (if possible we’ll arrange to watch He Named me Malala, 2015

Week 15
May 2
Due: draft of paper #2 for peer workshop. Bring 4+ pages.

May 4
Read: D2L selection of texts on representations of women in politics (approx. 25 pp).

Week 16
May 9
Final paper due at beginning of class.
Course recap, evaluations, and new questions.