Course Description:
Women’s bodies are at once everywhere and out of sight: fueling global economies through labor and consumerism and shaping ideas about power as displayed on billboards, in magazine ads, on movie screens, in music videos, on the radio, 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 women’s representations in mass media, how they reflect or even influence women’s realities, and what these images – and the markets that produce them – tell us about gender and its complex relationship with race, class, nationality, sexuality, and dis/ability. We will also examine both local and global media, and the history of colonial influences in shaping gender and sexual imagery, in order to fully understand why women (or at least the signs of womanhood) have become so central in selling everything from sex to government propaganda. We will also produce media projects to imagine these representations differently.

Online Syllabus:
An online version of this syllabus has been created to enhance your information and knowledge for this course. The URL (website address) is included at the top of this page, and you are strongly encouraged to visit it on a regular basis (a hyperlink to the online syllabus is also available on our Blackboard page). To access Blackboard, use your net ID (first and last initials followed by the last four digits of your SSN) and your password (first initial, followed by the first four digits of your SSN, and your last initial) to log on. You may later change this password. The online syllabus provides you access to hyperlinks to relevant websites and online essays relating to this course.

COURSE FULFILLMENTS & GOALS

General Education Information Literacy Learning Objectives:
Pending approval, this course will serve as an information literacy course that introduces students to various ways in which information is organized and structured and to the process of finding, using, producing, and distributing information in a variety of media formats, including traditional print as well as computer databases. Students acquire
experience with resources available on the Internet and learn to evaluate the quality of information, to use information ethically and professionally, and to adjust to rapidly changing technology tools.

Women’s Studies Department Goals and Learning Outcomes: [www.albany.edu/ws](http://www.albany.edu/ws)

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.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

This course will parallel departmental goals and objectives in that:
1. Students will learn to read and critically reflect on different media and the ways that they utilize conventional attitudes and visual tropes about femininity and masculinity.
2. Students will also learn to apply intersectional analysis to this concept - recognizing how femininity and masculinity are understood through racial, national, and class-based constructions.
3. Students will not only examine mass media sources but create their own media projects to participate in image-making and challenge limited representations and conventional narratives.
4. Students will learn to dismantle sexism and its interplay with other ideologies of dominance, such as racism, classism, xenophobia, and homophobia.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts

Course Packet - available for purchase at Shipmates, in Stuyvesant Plaza (hereafter abbreviated as CP in the course schedule).

*The New York Times* Monday-Friday subscription. (Call 888-NYT-COLL – mention media code SNY ZFX, or sign up online at [www.nytimes.com/student](http://www.nytimes.com/student)). Student rates: $0.40 daily and $3.00 Sunday.


Activities

1. **Class Participation** - You are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions, to listen effectively to lectures and to others, and to bring reading materials to class. Due to the contents of this course concerning gender, sexuality, and racial issues, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. You are also expected to attend class regularly and are permitted 3 unexcused absences for the semester, after
which you will lose 5 points for each additional absence from your final grade. An excessive show of lateness or failure to remain in class for the duration of class time will also impact negatively on your final grade, so please be judicious in how you use your allotted absences and how you monitor your presence in the classroom.

2. **Online Student-Led Discussions**: On our Blackboard online classroom site, you will be expected to contribute to online student-led discussions, an important learning activity in this course. Each week, you are required to write a discussion question or respond to a debate question concerning each reading and video assignment, and then facilitate the ensuing discussion. Before you post a question or response, read the questions already posted, and do not repeat a question asked by another student. Your discussion question should relate directly to an issue raised in the reading or video, and it should elicit a thoughtful response. Don’t ask a question which can be answered by simply looking up the answer. Your question should require critical thinking and should be provocative in its ability to evoke commentary. In addition to facilitating the discussion on your own topic, you are also required to be an active participant in at least three of the topics facilitated by other students. It is important to post your discussions as soon as you have completed the reading/screening and to return frequently to facilitate and participate in these discussions. You are expected to reply to all students who have responded to your discussion question. I will grade these discussions, but I will not be a participant. I will instead draw from these discussions to shape our in-class discussions. If the online discussion you are leading gets off track, it is your responsibility to refocus it. You are responsible for maintaining the quality of the discussion threads you lead. Every posting to a discussion should add something substantive to that discussion. Be sure to read the detailed instructions provided online for facilitating and posting to student-led discussions. I will close discussion threads 2 weeks after your initial posting.

