

GSWS 0200:1050 Sex, Race, and Popular Culture
Spring 2017 Course Syllabus
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:15pm
142 Cathedral of Learning

INSTRUCTOR: Emily Deering Crosby

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OFFICE LOCATION: 401B CL, second door on right in GSWS suite

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

COURSE ATTRIBUTES: Fulfills Social Science “Gen Ed” requirement

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course considers how popular culture provides us with the scripts to practice femininities, masculinities, and sexualities, and how these practices are infused with race and class. It also examines how we exchange knowledge about race and gender through popular culture. Through examples from U.S., Western, and “global” culture, we will study the tremendous influence that popular culture, in the form of music, films, television, print media, and communication technologies, has on our identities, perceptions, values, and everyday lives. We will investigate questions like: How do the culture industries reinforce racial and sexual domination? How do racially and sexually marginalized groups use popular culture to subvert existing social hierarchies? This course makes especially strong use of images, music, media clips, and websites during class discussions and as part of class assignments. To get the most out of this course, stay up-to-date on the readings and engage with your peers and instructor during class.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Online articles and scanned book chapters available on our CourseWeb site under “Readings” tab

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- ✓ Use readings in feminist and critical race theory to systematically analyze popular culture around you.
- ✓ Explain how pop-cultural practices, tastes, and expressions reproduce race, gender, sexuality, and class.
- ✓ Describe how socially marginalized people use popular culture to advance consciousness and change.
- ✓ Propose analytic arguments about popular culture in a way that is accessible to a diverse audience.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

Thought Cards: A thought card is due in every class there is assigned reading. On a 3x5 notecard *concisely* write:

1. “Takeaway” - The author’s central argument from the assigned reading, or the prominent theme that linked 2 or more readings
2. A new term or concept from the assigned reading, defined in your own words
3. A class question or comment to spur dialogue with your peers or a question for your instructor, which should not require merely a yes or no answer (**20 at 5 points each=100 points**)

Midterm Exam (125 points): An in-class midterm exam will be administered during class. It will cover the first half of class. This exam will likely have a multiple choice, matching, and short answer/essay section.

Final Exam (150 points): An in-class final exam will be administered at the end of the course. It will be cumulative. This exam will likely have a multiple choice, matching, and short answer/essay section.

Professionalism (100 points): This includes attendance, academic in-class participation, classroom focus, completion of work and readings on time, submission of college-level work, and use of appropriate online and in-class communication with the instructor and your peers. You are allowed two “unexcused” absences. Beyond that, your professionalism grade will reflect your absences. Two late arrivals or early departures equal one absence.

Critical Media Analysis (100 points): Each student will prepare a polished, well researched 7-8 minute presentation in which they analyze a popular cultural artifact, of their choosing, from a critical perspective. This perspective can invoke issues of class, race, sexuality, gender, or in any combination to formulate an intersectional analysis. We will spend class time talking about this assignment at length. Start thinking early about a TV show, toy, video game, performance, advertisement, novel, media event, film, character, etc. that you would like to explore more deeply using academic scholarship and your own critical eye to formulate an argument and defend it. This presentation will be in front of your peers and a brief question and answer period will follow the presentation. A visual aid is required.

GSWS Event (25 points): You are required to attend the GSWS event on Tuesday February 7, when local (and famous) writer and editor Damon Young speaks about his experience creating online media and critiquing popular culture along the intersectional lines of race, gender, and sexuality. If unable to attend, you are required to attend another event hosted or co-hosted by the GSWS Program. A list of events is available on our Coursweb site. Within one week of attending, please write a type 1-2 page response (double spaced) that offers details of the event and two specific connections to things we discussed or read about in class. This should not be a weak “book report” but a reflection on the meanings and themes of an event, which is to be read as a text. You may attend two other GSWS events and write a reflection for +10 points each.

Assignment	Pts.	Points Earned
Critical Media Analysis	100	
Thought Cards (20 @ 5 pts)	100	
Midterm Exam	125	
Final Exam	150	
Professionalism	100	
1 GSWS Event Reflection	25	
TOTAL	600	

Grade	% Limits
A+	98-100%
A	93-97%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	60-66%
F	Below 60%

