GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES 101-2
Women, Culture, and Representation
Honors Lecture

FALL SEMESTER 2008
CLASS SESSIONS: 8 0 6  VAN HISE HALL
M&W 2:30-3:45
224 INGRAHAM
PROFESSOR NANCY KAISER
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OFFICE HOURS: WED. 9:00-12:00
(AND BY APPOINTMENT)
WOMENST101-2-F08@LISTS.WISC.EDU

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Assumptions about gender shape our understanding of who we are and how the world works. Yet we rarely analyze the underlying ideas, where they came from and how they function. Our course this semester provides the opportunity for critical investigation. It introduces you to the academic field of critical gender analysis and women’s studies, providing tools and skills for analyzing the power relations involved in maintaining conventional ideas of gender and sexuality. We will concentrate on cultural representation. Our analyses examine assumptions about gender, seeking to understand how femininity and masculinity as sets of socially constructed meanings are represented in the stories and images that circulate in culture. We will also pay close attention to the ways in which dominant gender ideologies are contested, challenged, and modified.

We all understand the world around us – and we produce meanings – through representation, through creating stories, images, practices that shape who we think we can be and how we approach our social and natural environment. This semester we will work on analyzing the processes and politics of representation by asking how women have been represented in the cultural narratives, dominant images, and social and political practices in western culture. We will also explore how the dominant ways of representing women have been both supported and challenged in cultural production by women as well as in cultural products targeting women. Drawing on the United States for most of our case studies, we will come to realize how representations of gender in our domestic context are interconnected with assumptions about other areas of the world, both in the contemporary moment and historically. Our readings and discussions will convince us that masculinity and femininity are always intertwined with other socially and historically constructed power relations, with social structures such as race, class, ethnicity. One is never “just” a woman or a man . . .

You will be asked this semester to consider different frameworks for critical analysis. One part of the course will survey selected moments in the history of U.S. feminism. Some of the ideas may challenge preconceptions and convictions that we each bring to the class. The issues we discuss touch our lives in ways that not all academic courses do. The course does not ask you to adopt or reject specific beliefs about feminism, gender, sexuality, social institutions, cultural practices. Diverse viewpoints are key to productive work as we delve into central questions such as how do cultural representations of gender shape self and society? The course should help you to develop a set of critical tools for feminist analysis. We will seek to understand the complexity of the social scripts and historical narratives that structure the individual experience of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality in different contexts and communities. And we will respect the relationship between that complexity and diverse answers to central questions of the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Participants are expected to prepare carefully all assigned readings, attend all class sessions, and participate in discussions and in-class exercises. The final section of the semester consists of group reports and discussion. Written work includes several brief ungraded exercises at the beginning of the term, two relatively short papers, a midterm, and a take-home final. Each is outlined briefly; extensive guidelines will be available well in advance.

- The initial brief assignments are intended both to launch class discussions and to exercise various aspects of reading and analyzing texts. They are structured assignments designed to practice critical analysis.

- The first paper (3-4 pages, due FRIDAY, October 3) provides practice using the critical skills that you are learning and assists in formulating your own ideas about arguments presented in our class materials. It asks you to analyze a cultural representation of your choice by drawing on specific course readings to inform your argument. You are required to clear your choice of a cultural phenomenon with me in advance, and it is necessary to demonstrate proficiency in using our course concepts.

- The second paper (3-4 pages, due the second day of your group project, (maybe the day after?) is related to your group topic. Details available with the group assignments.

- The midterm will be written in class on Monday, October 20. It consists of short-answer questions reviewing the course materials up to October 15. A list of all possible questions will be distributed for review in advance, and you are encouraged to learn together in groups for the exam.

- The take-home final will be distributed on the last day of class and is due by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16. It consists of several essays, emphasizing the material since the midterm.

The semester grade is based on the following percentages: midterm 20%; final 25%; papers each 15%; group presentation 10%; class participation (includes attendance and initial written assignments) 15%.

We will explore two key resources on the UW-Madison campus during the semester:

- The UW Writing Center offers assistance with all aspects of writing. [www.wisc.edu/writing/](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/)

- The Office of the UW System’s Women's Studies Librarian, Phyllis Holman Weisbard, is an amazing resource. [http://womenst.library.wisc.edu](http://womenst.library.wisc.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1) The course reader for WS101-2 is available from Bob’s Copy Shop, 616 University Avenue (between Lake Street and Frances Street). Their hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00-7:00, Friday 9:00-5:00, Saturday 10:00-3:00. The phone number is 257-4536. One copy of the reader is on reserve in the Social Science Reference Library (8432 Social Science Building).

2) John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

3) Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

We will discuss your preferred way to acquire the Berger and Cisneros texts in the initial class session. One copy of each will be placed on reserve in the Social Science Reference Library.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

The work that you submit for our course must be solely your own. You should know and use proper citation practices, and please be aware that plagiarism rules also apply to material found
on websites and in other electronic sources. If you have any questions, the UW Writing Center has good guidelines in the Writer’s Handbook on their website.

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know (early in the term) if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Resource Center will provide useful assistance and documentation.

