Department of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Gender in Pop Culture (WGS2061) – Online/Distance Learning Only
Spring 2015
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SYLLABUS

- "Sexuality here in America remains a confusing entity. A 'just say no' mentality thrives in a culture that uses sex to advertise and sell everything from soap to beer." ~ Paul Joannides

- "We use the term 'opposite sex' when comparing men and women, yet there is not a single psychological test battery that can distinguish male from female test takers." ~ P. Joannides

- "Consumer and popular culture encroach on the terrain of so-called female freedom, appearing supportive of female success and yet tying women into new post-feminist neurotic dependencies." ~ Angela McRobbie

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Gender in Popular Culture. We will critically examine gender, sexuality, and other **identity markers** as they are portrayed in popular and alternative media, including film, TV, and Internet-based mediums, as well as audio and print materials. We will start from the premise that identity markers are **socially constructed** and ever-changing (as well as **co-constructing**), rather than pre-existing, natural, or static conditions. Using multiple **lenses**, based in **feminist**, **anti-racist**, and **LGBTQ-positive** studies, we will engage with course content or **artifacts** in multiple genres such as fiction, nonfiction, comedy, music, documentary, academia, and advertising.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students in this introductory-level course will attend critically to **cultural representations** of social identity markers, including sex, gender, race, sexuality, dis/ability, and economic status. Students will complicate their understanding of human identities and social issues and become more discerning **conscious consumers** of popular and alternative cultural mediums.

> **By the end of this course, students should:**
> - Distinguish feminism, anti-racist work, and LGBTQ activism each as multiple socio-political movements of (primarily) resistance and response to sexism, racism, heterosexism, patriarchy, co-option, and/or other systems of oppression;
> - Understand some of the history of these movements (primarily women's rights in the United States), especially in relation to popular culture, mass media, and advertising;
> - Recognize that – even when optimizing intersectionality – these movements may still operate in problematic ways that (re)produce and rely on elision, exclusion, conflation, stereotype, and "Othering";
> - Identify and comment upon common techniques of (re)producing race, sex, and gender stereotypes, challenging their validity and producing alternative responses.

COURSE SUPPLIES, TEXTS & OTHER ARTIFACTS

➢ **To successfully participate in and complete the course, students need:**

- **Good organizational skills and self-discipline.** The Instructor will maintain a regular online presence in order to give detailed feedback and grades but will not police your schedule. Each student is solely responsible for their own timely completion of assigned and optional coursework.

- **Reliable access to a computer** with working Internet, Blackboard, and Email access, audio/video playback capacity, and speakers or earphones. Course communications will be posted on the Blackboard (Bbd) Announcements page, to the Email addresses students provide on Bbd, and/or through My Grades, the grading portal on Bbd.

- **Microsoft Office software** (for PC or Mac, 2003 or more recent), which can be purchased at a discount with UCID from UC Bookstores, as well as (downloadable) free **multi-media players**, such as RealPlayer, Media Player, and/or QuickTime.

- **A hard-drive or travel/flash/thumb-drive** for storing copies of the Syllabus, Suggested Course Schedule, other instructions, and draft and completed assignments.

➢ **There are two (2) required texts for this course:**

- *Feminism and Pop Culture* **(Zeisler) ISBN: 9781580052375**
- *The Complete Persepolis* **(Satrapi) ISBN: 9780375714832**

➢ Other course content/artifacts to be provided on Bbd throughout the term include:

  o Documentaries *Killing Us Softly*, *Dreamlands*, and *Tough Guise*
  o Films *Iron Jawed Angels* and *9 to 5*
  o Excerpts from other films and TV and radio shows
  o Internet resources ranging from vlogs and blogs to YouTube and TEDTalks
  o Music and poetry/spoken-word videos

➢ These artifacts will ground our discussions but students also are expected to contribute their own knowledge, experience, and perspectives – bearing in mind that, while each student's experiences and perspectives are valid, our opinions (although rarely unique) are not in fact universal; our personal experiences cannot invalidate others' equally valid opinions. **Our class is a collaborative environment, where each person is to be respected and everyone's substantive contributions are to be valued.**

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

The course is presented entirely online in Bbd Learning Modules designed to fit the arc of the term. Students meet asynchronously on Bbd to complete activities detailed in the Learning Modules and Suggested Course Schedule – including reading and viewing assignments, Discussion Board (DB) posts, tests, and other assignments. While not expected to meet exact (i.e., weekly) deadlines, students should do their best to follow the Suggested Course Schedule so that they complete all assigned activities in advance of the end of term.

