

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA
WSS 281 (6798)

http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/wss281/women_media.htm

Spring 2005
Tu/Th 1:15-2:35 pm
HUM 128

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson
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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 pm
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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 take on different 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 global feminist media analysis, leading us to consider possible means of creative resistance against sexual objectification and societal domination.

Women's Studies Department Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate that they:

1. understand and can use intersectional feminist analysis to explore the bases of social inequalities.
2. understand what it means to place women at the center of knowledge-making and of discourse across disciplinary boundaries.
3. understand how feminist pedagogy may be different from other forms of teaching and learning.
4. understand the dynamic relationship between Women's Studies scholarship and feminist social action.

For more information, please visit the website: www.albany.edu/ws

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

This course will parallel departmental goals and objectives in that students will:

1. dismantle the intersecting ideologies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, etc.
2. conceptualize feminist social justice beyond gender equity and towards community and human dignity.
3. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.
4. apply scholarship in the classroom to activism beyond these walls.

Required Texts (available at the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza and Mary Jane Books)

Edut, Ophira, ed. *Body Outlaws*.

Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl* (CD-Rom).

Mernissi, Fertima. *Scheherazade Goes West*.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*.

Course Packet – available at Shipmates (abbreviated in course schedule as CP).

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (15 points)

Participation includes your regular attendance and contributions to classroom discussions and the webct discussion board. You are allowed **3 unexcused absences**; however, if you go over this number, you stand to **lose 2 points for each additional absence** from your final grade. Excused absences will only be granted in cases of documented illnesses and emergencies. **Two bonus points toward your final grade**

for perfect attendance! Perfect attendance means that you have never missed a single class (whether this is excused or not – including for illnesses and emergencies), nor have you ever arrived late nor left early for any reason. If you attend every single session, from the beginning of class time to the end, and if you are respectful in class, contribute to discussions and never disrupt class through disrespectful behavior (being insulting, rude, or NOT turning off cell phones, pagers, and beepers), **then and only then** will you receive bonus points for perfect attendance.

Pop Quizzes (20 points)

Scheduled throughout the semester and unannounced; you will have as many or as few quizzes, depending on how regularly everyone in class keeps up with their reading assignments.

Media Essay (25 points)

You will be required to submit a written project towards possible publication. You may choose from one of the following:

- Option A: The e-journal, [transcending silence...](#), accepts undergraduate student research papers, creative writing, or artwork. For the purposes of this class, develop a critical essay (12-15 pages, typed and double-spaced) based on research conducted through a Media Watch. Your media watch could include a survey of advertisements (collected through magazine/newspaper/Internet clippings), TV commercials, programs, or music videos, an analysis of music selections (from a CD playlist that you've created), or a series of photographs that you've taken of public media (i.e. billboards, transit ads, posters, flyers, etc.). Your essay must examine representations of women observed in your media watch and analyze how race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality shape the image. You may focus your topic on certain groups of women if you wish (i.e. – African American women, Latina women, disabled women, etc.) or on certain themes in media (i.e. – violence against women, heterosexual romance, etc.). You will be expected to work on this project in drafts: the first draft to be turned in on Tuesday, **March 8**. The second draft (3 copies) will count as an official submission to the *transcending silence...* editorial board, which is due on Thursday, **March 31**, and which must also be turned in on CD/disk. Please follow the submission guidelines of the e-journal (turn in 3 hard copies and a disk/CD copy). Only those drafts that receive a B+ or higher (22 pts or more) will be forwarded to the editorial board. If your submission is accepted for publication, a third and final draft, which should include major revisions based on feedback from the editorial board, is due Tuesday, **April 26**. 3 bonus points added to the project grade if published.
- Option B: As part of our class's participation in the [Frankenstein Manifesto Film Series](#) this semester, write a Review Essay (an extended movie review) of 4-5 films featured in the film series (5-8 pages, typed and double-spaced). Be sure to analyze representations of gender, as well as to explore the films through a common theme of your choice (i.e. – artificiality, freaks and outsiders, etc.). You are expected to attend more than half of the film screenings featured in this event in order to receive full credit. The series will be held **Thursdays, 7:30 pm, from February 3 to March 31**, in Humanities B39. The review essay is due in class on Tuesday, **April 12**.