CLASSROOM DECORUM

- Whenever possible, try to begin comments with sincere **affirmation** of the other (e.g., “While Sam made a good point, I argue that. . .” “I liked how Aditi noticed that . . .”)
- **Avoid generalizations** about others
- **Avoid essentializing** by assuming that certain experiences are universal
- **Stay focused on academic issues, *not* people**
- Use “**I**” language
- **Support your position** with class notes or course texts. You can also refute this information with course concepts. I welcome respectful disagreements and deliberation as a form of learning.
- **Write and speak thoughtfully** to avoid any dismissive or misunderstood messages. If an online or classroom interaction is unpleasant, talk to your instructor after/before class. Try to resist defensiveness.
- Maintain a **climate of civility** where all participants can feel comfortable expressing their views without fear of reprimand. Again, I welcome discussion, disagreements, and intellectual growth by thinking in new ways.
- **Avoid personal revelations and anecdotes** unless they are **relevant** to course topics *and* you are absolutely confident that you are comfortable sharing your personal experiences in class or on-line

UNIVERSITY & COURSE POLICIES

- **Disability resources and services:** If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and

Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>

- **Academic Integrity:** Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to: www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html.
- **Gender Inclusive Language:** Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored. For more information, visit: <http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/faculty/gender-inclusivenon-sexist-language-syllabi-statement>
- **Recording:** You are not allowed to record classroom discussions or lectures.
- **Late Assignments:** All assignments must be completed to receive course credit; however, late assignments will receive points equal to a “C” or below at the instructor’s discretion. Make-up exams require a medical excuse from a physician, detailing that it was impossible for the student to be in class. If you know you will not be in class, e-mail the instructor your assignment *before* the start of class to ensure that the work is not counted late. This also applies to situations when adverse weather keeps the student from attending class.
- **Attendance:** You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Beyond that, you will lose 15 points per absence. Two late arrivals or early departures equal one absence. Success starts by showing up.
- **Cell Phones/Technology:** Please silence or turn off your cell phones. If you are monitoring an emergency situation, please notify the instructor. Laptops are allowed in class as long as they are not a hindrance or distraction to you or your peers.
- **Computer Caution:** Please allow time to get electronic assignments done and “backup your work” on a flash drive, in Pitt Box, in Dropbox, or simply email it to yourself to ensure that if your computer crashes or if you are using a university communal computer, work will not be lost.
- **Content warning and class climate:** Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program, course topics are often political *and* personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers’ understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom. I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you’d like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

- **Sexual misconduct, required reporting, and Title IX:** The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860; SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>

GSWS: SEX, RACE, & POPULAR CULTURE

Note: The day readings and assignments are listed are the day they are *due*

All readings are available on CourseWeb

Additional/Different readings may be assigned and will be made available on CourseWeb

*The instructor reserves the right to alter and update the syllabus; updated versions will be available online

Week One: Introductions

Th 1/5

Course introduction; Discuss the syllabus; Activity: Seeking common ground

Before next class, watch *Miss Representation* (2011) on *Netflix* or here:

<https://freedocumentaries.org/documentary/miss-representation#watch-film>

With these questions in mind, take 1-2 pages of notes, type them, and bring them to next class:

1. What are the film's main arguments regarding popular culture? What is popular culture?
2. How do gender, sexuality, and race inform audience perceptions? Be specific
3. Offer critique: What, if anything, is missing from this film? What are its shortcomings?
4. How did you personally relate to it?

Week Two: What is Culture and who creates it?

- T 1/10 Discuss: *Miss Representation* notes in small groups, then turn in notes to instructor
 Defining culture – What is *popular* culture? How does it shape our lived reality?
 Read: Storey, “What is Popular Culture?” available on Courseweb
- Th 1/12 *Thought card #1 due
 Discuss: Foundations of respectful cultural critique and academic inquiry
 Read: Alcoff, “The Problem with Speaking for Others”
 Brainstorm examples of when we speak for others

Week Three: Intersectionality and the Politics of Cultural Exchange

- T 1/17 *Thought card #2 due
 Read: Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (this article is long and from the Stanford Law Review)
 Exercise: How to recognize intersections of identity; “Asking the other question”
- Th 1/19 *Thought card #3 due
 Discuss: Cultural Appropriation, Cultural Assimilation, Cultural Exchange
 Read: Brown & Kopano, *Soul Thieves: Appropriation and Misrepresentation of African American Popular Culture*, “Preface” and “Introduction”
 Jackson, “See *Hidden Figures*” <http://verysmartbrothas.com/see-hidden-figures/>
 Watch: Elvis, “Hound Dog;” Cyrus, “We Can’t Stop”
 Watch: Amandla Stenberg, “What if America loved *black people* as much as they loved *black culture*?” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1KJRRSB_XA
 Aaliyah Jihad, *TED Talk* “Why Your Pocahontas Costume Isn’t Okay” (minute 6:39) <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Cultural-Appropriation-Why-Your->

