

***Black Bodies, Blonde Ambitions, Global Trends:
Women and the Media***

WSS 281 (7910)

Please visit <http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/wss281/womedia.htm>

Spring 2004
Mon. & Wed. 4:15-5:35 p.m.
Social Science 134

Dr. Janell Hobson
Office: SS 344
Office Hours: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. Mon. & Wed.
Phone: 442-5575 email: jhobson@albany.edu

Course Description:

Women's bodies are at once *everywhere* and out of sight: fueling global economies through labor and consumerism and shaping ideologies of dominance as displayed on billboards, in magazine ads, on movie screens, in music videos, in the art gallery, or on the Internet. Moreover, their bodies signify diverse meanings when race is taken into context. This course will subsequently explore how intersections of race, gender, class, nationality, sexuality, age, and (dis)ability shape representations in mass media and popular culture. We will also develop a transnational feminist media analysis, leading us to consider possible means of creative resistance against sexual objectification and societal domination.

Required Texts:

Dines, Gail and Jean M. Humez, eds. 2002. *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*. 2nd edition. New York: Sage. (hereafter abbreviated as GM)
Jones, Amelia, ed. 2003. *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. New York: Routledge. (hereafter abbreviated as FV)
Nelson, Alondra, Thuy Linh N. Tu, and Alicia Headlam Hines, eds. 2001. *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life*. New York: NYU Press. (hereafter abbreviated as TC)
Course Packet – available at Shipmates (hereafter abbreviated as CP).

These books are available for purchase at Mary Jane Books or the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (20 points)

Your regular attendance and participation are required for the success of this class. Participation includes your weekly contributions of discussion questions and commentaries on reading/film assignments on our webct discussion board, in addition to your regular contributions to classroom discussions. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences; however, if you go over this number, you stand to lose 1 point for each additional absence from your final grade. If you cannot avoid an absence due to illness or emergencies, please notify me in advance so that you may be excused. A bonus of 2 points will be added to your final grade for perfect attendance.

Film Screenings (15 points)

Three screenings are scheduled this semester on Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in Physics 123. You can earn up to 15 points for attending these (5 points/screening). You will also need to read 2-3 reviews and criticisms of the film, prior to attending the screening, and to prepare an annotated bibliography of these secondary sources, to be submitted at the end of each screening. On the Mondays when we have an evening screening, regular class sessions will be canceled (with two exceptions: special

workshops on web design for the Class website group only [see below]). If you will be unable to attend these events, you will need to drop this class or stand to lose 15 points from your final grade!

Media Review (20 points)

You will be expected to submit a review (4-5 pages, typed and double-spaced) of a current movie, TV show, music CD, zine/website, video game/software, or print journal/magazine, using feminist media analysis. The assignment is due Wed., **Feb. 25**.

Media Watch (20 points)

We have an opportunity, as a class, to create a tool for public education and human rights advocacy: the collection of various media materials depicting women in either problematic or subversive ways, to be prepared for the activist work of **Breakthrough**, a human rights organization. This organization would especially like us to collect media images of women of color/"Third World" women, so you will be encouraged to collect materials featuring African/American, Arab/American, Asian/American, Latina, and Native American women and girls. You may choose one of two options: Option A - turn in a *Scrapbook* of clippings of print advertisements, postcards, greeting cards, flyers, etc. Option B - turn in a *Videotape* of recordings of music videos, TV commercials, movie trailers, or segments from TV programs (you may choose to focus on one genre here). In addition to this collection, you will need to write a 3-4 page overview and analysis (typed and double-spaced) of the items that you collected. Two bonus points will be added to this assignment when you share any of your media watch images on our webct board (by scanning images or passing on to me videotaped segments, converted into media files to be uploaded on webct). The assignment is due Wed., **Apr. 21**.