To prepare for this assignment, you will need to choose Option A or B by Tuesday, **February 8**. Explain your choice in a 1-3 page proposal (typed and double-spaced); then, submit an [annotated bibliography](#) (by Tuesday, **February 15**) of 4-5 secondary sources (articles from academic, peer-reviewed journals) relating to your subject matter. In your annotations, provide a brief summary (150 words) of main arguments in each source; list citations in [APA format](#). The annotated bibliography counts 10 points toward your final grade; the proposal: 5 points.

Website Team (25 points)

From Production to Consumption: in teams of 4, collaborate on the creation of a website that provides information and traces the impact of women's bodies in our global information age, from the worker/producer, who assembles our media, to the consumer who is seduced into buying these products. How are women's bodies used on both ends of media production? Your website should include interactive features (such as images and hyperlinks) that expand on your written information. You may choose to present your information through 1.) meta-site – an extended listing of related links (15-20 websites) with an analytical description of each website; 2.) hypertext essay – information presented through an informative essay; 3.) interactive game – an innovative way of presenting your information by offering visitors to your site a fun way to interact with information through the form of a “game”; or 4.) virtual gallery or virtual map – information organized through images or a map/diagram. Be sure to seek permissions for any digitized photographs, art, or video/audio used in your website (the same applies to any used for your media essay project submitted to the e-journal).

Your team may focus on one of the following media topics:

I. “Who Assembled This Computer? What’s on the Screen?” Explore the role of women workers in our digital age; what lives do they lead, and why is computer media making such lives “invisible” to the rest of us? Then, explore how the visibility of women's representations in cyberspace supports this invisibility.

II. “Who Made this Lingerie? What Makes it Sexy?” Explore the role of women workers in sweatshops; what lives do they lead, and why do all of our fashion ads make such lives “invisible” to the rest of us? Then, explore how the sexual objectification of women in fashion ads supports this invisibility. Similar questions can be applied to the other topics below.

III. “Who’s getting married? Why are weddings so expensive?”

IV. “Who Made this Video Game? Who Has the Power and Control?”

V. “Who is Forced to Work in Porn Industries? How is Pornography Mainstreamed in Our Everyday Lives?”

VI. “Where is the ‘Real’ Cancun? How is Spring Break and Sex Tourism Linked?”

VII. “Who Stole the Music? From Poverty to Hip-Hop to Sweatshops.”

VIII. “Whose Harem is This? From Burquas to Bikinis.”

IX. “Hollywood or Bollywood? Fantasies, World Cinemas, and Representations of Women.”

X. “What’s wrong with women’s bodies? Cosmetic Surgery, Thinness, and Skin Color.”

On each team, students may perform one of these roles: *web master; managing editor; researcher; bibliographer*. A website team proposal (3-5 pages, typed and double-spaced), including a design layout for the web page and plans for digitizing your information in an interactive hyper-format, is due Thursday, **March 17**. The written text for the website is due Tuesday, **April 19**. The completed website is due on a CD/disk by Monday, **May 9**, 4 pm in my mailbox, Social Science 341. Only websites receiving a grade of A- or higher (23 pts or more) will be published on our class website.

Please note: Our online syllabus provides links to guidelines for the above assignments.

Expectations:

- *Discipline* to complete course requirements, *Desire* to learn more, and *Delight* in the learning process. (3 Ds = guaranteed A!!)
- Compassion, respect for others, and tolerance for other points of view (will allow further access to the 3 Ds).
- Comfort and appreciation for learning through technology (access to a computer will facilitate the 3 Ds for this course). Welcome to the 21st century!

Format and Grading Policies:

- This course will be structured primarily around discussions and occasional lectures.
- Please come to class with reading materials; you are expected to have read them prior to the class session, so be prepared to discuss them or to be quizzed on them.

- Films and videos will be screened on the dates listed in the schedule; you have the option of viewing these ahead of time (at the library, through video store, or on webct) but it is not required. We will discuss films/videos after viewing them in class.
- Due to the contents of this course, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. If you engage in disruptive behavior (i.e., delivering insults, using vulgar expressions, doing work or having conversations not related to this class, not turning off cell phones, beepers and pagers, walking out in a way that disrupts class, arriving late, or leaving early without first consulting me when this is unavoidable), then **3 such incidences = 1 unexcused absence**. (Please see Attendance Policy)
- Whenever you have concerns over a grade assigned, please contact me at least 24 hours after receipt of your grade. You must also submit a typed letter addressed to me and delivered in person (NOT over email) if you wish to challenge a grade and state your case. Please only send emails to schedule an appointment, not to discuss concerns with the course.
- Late assignments will result in 5 points deducted from your grade for each day late; no extensions will be granted with the exception of documented emergencies. In addition, plagiarism is a violation of university policy; any errors in citations and use of work that is not your own will result in a failing grade for assignments.