Course Content, Schedule & Assignments

➤ With the exception of the two required texts, Course Content is distributed in numbered Learning Modules on Bbd. These direct students to work through assigned artifacts and activities/assignments in order, developing cumulative themes and knowledge.

- o To access artifacts and to complete activities for this course, select the appropriate Learning Module and review its contents. Within each Learning Module and its embedded Table of Contents, students will find access to reading assignments, links to other artifacts, assignments and instructions, tests, Collaboration/DB, optional coursework, and so forth.

➤ All student work should evidence careful thought, preparation, and presentation and must include proper citation/attribution throughout. Proper word usage, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other writing conventions should be observed.

➤ In addition to completing relevant tests and papers, students are responsible to participate in substantive **Guided Discussions** on the DB in response to course content/artifacts and prompts provided by the Instructor. Participation includes both writing a thoughtful post and then responding constructively to one or more posts by your peers.

- o Posts should be well thought out, be based on the text, film, or other artifact under discussion, and be composed with proper mechanics (e.g., grammar, spelling), not texting language (i.e., IMHO). Merely summarizing an artifact does not constitute a thoughtful post. Writing "I agree with [so-and-so]" or restating another's post does not constitute a constructive response.

- o *An ideal post (whether original or responsive) will be approximately 250 words long, will clearly address the prompt, and should inspire further discussion. Because we are not meeting in person, DB posts are students' best chances to collaborate/interact with, debate, and learn from their peers and the Instructor in vigorous discussions of course artifacts.*

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar with the University of Cincinnati (UC) Student Code of Conduct. Among the policies applicable to this course are those regarding Academic Misconduct; for example, students may not copy and paste uncited/unattributed materials from the Internet (or any other source) into their own work. *Anyone found to be lying, cheating, plagiarizing, or taking part in other academic misconduct will fail this course and may be subject to further disciplinary action.*

Grades

➤ **Grades will be based on skillful completion of assignments.** DB posts, tests, and other assignments will be graded solely on quality of expression and response to instructions; students are graded not on the content of their opinions but rather on their competence in presenting their research, analysis, and observations and using good writing techniques. Points are compiled per activity/assignment up to a maximum of 200 potential points.

The standard UC grading schema is a 100% scale with 100 or "A" being the top score. This course will rely upon an identical schema applied to a 200-point scale. **A student compiling fewer than 140 points (70%) by the end of the term will fail the course.**

A	186 to 200 points	93-100%	A-	180 to <186 points	90-93%
B+	174 to <180 points	87-93%	B	166 to <174 points	83-87%
B-	160 to <166 point	80-83%	C+	154 to <160 points	77-80%
C	146 to <154 points	73-77%	C-	140 to <146 points	70-73%

➤ **As with any other 3-credit-hour course, plan to spend approximately 6 hours per week on activities related to this course.** Online participation constitutes both class preparation and class attendance and students are expected to complete all course activities/assignments before the end of the term. **The Instructor will not give extensions or "I"/Incomplete grades.**

➤ All work generally will be graded within one week of completion and all grades and comments will appear in the student's **My Grades** section on Bbd. The Instructor will notify students when grades and comments have been posted and students are responsible to incorporate suggestions toward improved grades (points) on future assignments.

ACCOMMODATIONS, SUPPORT & RESOURCES

If students need specialized academic support and/or reasonable accommodation relating to any condition, such as an identified visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, communication disorder, and/or specific learning disability, that may influence their performance in this course or other courses, they should contact U.C. Disability Services **at or before** the start of each academic term to obtain the proper authorization for each of their instructors.

➤ UC Academic Excellence & Support Services offers resources to help students at all levels of dis/ability. The UC colleges also offer academic support at Math and Writing Centers.

➤ Accommodations also may be provided per UC's Statement of Principle on Religious Observances and Class Attendance.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS

➤ **Contact the Instructor by Email any time at mcentyhl@mail.uc.edu.** If you do not receive a response from the Instructor within a reasonable time period, notify the Department of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies at (513) 556-6776.
➤ **All technology questions/problems should be addressed to UCIT staff.**
   o Email: HelpDesk@uc.edu
   o Phone: (513) 556-4357 (HELP)

SUMMARY

➤ **Enjoy the course, work hard, and don't end up like this student:**
   o **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2Co6_tu808 (use this hyperlink or copy and paste it into your web browser to watch this video)**