**Assignments:**

1. **Media Watch**: Three exercises are geared towards media awareness this semester (5 points each – 15 points total):
   - **Video Blog**: The goal of this online Blackboard exercise is to introduce you to various video sources on the Internet (e.g. YouTube, Veoh, Vimeo) and to promote dialogue with your classmates about current media and their depictions of women. Between Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, December 6, you are expected to post a link to a video clip and provide commentary in our Video Blog discussion topic. The clip may include a music video, a segment of a TV show or movie, a commercial, or a movie trailer. It should also last anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes. The clip should also be accompanied by a 150-200 word analytical response. You should carefully choose your clips for either their typicality (are representations of women stereotypical and/or conventional?) or atypicality (do these representations subvert conventional narratives about women?). You are expected to post at least three (3) video blog entries for the semester, to reply to each student who
posts comments to your blog entries, and to reply each week to at least two (2) other blog entries posted by your classmates. Please read detailed instructions included on our Blackboard.

- **My Journal on Cyberspace Performance:** The goal of this Blackboard journal assignment is to chronicle your experiences interacting in an online environment, such as *Second Life*, the blogosphere, or any other online site that allows you to interact with others through an assumed alias or avatar. For the purposes of this assignment, your alias/avatar should be a fictional character that allows you to perform a different gender, race, or sexual identity and to observe the ways that you are treated by others accordingly. In other words, does the virtual space allow different rules of engagement, or does it reproduce similar real-life environments? You are required to post at least one journal entry each week, throughout the semester, and to also comment each week on at least two (2) other students’ journal entries. You are also expected to reply to all students who comment on your journal. If you already have an existing alias or avatar in cyberspace, feel free to adapt it to this assignment.

- **Women in the News Commentary:** As part of a semester-long Monday-Friday review of *The New York Times*, you will be required to subscribe to the newspaper and to create each week a comparative analysis in which you will locate a news story, ad, letter, editorial, photograph, or political cartoon pertaining to women and then compare the newspaper item with what has been reported on the women-centered radio broadcast, *51%*, which airs Wednesdays at 3 pm on WAMC’s public radio program on 90.3 FM (also available online at www.wamc.com); be sure to start listening and reading the third week of classes. On Blackboard, you are to write a 200-word commentary each week (beginning the week of September 11) that compares the two news genres and their representations of women until Tuesday, **Oct. 30**, when you will instead post and bring to class an original concept (500-700 words) for a 30-minute show appropriate for the radio program, replete with an appropriate music playlist of two songs to open and close this special broadcast. Be sure to respond to at least three (3) of your classmates’ concepts and to reply to at least two (2) of your classmates’ commentaries each week.

2. **Review:** Write a review (4-5 pages, typed and double-spaced) of a current movie playing in theaters, of a classic movie critiqued in any of our readings or video screenings, or of a current or classic woman’s music album. Your selection should be based on the medium’s typical (conventional or stereotypical) or atypical (progressive or subversive) portrayal of women. Your review should include a synopsis of the medium’s overall content and themes, as well as an analysis of its depictions of gender and its relationship to race, class, sexuality, and nationality as they come into play. Be sure to highlight both positive and negative attributes. In other words, rather than focus on what you “liked” or “disliked,” examine instead what the text has to offer and how it functions in its particular context. (e.g. If a movie or album appeared in 1941 or 2001, what was
going on in that year, and how does the text reflect its particular time period, especially in the way that it highlights personal and political themes?) (due Tuesday, Nov. 20). Regularly read the movie and music reviews offered in The New York Times for models.