If you have questions about a grade, speak to me first. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair of the Women’s Studies Program, Julie D’Acci, or the Associate Chair, Mariamne Whatley. They will attempt to resolve the issue and inform you of the Appeals Procedure if no resolution is reached.

Attendance is required and will be taken at each class session. If you must miss a class session, please notify me IN ADVANCE (email is fine). YOU are responsible for getting notes and announcements from someone in the class for the session you missed. I will remember to supply you with any handouts which you may have missed. Unexcused absences may result in a lower semester grade.

If you will miss class for religious observances during the semester, please inform me within the first two weeks of the semester in writing (email is fine) of the specific dates. I will gladly make arrangements with you for any work you may have to miss.

We have a class email-list: WOMENST101-2-F08@LISTS.WISC.EDU. Messages posted to this address will be sent to everyone in our class. We also have a course website at Learn@UW. Course materials will be available on this website, and both the email list and the website may be used for announcements, for questions, for continuing discussion, or for other purposes we agree upon.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

CR = Course Reader

**Unit I: Introduction to Gender Analysis and Feminism**

Sept. 3 introductions to the course and all participants; opening discussion

________ poems by Pat Mora: “Elena” and “Legal Alien”

________ selected images from advertising

Sept. 8 Judith Lorber, “Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender” (CR)
Marilyn Frye, “Oppression” (CR)
Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” (CR)
**first written response due (guidelines on Learn@UW)**

Sept. 10 Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction to The Second Sex” (CR)
Johnetta Cole, “Commonalities and Differences” (CR)

Dorothy Allison. “A Question of Class” (CR)
**second written response due (guidelines on Learn@UW)**

Sept. 17 Peggy McIntosh. “White Privilege. Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (CR)
“Heterosexuality Questionnaire. Gay and Lesbian Speakers’ Bureau” (CR)
Audre Lorde. “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” (CR)

third written response due (guidelines on Learn@UW)

Sept. 24  screening: excerpts from *China Blue* (Micha Peled)
Minnie Bruce Pratt. “Who Am I If I’m Not My Father’s Daughter?”

Sept. 29  Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, through the section “Hips”

Oct. 1  Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, read to the end
fourth written response due

Unit II: Tracking U.S. Feminism

Oct. 6  ManifestA’s Timeline (available on Learn@UW)
Amy Kesselman, Lily D. McNair, Nancy Schniedewind, “Changing Our World: Introduction” and “Feminism as a Social Movement” and Amy Kesselman, “A History of Feminist Movements in the U.S.” (CR)
Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards. “A Day Without Feminism” (CR)
“Seneca Falls Convention of 1848: Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (CR)
Sojourner Truth. “A’n’t I a woman?” (CR)
Betty Friedan. “The Problem That Has No Name” (CR)
“NOW Statement of Purpose (1966) and Bill of Rights (1968)” (CR)
“Equal Rights Amendment (1972)” (CR)
“The Beijing Declaration”

Oct. 8  screening: excerpts from *Step by Step: Building a Feminist Movement 1941-1977* (Joyce Follet) and *Some American Feminists* (Luce Guilbeault, Nicole Brossard, Margaret Wescott)

Debbie Siegel. “Rebels with a Cause” (CR)
Danzy Senna. “To Be Real” (CR)

Oct. 15  continuing the discussion; considering the upcoming midterm

Oct. 20  midterm examination in class

Unit III: The Politics and Power of Representation: Images, Voices, Bodies, Texts

Oct. 22  Emily Martin. “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” (CR)
Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English. “The Doctors’ Stake in Women’s Illness” and “The ‘Scientific’ Explanation of Female Frailty” (CR)
Charlotte Perkins Gilman. “The Yellow Wallpaper” (CR)
Oct. 27 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*: Chapters 2, 3, 6, 7

Oct. 29 screening of Jean Kilbourne, *Still Killing Us Softly*

Sirena J. Riley. “The Black Beauty Myth” (CR)
Nancy Mairs. “Carnal Acts” (CR)

Nov. 5  Susan Bordo. “Reading the Slender Body” (CR)
Lucille Clifton. “Homage to My Hips.” “Homage to My Hair” (CR)
Alice Walker. “Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self” (CR)

Nov. 10 Chadwick, Whitney. "Women Who Run With the Brushes and Glue" (available on Learn@UW)
Margaret Atwood. “Spelling” (CR)

Nov. 12 Rosalind Gill. “Analysing Gender in Media Texts” (CR)

Nov. 17 Nancy Mairs. “Hers Columns (excerpt)” (CR)
John Fiske. “Gendered Television: Femininity” (CR)
Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards. “Girl, You’ll Be a Woman Soon” (CR)

**Unit IV: Case Studies – group reports and discussion**

Nov. 19  Motherhood: Social Institution, Cultural Meanings, Individual Experience

Nov. 24  Motherhood, continued

Nov. 26  feminist charades, screening of media excerpts

Dec. 1  The Politics of Sexuality: Disciplining Bodies, Power, Pleasure

Dec 3  Politics of Sexuality, continued

Dec. 8  Women, Gender, Music: The Case of Hip-Hop

Dec. 10  Women, Gender, Music, continued

Take-home final will be distributed the last day of class and is due by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16.