

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

**Voyage:** Spring 2013

**Discipline:** Communication

**MDST 3559: Diverse Cultures, Lifestyles, and Gender in Mass Communication**

**Upper Division**

**Faculty Name:** Ferrara

**Pre-requisites:** None

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the moment we enter the social world, we are assigned a biological sex (i.e. “It’s a girl!”). We then begin the complicated process of *learning* what it means to be “female” or “male,” “feminine” or “masculine,” “gay” or “straight.” In this course, we will focus on the ways in which media culture is central to the creation, maintenance and subversion of gender divisions. In addition, we will consider how these gendered identities intersect with race, class, sexuality and nationality. As a problem-based learning course, students will identify inequalities in media production and representation, and will design activist-centered projects to address these problems.

The course is organized loosely around four central and interrelated themes, what I call “modules:” social construction of difference, audiences, text and production. Module 1 explores social construction, particularly how the United States constructs our assumptions about culture, race, gender, class, and sexuality. Module 1 will also involve media “toolbox classes” to introduce the class to basic media terms and theories. In the second section of the course (Module 2), we will focus on audiences and consumer culture, or the desire of advertisers to produce and reach out to various audiences. In this module, we will also address and the various ways diverse *audiences* interpret media messages. In the third section of the course (Module 3), we will address gender as the subject of media content, or the various ways in which women and girls (as well as straight men, gays and lesbians) have been represented in the media and popular culture. Finally, the last segment of the course (Module 4) will consider the role of gendered minorities as the producers of media content, highlighting how women in powerful positions as well as average consumers of media content can impact what we see, and who is seen, in the media.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop and enhance our ability to critically “read” the media we consume, to find new ways of “seeing” the television shows, films, advertisements, and internet sites we devour daily
- To see ourselves as both products of media influence and as agents of progress, resistance and change

- To ask fascinating questions about the role the media play in defining what it means to be “female” and “male” in our contemporary culture (even if we don’t always have all the answers)
- To identify inequalities in media production and representation
- To make better sense of the role of media in forming our own gendered identities as well as its role in forming our impressions of other cultural, racial, and class groups.
- To be able to read, understand and make use of the major issues and debates guiding the field of media and gender studies around the world

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

AUTHOR: Dines, Gail & Humez, Jean M., Editors (2011).

TITLE: *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Critical Reader.*

PUBLISHER: Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA

ISBN #: 978-1-4129-7441-7

DATE/EDITION: 2011

AUTHOR: Durham, Gigi

TITLE: *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It.*

PUBLISHER: The Overlook Press: Woodstock, NY

ISBN #: 1590200632

DATE/EDITION: 2008

AUTHOR: Rothenberg, Paula

TITLE: *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*

PUBLISHER: Worth

ISBN #: 978-0-7167-6148-8

DATE/EDITION: 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009

AUTHOR: Bell, Elizabeth & Haas, Lynda

TITLE: *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*

PUBLISHER: Indiana University

ISBN #: 0253209781 | ISBN-13: 978-0253209788

DATE/EDITION: 2008

***Articles, book chapters, podcasts & videos will also be posted. See schedule below for specifics.***

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE course schedule

**Please note:** The below schedule of topics and readings is subject to change. At times, we as a class may want to expand upon a topic or delve into a new area altogether. We may need extra time to review core concepts, or I may find a new reading that fits the course. Have no fear: I will let you know when there are changes to the schedule. All readings not in the textbooks appear in bold below and will be posted to Oaks.

<i>Class</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Readings and assignments due</i>
1-2	<b>Introduction to the course: media audiences, content, production</b> <b>Syllabus &amp; logistics</b> <b>Gender and media toolbox: terms, theories, orientations</b>	1) Lind, Laying a foundation 2) Kellner (reader Ch. 1), Cultural studies, multiculturalism and media culture 3) RCG (Ch 3, 7, 636-643, 403-426)
3-4	<b>Gender and media toolbox continued:</b> Social construction of gender, class, and culture  Commercial imperatives of media; Hegemony	1) RCG, "Night to His Day": The social construction of gender (Ch 5) 2) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i> , Intro 3) Winseck (reader Ch. 2), The state of media ownership 4) Lull (reader Ch. 4), Hegemony
5-6	<b>Introduction to Module 2: Gendered audiences/consumer culture</b>  Courting Kids	1) Jhally (reader Ch. 22), Image based culture 2) Kilbourne, The more you subtract  1) Schor (reader Ch. 40), From Tony the Tiger 2) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i> , Ch. 1
7-8	The metrosexual: marketing masculinity and courting sexual minorities  Audience reception: Audiences talk back	1) Katz (reader Ch. 29), From BMW's to Bud Light 2) Sender, Gay Window Advertising  1) Radway (reader Ch. 6), <i>Reading the Romance</i>