3. Visual Narrative: This major assignment, requiring you to pair up with another classmate, will necessarily shift the focus from media criticism to media production. In the event of an odd person out, that student will choose to work individually or team up with one of the groups. Each group is to highlight a social problem that hasn’t received much attention in mainstream media; be sure that this social problem is not a recognizable “women’s issue” but is nonetheless an important subject affecting women’s lives. Your Goal: Reframe the social problem as a “feminist” issue through your media. If you must address a recognizable feminist issue (e.g. abortion, rape, eating disorders, etc.) then please do so from a fresh new angle. You have a few choices on how to create a visual narrative. Select from one of the following media genres:

- **Photo-Narrative** – Tell a story, highlighting the social problem, through 24 original photographs (a digital camera, disposable camera, or even cell-phone camera are acceptable), each photo serving as a frame, with a 2-3 sentence caption accompanying each frame. You may include persons who give you permission to include their images in your photo-essay (such photographic subjects may agree to do real-life, documentary-style portraits, or they may serve as actors performing in a fictional photo narrative). Your captions may be written in critical-essay format, poetic format (rhyme, haiku, free-verse, etc.), or they may be satirical or ironic.

- **Original Music Video** – produce a 3-5 minute music video to raise awareness of the social problem. You may create original music and visualize a concept for the video, or you may recast a popular anti-feminist song and render it ironically through your feminist video concept. You may also use spoken-word poetry (original or borrowed) instead of music for your video.

- **Found Footage Film** – create a montage of various clips from movies, music videos, TV shows or commercials, home videos, or still images to create a 5-10 minute film (each clip should be less than 30 seconds). Edit your clips through imovie or similar video editing program. The clips must cohere to tell a unique story, one that raises awareness about the social problem. You may include a voice-over narrative and/or music soundtrack, or you may render it in the style of a “silent film.”

This project is to be completed in phases: First is the annotated bibliography of 10 sources relating to your topic; sources must include: two websites with relevant and valid information; four academic journal articles (search library databases – EBSCO, J- STOR, Project Muse, Women’s Studies International, and WORLDCAT); two book chapters; and two articles or book chapters referenced in the endnotes/bibliography of an assigned reading (due Tuesday, Sept. 25). Next is the Proposal (2-3 pages typed and
double-spaced), which must include a description of the visual narrative you and your partner will create to explore the social problem. Third is a Conference Abstract (200-word project description to be submitted to the “Media Activism and Feminist Futures” Women’s Studies Student Conference – scheduled for November 29-30, 2007), which must be emailed to wstudent@albany.edu by Tuesday, Oct. 16, the same due date for your proposal. Fourth is a storyboard that visualizes your project (due Tuesday, Oct. 23). Finally due is the visual narrative in its final version (which must include a written introduction explaining your project, 2-4 pages, typed and double-spaced) to be presented in class Tuesday, Dec. 18, 1:00-3:00 pm. Bonus 5 Points will be added to this project grade if you present your visual narrative at the student conference on Friday, November 30. Bonus two (2) points for each workshop that you attend at the Interactive Media Center.

4. **Assignment Checklist/Self-Evaluation** – designed to help you keep track of your performance in this course, due Thursday, Dec. 6; see last page of print syllabus.

5. **E-Journal Submission** – Select your Review or your Visual Narrative for submission to the undergraduate e-journal, *transcending silence*... [website link] Make your selection based on the project that reflects your better work (I will also make recommendations). Follow submission guidelines and turn in e-journal materials packet on Tuesday, Dec. 18.

