

Gender and Film

1703-1200 28373

Tuesdays 1 pm – 4:50 pm pm 209 Lawrence Hall

Fall 2013

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Course Description

This is an advanced film seminar with a writing designation that will examine the changing cultural and theoretical views of gender in (mostly) American cinema and (mostly) American cultural theory. Students will be asked to read, view, examine, discuss and write about the films in terms of feminist and queer theory, and masculinity studies.

Learning Outcomes from this class:

1. Students should be able to analyze the films (or other visual media text) in terms of their formal elements, themes, and structural discourses as they apply to gender issues.
2. Students should be able to place the films within their social, political, cultural and historical contexts.
3. Students should have an understanding of the concepts of film theory (and their historical evolution) as well as comprehend cinema's relation to other media forms (e.g. photography, digital imaging) as they apply to gender issues.
4. Students should be able to write clearly, coherently and skillfully about the films in this class in terms of their history, theory, aesthetics, and/or social/cultural context as well as deliver oral presentations about them.

Required Texts

course packet

Screening and Reading Schedule

8/27 *The Celluloid Closet* (Epstein and Friedman 1995)

Introduction to the course

9/3 1. *Psycho* (Hitchcock 1960)

clips from: *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (Walters 1960)

Mulvey essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Doty essay, "He's a transvestite! Ah, not exactly. How queer was my Psycho?"

9/10 3. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks 1953)

clips from: *Indiscreet* (Donen 1958)

Kaplan essay, "Is the Gaze Male?"

Doty essay, "Everyone's here for love: Bisexuality and *GPB*"

9/17 4. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Leone 1966)

clips from: *The Bird Cage* (Nichols 1996)

Neale essay, "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema"

9/24 5. *Bringing Up Baby* (Hawks 1934)

clips from: *I Was a Male War Bride* (Hawks 1949)

Cohan essay, "Cary Grant in the Fifties: Indiscretions of the Bachelor's Masquerade"

clips from: *Indiscreet* (Donen 1958), *I Was a Male War Bride* (Hawks 1949)

10/1 6. *Some Like It Hot* (Wilder 1959)

clips from: *Calamity Jane* (Butler 1953)

Straayer essay, "Redressing the 'Natural': The Temporary Transvestite Film"

10/8 7. *Pillow Talk* (Gordon 1959)

clips from: *Down With Love* (Reid 2003) (dvd 1231)

Teacher's Pet (Seaton 1958) (dvd 8150)

10/15 Pretend Monday no class for us

10/22 . *Die Hard* (McTiernan 1988)

clips from: *Tango and Cash* (Konchalovsky 1989) (dvd 9129)

Tasker essay, "Dumb Movies for Dumb People: Masculinity, the Body and the Voice in Contemporary Action Cinema"

10/29 10. *Interview with a Vampire* (Jordan 1994)

clips from: *Risky Business* (Brickman 1983)

Jerry McGuire (Crowe 1996)

Studlar essay, "Cruise-ing into the New Millenium: Performative Masculinity, Stardom and the All American Boy's Body"

11/5 11. *Alien* (Scott, 1979)

clips from: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (Hill 1969)

Thunderbolt and Lightfoot (Cimino 1974)

Welsch essay, "Let's Keep Goin'!": On the Road with Louise and Thelma"

11/12 12. *The Big Lebowski* (Coen Brothers, 1998)

"What Makes a Man, Mr. Lebowski?": Masculinity Under Friendly Fire in Ethan and Joel Coen's *The Big Lebowski*"

11/19 13. *The Crying Game* (Jordan 1995)

clips from: *Boogie Nights* (Anderson 1997)

Angels and Insects (Haas 1995)

Young essay, "Nothing Is as It Seems: RE-Viewing the Crying Game"
Lehman essay, "Crying Over the Melodramatic Penis: Melodrama and Male Nudity in Films of the 90's"

11/26 14. *Bound* (The Wachowskis 1996.)