Media Activism Project (30 points)

To create media awareness, you will be expected to incorporate creative resistance in a group project. Media activism could include such projects as spoof ads, magazines and commercials, PSA videos, and radio station activities. (See Adbusters' website: <http://www.adbusters.org> or Breakthrough TV website: <http://www.breakthrough.tv>) You may sign up for one of the following group activism projects (to be presented last week of class):

- **Creative Video** - make a spoof commercial video, documentary short, an informative 30-second PSA, or a progressive music video or experimental film.
- **Resistance Advertising** - create a spoof advertising poster campaign or build a parody magazine.
- **Feminist Hour on the Radio** - through a campus or local radio station (i.e. – WRPI), seek air time (for approximately 1 hour) for the broadcasting of an antiracist, global feminist radio show, featuring announcements, readings, audio performances, and progressive music (the preparation of a *playlist* of possible music selections should be completed in advance).
- **Class Website** – construct a web site featuring the above class projects and assignments.

Grading Policy:

Your final grade is based on accumulative points.

A = 100-93	A- = 92-90	B+ = 89-86
B = 85-83	B- = 82-80	C+ = 79-76
C = 75-73	C- = 72-70	D = 69-65
E = Below 65		

Late assignments will result in 5 points deducted from your grade for each day late; no extensions will be granted with the exception of emergencies. In addition, plagiarism is a violation of University at Albany's policies and will not be tolerated. If you do not use proper citations (either in MLA or APA format), you will automatically fail this class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction

Jan. 21 Course overview.
Videos: *Culture Jamming & Breakthrough*.

Unit One: In/Visible Bodies

Jan. 26 FV: chapter 9.
CP: "Viewing in the Dark: Toward a Black Feminist Approach to Film."

Jan. 28 Online: "Blue Notes and Butterflies: Black Women's Singing."

Unit Two: Racial Formations & Violent Subjects

Feb. 2 Video: *The Darker Side of Black*.

Feb. 4 GM: chapters 13-14, 38.

Feb. 9 Evening Screening: *Bowling for Columbine*. / no regular class session.

Feb. 11 GM: chapters 33-34, 37.

Feb. 16 holiday – no class

Unit Three: Sexual Politics

Feb. 18 FV: chapters 19, 21, 24.

Feb. 23 GM: chapters 4, 42.
CP: "Naked, Neutered, Noble: The Black Female Body in American Culture and the Problem of Photographic History."

Feb. 25 Video: *The Body Beautiful*
Due: Media Review.

Mar. 1 Video: *Miss America*.

Mar. 3 FV: chapters 35-36, 38, 40.

Mar. 8* Evening Screening: *The Celluloid Closet*. / no regular class session

Mar. 10 GM: chapters 9-10, 56-57.

Mar. 15 Video: *Slaying the Dragon*.

Mar. 17 GM: chapter 63.
FV: chapter 33.

Unit Four: Technicolor Visions & Global Flows

Mar. 22 Video: *Color Adjustment*.

Mar. 24 CP: "Baby Mama (Drama) and Baby Daddy (Trauma): Post-Soul Gender Politics";
"White Flight."

Mar. 29* Evening Screening: *Daughters of the Dust*. / no regular class session

Mar. 31 FV: chapter 14
CP: "Dialogue between bell hooks and Julie Dash."

April 5-9, 2004, Spring Break

Apr. 12 TC: chapters 1, 2, 4, 7-9.

Apr. 14 Video: *Performing the Border*.

Apr. 19 TC: chapter 10.
GM: chapters 28, 66.
FV: chapter 62.

Apr. 21 **Due: Media Watch.**

Unit Five: Cultural Differences, Gendered Bodies

Apr. 26 Guest Lecturer/Author: Edwidge Danticat (Campus Center Assembly Hall).

Apr. 28 CP: "Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema."
Video: *Hollywood Harems*.

Conclusion: Producing Our Own Media

May 3 Presentations: Creative Video & Resistance Advertising.

May 5 Presentations: Feminist Radio & Class website.

*dates when special workshops on web design are held for Class website group members in Digital Workshop 2 of the Science Library (March 8 and 29). Other students in class have the option of attending these sessions.