### HOW YOUR GRADES ARE DETERMINED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities and Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>DUE DATES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Student-Led Discussions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Watch Exercises</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>ongoing (radio concept – Oct. 30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nov. 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Narrative</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>annotated bibliography (Sept. 25)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>proposal and abstract (Oct. 16)</td>
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<td>storyboard (Oct. 23)</td>
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<td>completed project (Dec. 18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment Checklist/Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-Journal Submission</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dec. 18</td>
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Grading Scale:

- A = 100-93
- A- = 92-90
- B+ = 89-87
- B = 86-83
- B- = 82-80
- C+ = 79-77
- C = 76-73
- C- = 72-70
- D = 69-65
- E = Below 65

### EXPECTATIONS

As previously mentioned, you are allowed up to 3 unexcused absences. Excused absences and make-up assignments are only granted in cases of emergency and grave illnesses. If you miss more than your allotted three unexcused absences, you stand to
lose 5 points for each additional absence. If you accumulate more than 7 unexcused absences, you will fail this course.

Late assignments will result in a 5-point reduction for each day late. After two days late, you will receive a “0” for that assignment.

Plagiarism is a university offense and will result in failing grades. First time offense will result in a “0” for your assignment. Second offense will result in a failing grade for the course.

TO AVOID PLAGIARISM:
Understand what it means: plagiarism results when someone uses the ideas or writings of another and presents these ideas or writings as his or her own. Examples include:

1. Buying a paper from a research service or term paper mill.
2. Turning in a paper from a “free term paper” website.
3. Turning in a paper someone else has written for you.
4. Copying materials from a source without proper citation.
5. Using proper citation but leaving out quotation marks.
6. Paraphrasing materials from a source without appropriate citation.

When citing sources, it is best to present ideas using your own original words. If you fully understand a source, you will be able to completely describe its themes and ideas in your own words and from your own perspective. However, if you copy a passage that someone else wrote and only change a few words around, it becomes plagiarism.

When quoting directly from sources, it is best to use direct quotes only if the phrasing is apt and powerfully stated; be sure to include proper citation. If the quote is not revelatory or eloquent but simply provides some useful information, then it is best to explain the information completely in your own words while providing proper citation.

Use the site www.turnitin.com to submit your written work and check for plagiarism errors. The easiest way to do this is to log on, create an account (if you are a new user) and copy and paste your essay into the assignment box.

TO AVOID COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT:

Since you will be engaged in media production and will possibly work with various media sources, you will need to familiarize yourself with copyright policies on “fair use” of others’ creative works. Copyright “fair use” laws allow you to reproduce copyrighted work only if your use of such work is “transformative” of the original or if it contains a small portion of it. It is often difficult to determine the nature of such transformations and portions, so when in doubt, it is safest to seek permission from the copyright owner for free use (if your work is for educational rather than commercial purposes, as is the case for your visual narrative projects) or to pay a licensing fee. For more information,
please visit Stanford University’s website on copyright fair use laws: http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_fair_use_Overview/

To pay a one time individual licensing fee for royalty free music in the public domain, please visit: http://www.pdinfo.com or http://www.creativecommons.com

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE!

This course can be a great deal of fun – paying intellectual attention to the popular culture texts that you might be regularly engaging outside of your college assignments without much critical thought. However, this is still a college course, and I expect you to treat this subject with the same level of intellectual rigor as you would any other academic course. You are expected to keep up with your reading assignments, to treat assigned videos with the same seriousness as your readings, to post regularly on Blackboard assignments, and to complete all projects with enthusiasm and diligence.

Minimal Knowledge Base:
I know what an image is and that it has deeper meanings than the superficial messages offered in mass media.

I know that concepts like “gender,” “race,” “class,” and “sexuality” are social constructions.

If you do not understand these two statements, then this course will be exceedingly difficult for you. This does not mean that you will not be able to pass this course, but it does mean that you will have to work extra hard in grasping course materials. Please do not hesitate to make appointments with me whenever you have questions and concerns. If you are not prepared to work hard to make up for lack of prior knowledge, please consider dropping this course. Please send emails to make appointments, not to discuss concerns with the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

Aug. 28 Course overview and introduction.
Screening: “Breakthrough.”