12/3 Wrap up discussion of *Bound* and whole class

Student work and Responsibilities

Work

1. Students will be asked to sign up for presentations on the film/theory selections each week—except for the last week which will be a final screening and wrap-up discussion with a short reading selection. A sign-up sheet will be passed around during the first class.

The presentations should briefly cover any background material on the films that the students think is relevant to the film and its gender issues and then the presenters should give a brief overview of the critical readings and open up the discussion to the class with a few questions that the students think are relevant to the film/theory. These questions should be open-ended and address the film/theoretical reading connections. (Student presenters do not need to have all the answers to these questions ahead of time. Issues etc. that puzzle a presenter are fair game for the discussion.) (See below for presentation tips.) 20%

2. Students will be asked to post online 2-3 page responses to the film/theory selections every week before the discussion. Presenters will not need to post responses the week they present, but they will be expected to have read through the classes responses. 20%

3. One short online response to *The Celluloid Closet* due the week after the screening. 10% (Please discuss your understanding of the history of the representations of sexuality—particularly homosexuality—as *The Celluloid Closet* presents it to us).

4. Final paper written within the boundaries of the course discussions (and films and theoretical pieces) on a film(s) of the student's choice. 30%

5. Class participation 20%

Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

1. To arrive on time for class and stay until class is formally dismissed.
2. To complete all assigned work on time.
3. To not skip classes. One absence will be ignored; after one absence, missing class will adversely affect final course grades. More than 2 absences will result in automatic failure.**
4. To maintain an open critical attitude that can tolerate different opinions and perspectives and intellectual debate and argument while maintaining respect for others.
5. To follow the university guidelines on academic integrity – particularly with regard to plagiarism (see below)* – in this course. Students are encouraged to read the academic integrity section of the university policy.
6. To turn off your cell phone when class begins.
7. If students wish to bring laptop computers to class in order to take notes, they will be required to submit the notes via email to me at the end of class. Please turn computers off when the film is on.

Students with Disabilities

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 or (412) 383-7355(TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

***Plagiarism by a student is:**

1. When a student presents as his/her own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources.
2. When a student submits work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be his/her own.
3. When a student knowingly permits his/her work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization. ("Student Obligations and Adjudication," University Policy 02-03-03).

Suggestions for a Successful Presentation

Presentations will be assessed on these three criteria.

1. Nonverbal Skills

Eye contact –presenters make and keep eye contact with the audience only glancing occasionally at notes (if at all)

Body Language – presenters seem relaxed, poised and at ease with being in front of an audience

2. Verbal Skills

Voice – presenters speak clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard by the entire audience. Presenters talk to the audience rather than reading notes.

3. Content

Subject Knowledge – presenters demonstrate a good understanding of the material they are presenting. Individual presenters also understand the material the others in their group are presenting.

Organization – presenters present the information in a clearly organized way that makes sense to the audience.

Discussion Questions – presenters ask open-ended questions that allow the audience to engage with significant issues regarding the text and reading.

Holistic Grading Rubric for Writing Assignments

Final papers will be assessed on these criteria.

A paper

Excellent. Thesis is very well defined and original; solid reasoning throughout, aware of subject's complexities, sources used properly and

effectively; excellent grammar; good paragraph structure, excellent format and presentations.

B paper

Strong. Thesis is clearly defined; valid reasoning through most of the paper, perhaps containing some unsubstantiated generalizations; adequate grammar and diction; some relatively minor mechanical errors.

C paper

Average. Thesis is somewhat clear, but may be too general; supporting discussions can be, at times, repetitious and unfocused, reasoning is at times vague, inconsistent mechanics.

D paper

Problematic. Central idea is vague and/or confusing; supporting discussions are under developed, repetitive, redundant; reasoning is often inaccurate or flawed; several incoherent paragraphs; poor grammar and presentation.

F paper

Fundamentally deficient. Thesis is wholly unclear; supporting discussions may be completely absent or unclear; chaotic organization and paragraph structure; largely deficient grammar.

University email policy

*Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.*

Turnitin policy

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.

All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Turnitin.com site.