Week Four: Femininity, Whiteness, and the Romance Narratives

- T 1/24 *Thought card #4 due
 Discuss: White beauty ideals, female objectification, and internalized oppression
 Read: Rogers, *Barbie Culture*, “Plastic Bodies”
 Damon Young, “Darth Becky” and Problematic White Women:
- <http://verysmartbrothas.com/how-taylor-swift-is-the-most-dangerous-type-of-white-woman-explained/>
 - <http://verysmartbrothas.com/its-time-to-stop-allowing-ourselves-to-be-seduced-by-shitty-white-women/>
 Preserving Whiteness as Power (Named top 30 articles by POC in 2016)
 - <http://verysmartbrothas.com/i-will-never-underestimate-white-peoples-need-to-preserve-whiteness-again/>
 - For list of top 30: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/26-of-the-most-important-articles-by-people-of-color-in-2016_us_584ed5fae4b04c8e2bb0bc42
- Exercise: In pairs, conduct an “oral history interview” of your first memories of dolls/action figures and what this memory informs about gender, race, and beauty
 Watch: Doll Experiment

- T 1/26 *Thought card #5 due
 Discuss: Compulsory Heterosexuality and Wedding Consumerism
 Read: Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*,
 “McBride to McDreamy: Television Weddings”
 Young, “Why Some Men are So Damn Upset about Ciara’s Relationship with Russell
 Wilson, Explained”
<http://verysmartbrothas.com/why-some-men-are-so-damn-upset-about-ciaras-relationship-with-russell-wilson-explained/>
 Lasha, “Black Women Deserve Real Love Too”
<http://www.ebony.com/news-views/ciara-pregnant#axzz4Ur66ICow>

Week Five: Disciplinary Mechanisms and Emancipatory Practices

- T 1/31 *Thought card #6 due
 Discuss: Ageism, Double Binds, and Postfeminism
 Read: Thomas, “Punishing Unfaithful Wives and Working Mothers: Messages of
 Postfeminism in Contemporary Film”
 Wearing, “Ageing in Postfeminist Culture”

- Th 2/2 *Thought card #7 due
 Discuss: Queering the body: Anxieties and Potential
 Read: Mizejewski, “Minstrelsy and Wartime Buddies”
 Hutton, “God and the ‘Gaze’: A Visual Reading of Lady Gaga”
 Watch: Ingrid Michaelson, “Girls Chase Boys”
 Shania Twain, “Man, I feel like a Woman”
 Robert Palmer, “Simply Irresistible”
 Robert Palmer, “Addicted to Love”
 Exercise: in groups, analyze lyrics for discussion

- Watch part of the Super Bowl (and its ads), if you can, for a class discussion on Tuesday

Week Six: Race, Homophobia, and Hypermasculinity

- T 2/7 *Thought card #8 due
 Discuss: Homophobia as hatred of the feminine, anxieties and black masculinity
 Nate Parker and Casey Affleck, VSB
 Read: Clarke, “The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community”
 Morris, “Why Pop Culture Just Can’t Deal with Black Male Sexuality”
 • http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/30/magazine/black-male-sexuality-last-taboo.html?_r=1
 Attend: **GSWS Event, 4-5:15pm with local author Damon Young** for a Q&A about
 writing as a cultural critic

- Th 2/9 *Thought card #9 due
 Discuss: Negotiating the “Angry Black Man” Stereotype and unpacking tropes of Black Women in Popular Culture
 Read: Bailey, “Isaiah Washington and the Grey’s Anatomy Scandal”
 Suggested Reading: Springer, “Postfeminism and African American Women”
 Midterm Study Guide available on Courseweb

Week Seven: Guns, Aggrieved Entitlement, and Mental Health Stigma

- T 2/14 *Thought card #10 due
 Discuss: White Masculinity and the privileging of violence, *Hard Bodies*
 Read: Kimmel, *Angry White Men*, “Angry White Boys”
 Coulthard “Killing Bill: Rethinking Feminism and Film Violence”

Th 2/16 In-Class MIDTERM EXAM

Week Eight: Subversion, Humor, and Queer Palatability

- T 2/23 *Thought card #11 due
 Discuss: Colorblindness, Staring Back, and Queerness
 Read: hooks, “Black Oppositional Gaze”
 Decarvalho & Cox “Queerness (Un)Shackled: Theorizing Orange is the New Black”

- Th 2/25 *Thought card #12 due
 Discuss: Neil Patrick Harris and Ellen DeGeneres as Palatable Gay Icons
 Will & Grace, Modern Family and the role of class and whiteness
 Read: “Pretty Funny Butch as Girl Next Door” Ellen DeGeneres
 Watch: Excerpt: “Do I sound gay?”