Due Dates

Feb. 8	Project Proposal.
Feb. 15	Annotated Bibliography.
Mar. 8	Option A – first draft.
Mar. 17	Website team proposal.
Mar. 31	Option A – second draft.
Apr. 12	Option B.
Apr. 19	Website written text.
Apr. 26	Option A – final draft if accepted for publication.
May 9	Website.

Letter-Grade Equivalents:

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

Extra Credit:

1 pt. for every four Women's Studies/IROW events or special "Sci-Fi series" events attended on campus and for submitting a minimum 500-word analysis for each event (on webct no later than 48 hours after each event). See events pages for Women's Studies (www.albany.edu/ws/news.html), IROW (www.albany.edu/irow/programs.html), and Frankenstein/Sci-Fi series (library.albany.edu/imc/exh/calenda.htm). 1 pt. each for attending keynote address by Meredith Levande (Feb. 15, 8 pm), Shelley Jackson (Mar. 1, 4 pm seminar or 8 pm lecture), or Praba Pilar (Apr. 29, 8 pm).

Course Schedule

Jan. 20 Course overview and introduction.

UNIT ONE: MEDIA AND THE CULTIVATION OF DESIRE

Jan. 25 Online: Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema; Better Beauty for Technology.

Jan. 27 CP: (1) Viewing the West through Bollywood.
WebCT readings: "Globalization and Carnival"; "Racializing the Puerto Rican Day Parade"

Feb. 1 CP: (2) The Wedding Industrial Complex.

Feb. 3 CP: (3) Who's a Sissy?

UNIT TWO: THE MAINSTREAMING OF VIOLENCE AND PORNOGRAPHY

Feb. 8 Video: *The Darker Side of Black*.
Due: Proposals.

Feb. 10 CP: (4) Who(se) am I? The Image and Identity of Women in Hip-Hop.
Online: "From Sweatshop to Hip-Hop"; "Rhyme Pays."

Feb. 15 Guest Speaker: New York City-based songwriter, Meredith Levande.
Due: Annotated Bibliography.

Feb. 17 CP: (5) Naked Capitalists; (6) Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power.
Online: "Meet Bindi."

UNIT THREE: TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

Feb. 24 CP: (7) Mobile Stars, Digital Selves, and Video Games.
Website: "Grrl Gamer."

Mar. 1 *Patchwork Girl*.

Mar. 3 Web Design Workshop: Digital Workshop #2 (ground floor, Science Library).

Mar. 8 Video: *Performing the Border*.
Due: Option A - first draft for e-journal submission.

Mar. 10 CP: (8) At Your Service: Latin Women in the Global Information Network.
Website: "Mythic Hybrid."

UNIT FOUR: LOCAL SITES, GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Mar. 15 CP: (9) Mayan Migration and Cancun Tourism; (10) On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism.

Mar. 17 Video: *The Merchants of Cool*.
Due: Website Team Proposal.

Spring break

Mar. 29 *Scheherazade Goes West*.

Mar. 31 Video: *Hollywood Harems*.
Due: Option A - second draft for e-journal submission.

UNIT FIVE: BEAUTY, MYTHS, AND RESISTANCE

- Apr. 5-7 *The Bluest Eye.*
- Apr. 12 Video: *A Question of Color.*
Due: Option B - Review Essay.
- Apr. 14 CP: (11) World Piece: What the Miss World Pageant Can Teach about Globalization.
- Apr. 19 Video: *Miss America.*
Due: Website Written Text.
- Apr. 21 Video conclusion.
Body Outlaws: preface, introduction, and "Body Image."
- Apr. 26 Body Outlaws: select readings.
Due: Option A – final draft for accepted submissions.
- Apr. 28 Guest Speaker: Praba Pilar.
- May 3 Video: *The Body Beautiful.*
- May 4 All day web design workshop: 10:30 am – 5 pm, Digital Workshop #2 (ground floor, Science Library).
- May 9 Website due – SS 341 mailbox, 4 pm.