		<b>2) Jenkins (reader Ch. 7), <i>Star Trek</i> and Fan Writing</b>
9-10	<b>Introduction to Module 3: Gendered media content Fractured fairy tales</b>	<p>1) Orenstein, What's wrong with Cinderella?      2) Barnett, Women in Disney's <i>Mulan</i></p> <p>1) Stern, All I really need to know      2) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i>, Ch. 2  <u>(Group Discussion Moderation)</u></p>
11-12	<b>Body image(s) and consumer culture</b>	<p>1) Bordo, Reading the slender body      2) Tait (reader Ch. 56) Cosmetic surgery</p> <p>1) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i>, Ch. 3  <u>(Group Discussion Moderation)</u></p>
13-14	<b>Rejuvenated: Girls in popular culture  Catch up, questions, exam review  Midterm exam</b>	<p>1) Douglas, The Jamie Lynn Effect      2) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i>, Ch. 4  <u>(Group Discussion Moderation)</u></p>
15-16	<b>Bra-burners and Feminazis: feminism goes prime-time  Sexualized violence</b>	<p>1) Douglas, Throwing out our bras      2) Lind &amp; Salo, Framing feminism</p> <p>1) Caputi, Pornography of everyday life      2) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i>, Ch. 5  <u>(Group Discussion Moderation)</u></p>
17-18	<b>Depressed and desperate: Mothers and housewives</b>	<p>1) Douglas &amp; Michaels, "The mommy myth"      2) Cobb (reader Ch. 15) Mother of the year</p> <p>1) Sharp (reader Ch. 53) Disciplining the Housewife</p>

	Tough guys and “losers:” Men and masculinities	1) Henson & Parmeswaran, Dr. Phil Show 2) Williams, Tough Guys for Tough Times  1) Durham, <i>Lolita Effect</i> , Ch. 6 ( <u>Group Discussion Moderation</u> ) 2) Messner & de Oca, The Male Consumer as Loser
19-20	“The Gay ‘90s” and beyond: Gays and lesbians in the media	1) Walters, All the rage 2) Moore (reader Ch. 58) The swinging closet doors of Ellen  1) Battles & Hilton-Murrow, Will & Grace 2) Pratt (reader Ch. 38), Lesbian representation on the <i>L-Word</i>
20-21	Introduction to Module 4: Producers of media content  Behind the Scenes: The state of women in television and film	1) Wilson II, Gutierrez & Chao, Women of color in media  1) Lauzen, Celluloid Ceiling 2) Lauzen, Women behind the scenes in television industry
22-23		
24	Final Exam	

### class structure

Class meetings will be mostly discussion-based, working in groups or as a larger class to identify the critical issues and problems related to gender representation and media production. There will be some lecture, but it will be minimal, used as a way of launching us into discussion, group work, and individual reflection. We'll also spend quite a bit of time brainstorming ideas and learning from each other about what we can do to address these critical issues.

This class will include a variety of teaching methods conducive to different learning styles: some presentations (by your professor, your classmates, and field experience), robust discussion and debate, media screenings (television, film, documentaries, music videos, newspapers, magazines and advertising, and things you and your classmates share with us), and in-class group exercises and impromptu written responses/quizzes. My philosophy is that you are an integral part of the learning environment. Your required attendance and participation is crucial! See note on attendance/participation below.

### grading

Your course grade will be made up of the following:

Attendance and active participation	10%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%
Semester-long Course blog	15%
Doing Disney	15%
"Media Watch" Engagement Project & Presentation	20%

#### ***Attendance and participation (10%)***

As you can tell, this course operates under the philosophy that learning does not take place in a bubble. I consider you to be a vital part of your classmates' learning experiences, as well as my own. With due respect to your peers and to me, I expect you to be an on-time, active participant in this class. I do not differentiate between excused and non-excused absences. You are either here or you are not. If you miss a couple of classes, I am not concerned. But if you develop a pattern of non-attendance, your grade will suffer. Missing 3 courses brings your grade down one full letter. Missing more than 5 classes will result in automatic course failure.

In keeping with the philosophy that you are an integral part of your classmates' learning process, I will often call upon the class to bring or send me examples from your own "media diet." During the fourth class, on one of Gigi Durham's media myths for *The Lolita Effect*. You will develop discussion questions based on the myth and illuminate/challenge her argument with your media examples. You'll talk about her proposed solutions and present your own ideas for how to handle these media myths.