UNIT ONE: BODY / POLITICS

Sept. 6  Screening: “Miss America” (PBS American Experience, 2004).

Sept. 11 Online essay: “No More Miss America.” (See online syllabus.)
CP: Barnes, “Face of the Nation.”

Sept. 13 holiday – no class.


Sept. 25 Screening: “Performing the Border” (Ursula Biemann, 1999).
Due: Annotated Bibliography.


UNIT TWO: MYTHICAL NORMS AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

Oct. 2  CP: Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies.”

Oct. 4  CP: Shohat, “Gender and Culture of Empire.”

Oct. 9  CP: Jabbra, “Women, War, and Words.”
Online: “Buying the War”; “September 12.” (See online syllabus.)

Workshop: Visualizing Narratives.

Due: Visual Narrative Proposal and Conference Abstract (sent to wstudent@albany.edu).


UNIT THREE: MEDIATING SEXUALITY

Due: Visual Storyboard.

Oct. 25 CP: Russo, “Who’s a Sissy?”

Due: 51% Radio Concept.
Nov. 1  *Pimps Up, Ho’s Down*: Book Forum at 5:45 pm, Campus Center 375. (Class will meet at this time instead – students who cannot attend because they have a conflict with another class or job must submit a book review – 4-5 pages, typed and double-spaced – and a note from employer or class registration schedule the previous session.)

Nov. 6  Screening: “The Devil’s Music: 1920s Jazz” (PBS Culture Shock Series).

Nov. 8  CP: Stavney, “Cross-dressing Harlem, Re-dressing Race.”

**UNIT FOUR: SOUNGING OFF – FROM POP CULTURE TO POLITICS**


Nov. 15  CP: Griffin, “When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women’s Singing.”

**Due: Review.**

Nov. 22  holiday –no class.

Nov. 27  Screening: “Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing” (Barbara Kopple and Cecelia Peck, 2006).

Nov. 29  Film continued.

*Women’s Studies Student Conference: “Media Justice and Feminist Futures”* – November 29-30, 2007, Campus Center Assembly Hall.

**UNIT FIVE: RETHINKING THE BODY POLITIC**

Dec. 4  CP: Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory.”

**Due: Assignment Checklist/Self-Evaluation**

Dec. 18  FINAL (1:00-3:00 pm): Visual Narrative Projects – Presentations.
**Due: Visual Narrative & transcending silence… submission packet (select review or visual narrative for e-journal submission).**
ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST AND SELF-EVALUATION

Please complete the following, to be signed and turned in Thursday, December 6 (5 pts).

1. Class Participation (10 points)
   a. How often did I participate in class discussions? _____ /week _____/month.
   b. How many absences did I accumulate? _______. How many of these were excused? ________.
   c. Was I ever late to class or left early? _______. If so, how often? ______.

2. Online Student-led Discussions (25 points)
   a. What cumulative points did I receive for my online discussions? ______.

3. Media Watch (15 points)
   a. What cumulative points did I receive for my Media Watch exercises? ________.
   b. Did I lose any points for lateness on these assignments? ___. If so, how many? ____.

4. Review (20 points)
   a. What cumulative points did I receive for my Review? ________.
   b. Did I lose any points for lateness on this assignment? ___. If so, how many? ____.

5. Visual Narrative (20 points)
   a. Did we turn in an Annotated Bibliography? _______. Did we turn in a Proposal? _______. Did we email our Abstract to wstudent@albany.edu? _______. Will we submit a written introduction? _______. What number of points do we expect to receive for this assignment? _______.

6. E-Journal Submission (5 points)
   a. What number of points do I expect to receive for this assignment? _______.

7. Extra Credit
   a. Did I earn bonus (5) points for presenting at the Women’s Studies Student Conference? ________.
   b. Which IMC workshops did I attend? ___________________________. When did I attend these? _____________________________.

EXPECTED TOTAL POINTS: __________ EXPECTED GRADE: __________

____________________________________ _____________________________
Print Name      Your Signature      Date