Week Nine: Minority Representation and Questions of Authenticity

- T 2/28 *Thought card #13 due
 Discuss: Trans identity and authenticity, Latinx gender performance in *Jane the Virgin*
 Read: Lovelock, “Call me Caitlyn: making and making over the ‘authentic’ transgender body in Anglo-American popular culture”
 Bornstein, “Gender Outlaw”

Th 3/2 *Thought card #14 due
 Discuss: The overlooked American race? (South) Asian American media representation
 Whitewashing Asian characters in Popular Culture
 DarkMatter
 Read: Thakore, "South Asians on TV"
 Ono & Pham, *Asian Americans and the Media* chapter

Select presentation date and go over details "Critical Media Analysis" Presentation

Week Ten: Spring Break NO CLASSES

Week Eleven: Bodies, Class, and Performance

T 3/14 *Thought card #15 due
 Read: Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, "Reading the Slender Body"
 Discuss: Historical beauty trends, the body as locus of control
 Complexities of Diet Culture, Food & Media Studies

Th 3/16 *Thought card #16 due
 Discuss: "Unruly Women," Class, and Respectability Politics; Select Sport Controversy
 Read: Brown, "Class and Feminine Excess: The Strange Case of Anna Nicole Smith"
 Watch: The Supremes; Tina Turner
Roseanne; The Cosby Show

Last 10 minutes of class: select a sports controversy, meet your group

- Jeremy Lin "Linsanity" (note Christianity's coveted/reviled role in sports)
- Rhonda Rousey vs. Floyd Mayweather and (in)appropriate violence
- Colin Kaepernick and resisting the National Anthem
- Stephen A. Smith's commentary on Ayesha Curry "vs." Savannah James
- Serena Williams as pornified body
- NFL Cheerleaders as underpaid objects
- US Women's World Cup TV coverage and wage disparity
 - Double Standard of Sportsmanship in the case of Hope Solo
- Jason Collins's coming out
- MacKayla Maroney's disappointment vs. Gabby Douglas's "bad attitude"
- Rio Olympics, Katinka Hosszu wins gold and "there's the man responsible"

Week Twelve: Intersectionality and Sports Media

- T 3/21 *Thought card #17 due
 Discuss: Sports Media as Attack Rhetoric? Defending (White) Male Domains
 Read: Bagley, "Performing Social Class: The Case of Rutgers Basketball versus Don Imus"
 Crosby, "Chased by the Double Bind: Intersectionality and the Disciplining of Lolo Jones"
- Group presentation of controversies: everyone contributes (speaks) and you facilitate discussion with the class in 10-15 minute presentations*
- Th 3/23 *Group presentation of controversies: everyone contributes (speaks) and you facilitate discussion with the class in 10-15 minute presentations*

Week Thirteen: Gender, Work, and Leadership

- T 3/28 *Thought card #18 due
 Discuss: Pop Culture's androcentric work norms, tokenism, and tools for the future
 Read: Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In*, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1"
 bell hooks, "Beyond *Lean In*"
- Watch: Clips of office dynamics in popular culture
- Th 3/30 *Thought card #19 due (this thought card will include a specific question for Dr. Dow)
In-class lecture by Dr. Bonnie Dow on Network News, Politics, and the Assumed Male Gaze
 Read: Dow, "Spectacle, spectatorship, and gender anxiety in television news coverage of the 1970 women's strike for equality"

Week Fourteen: Fear, Monsters, and the News

- T 4/4 *Thought card #20 due
 Discuss: Reflections on Dr. Dow's Lecture
 Monster-Making and the Hermeneutics of Fear, Positive Future Directions
 Read: Igebretsen, "Monster-Making: Politics of Persuasion"
- Watch: Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, Ursula clips to discuss queer coding
 Willie Horton ad and its mythologies
 The Appeal of "Law and Order" in Political Discourse
 Trailer of Ava Duvernay's *13th* on race and the prison industrial complex
- Th 4/6 Group A Critical Media Analyses
 Group E Peer Evaluations

Week Fifteen

T 4/11 Group B Presentations
 Group A Peer Evaluations

Th 4/13 Group C Presentations
 Group B Peer Evaluations

Week Sixteen

T 4/18 Group D Presentations
 Group C Presentations

*Final Exam Study Guide available on Courseweb

Th 4/20 Group E Presentations
 Group D Presentations

Friday 4/21 Masculinities Conference here at the University of Pittsburgh, 4th floor of Cathedral
Attend/Volunteer for an Extra Credit Opportunity and Chance to Learn More

TBD FINAL EXAM

Have a wonderful summer break!