#### ***Semester-long Media blog (15%)***

Throughout the semester, you'll be asked to write a total of three (3) two-page blog posts that reflect upon the readings, your own media experiences in the US, as well as media you notice along the voyage. You must post a blog for Module 1. The other two blogs can be for any of the other three modules. You will pick three questions to write an entry, for a total of 6 pages. Some of the topics will be assigned to you; others will generate from your own media experiences. Specific criteria for the media blog will be posted. You will also be responsible for collecting media examples while at various ports (billboard images, magazines, videos, popular music lyrics, etc.), posting and commenting on what you see. You must also write a minimum five (5) substantial comments to your classmates' posts. You will post your entries to the class blog. I will give you feedback on your blog entries at various times during the semester.

#### ***"Doing Disney" (15%)***

Disney is a large part of how a child growing up in America learns gender and culture. As a class we will host movie nights to watch some classic Disney films prior to our disembarking at the relevant port including: The Little Mermaid, Frog Princess, Mulan, Aladdin, The Jungle Book, Tarzan, The Lion King, and Beauty and the Beast. You will select one film to: perform a literature review, interview fellow students on their memories of the film, conduct a content analysis, and lead a discussion on that reintroduces the film with a critical eye toward what it teaches

and images it perpetuates about gender, diversity, culture, etc. This will be a group project. The presentations will happen outside of class time.

***“Media Watch” Civic Engagement Group Project & Presentation (20%)***

Inspired in part by the organization “Media Watch”

(<http://www.mediawatch.com/>), we will develop our own original research-based project and presentation that critiques and challenges diversity portrayals in the media. We will design this project and implement it in the ship community. This will be a group project. We will take on specific issues related to gender/culture/diversity in media that irk, trouble, inspire—or simply just tick us off. Our project, presented at the end of the semester, will be research-based, activist-oriented and targeted to our voyagers. There will be multiple stages of this assignment, including literature review, a field experience, informant interviews, and the project design and implementation. Each individual will have a specific role and equal speaking time. You will receive an individual grade for your role as well as an overall group grade. Specific assignment criteria will be posted.

***Midterm and final exams (20% each)***

The two exams will be half objective (multiple-choice, true-false) and half essay. All material covered in class (including lectures, media screenings, and student presentations) and in the readings is considered fair game for exam questions.

## **FIELD WORK/LAB**

**Our field lab will take place on January 27 in Japan. Attendance is mandatory.**

When it comes to pop culture and trends, Tokyo is the place to see and be seen. We will spend the day visiting three areas of Tokyo to explore how the youth culture and mass media influence each other.

- Shibuya Station: shinjinrui, kogul, and gyaru girls.
- Harajuku Station: Lolita goth girls, visual kei, decora, and cosplayers.
- Akihabara “Electric Town”: Anime/manga (cartoon) subculture, with the legions of otaku fanatics

Get ready to snap pictures, interview youth, taste local cuisine, play games, experiment with technology, try on trendy clothes/accessories, and sing Japanese-style karaoke. During our adventure we will host mini debates as to whether these trends are shallow, materialistic, hyper-sexualized, devoted to conspicuous consumption or representative of strong, innovative, and active youth. Our guide for the day is a local public relations specialist who will contribute to our discussion of media theory, Western influence, Japanese culture, and Japanese media distinctions. This field lab is part of a larger Media Portfolio Project where students will collect images (billboards, magazines, photos of people on the street, etc.) and interviews. Students will analyze Gottman’s Codes of Gender and the Lolita Effect within the images and interviews.

## **FIELD ASSIGNMENTS**

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## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED INDEPENDENT SITE VISITS**

- Certain site excursions will focus on popular culture, cultural history, gender, class, and media (i.e., interacting with college students, service projects, shrine visits, urban and rural cultures)
- Shopping in the local market and/or dining out create ample opportunity to observe and interact;
- Even a day snorkeling involves a guide that is happy to answer questions relevant to our course. I encourage you to ask questions that provide insight into our course material.

## **RESERVE LIBRARY LIST**

AUTHOR: Davis, Amy  
TITLE: Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation  
PUBLISHER: John Libbey Publishing (February 20, 2007)  
ISBN #: 0861966732  
DATE/EDITION: 2007  
COST: @ \$33

AUTHOR: Byrne, Eleanor & McQuailian, Martin  
TITLE: Deconstructing Disney  
PUBLISHER: Pluto  
ISBN #: 0745314511  
DATE/EDITION: 2000  
COST: @ \$30

## **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS**

None. I will bring anything I need.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

DVD's by Media Education Foundation  
Mickey Mouse Monopoly  
Codes of Gender  
The Diamond Empire  
Virginity Myth  
Misogyny M

Disney Films

**The Little Mermaid, Frog Princess, Mulan, Aladdin, The Jungle Book, Tarzan, Snow White, The Lion King, Toy Story 3, Cars 2, and Beauty and the Beast**

## **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."