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COMX 491.03: ST - Feminism and Film

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Communication Studies 491

Feminisms and Film

Spring 2019

Tuesdays 2:00-2:50

Thursdays 2:00-4:50

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Office hours: 2:15-3:15 Mondays; 3:00-4:00 Tuesdays and by appointment

“Whether situated in the past, present, or future, commercial motion pictures invariably resonate with the value crises of the times in which they appear. Thus they are historical in the sense of being cultural artifacts and social-history evidence about the times in which they were made.”

George Lipsitz (1990) *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*

Course Description

The Second Wave of the U.S. Feminist Movement had a profound effect on society. From legislation at the federal, state, and municipal levels to assumptions about personal and work relationships, beauty norms, and childrearing, Second Wave Feminisms have changed the expectations and lived realities of women’s and men’s daily lives. In this class, we explore the intersection between Second Wave Feminisms and one aspect of our culture—Hollywood films. We begin with films made during the movement, next we turn to more recent films that aim to tell the story of the Second Wave, and we end with an exploration of the legacy of Second Wave Feminisms on the film industry. Throughout our explorations, we focus both on how feminisms are reflected in and affected by the stories films tell.

Trigger Warning: Some of the films we will view during the semester represent depictions of violence against women; some are in the horror genre. I will repeat this warning on days when we view films with this content. However, if such depictions are likely to be traumatic for you, this might not be an appropriate class.

Required Readings:

Posted on Moodle

Attendance:

There is no specific attendance policy; however, regular attendance is expected.

Academic Misconduct:

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, and deliberately interfering with the work of others. Plagiarizing means representing the work of someone else (such as another student or an author of a book or an article) as your own. If you use the ideas or words of someone else, you must cite the source of the original information. Following university regulations, cheating and plagiarism will be penalized with a failing grade in this course.

Grades :

Quizzes	200 points
Group Project	50 points
Exam #1	100 points
Exam #2	100 points
Participation	50 points
Total	300 points

Graduate Students will write an additional paper analyzing a film of their choice for 100 points.

Grades will be assigned on the following scale: 92% and above A; 90-91% A-; 88-89% B+; 82-87% B; 80-81% B-; 78-79% C+; 72-77% C; 70-71% C-; 68-69% D+; 62-67% D; 60-61% D-; 59% and below, F.

Major Assignments

Quizzes

Whenever there is assigned reading, you should anticipate having a quiz. The quiz may be given the periods following the due date for the assigned reading. Most quizzes will be in a true/false format.

Group Project

As will become clear over the course of the semester, feminist media scholars are often critical of the ways feminisms are represented in film. In your group project, you will work with your colleagues to either rewrite one of the films we have discussed to “correct” the problems scholars identify; or, you will develop a concept for a new movie that reflects the realities of the #MeToo era. Each group will present their work to the class.

Exams

Students will complete two exams reflecting material covered in class (lectures, readings, discussions, and films). Exams will not be cumulative.

Participation: Your participation grade will be based on your willingness and ability to discuss assigned daily readings and films in a thoughtful manner.

Paper

Graduate students will write an essay that offers a feminist critique of a film of their choice. (You may not write an analysis of a film discussed in class.) Specific guidelines will be provided at a later date. The paper is due on the last day of class – Thursday, April 25.

Schedule

- Th 1-10 **Introduction to the Course**
Introduction to Film Criticism
Introduction to Second Wave Feminisms
- T 1-15 **Introductions, continued**
- Th 1-17 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Read: Dunn, Stephane (2003). Foxy Brown on My Mind: The Racialized Gendered Politics of Representation. In Sherrie A. Inness (Ed.) *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (71-86).
View: *Foxy Brown* (1974)
- T 1-22 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Discuss: *Foxy Brown*
- Th 1-24 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Read: Silver, Anna Krugovoy (2002). "The Cyborg Mystique: *The Stepford Wives* and Second Wave Feminism. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 30, 1/2, 60-76 and Redstockings (1969), "Manifesto."
View: *The Stepford Wives* (1975)
- T 1-29 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Discuss: *The Stepford Wives*
- Th 1-31 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Read: Barger, L. C. (2011) Backlash: From *Nine to Five* to *The Devil Wears Prada*. *Women's Studies*, 40, 336-350, and Traister, R. (2015, May 13). If You Want to See What Revolutionary Workplace Policies Really Look Like, Watch *9 to 5*. *The New Republic*.
View: *9 to 5* (1980)
- T 2-5 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Discuss: *9 to 5*
- Th 2-7 **Second Wave Feminist Legacies**
View: *The Devil Wears Prada*
- T 2-12 **Second Wave Feminist Legacies**
Discuss: *The Devil Wears Prada*

- Th 2-14 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Read: Bobo, J. and Seiter, E. (1997). Black Feminism and Media Criticism: *The Women of Brewster Place*. In Charlotte Brunson, Julie D'Acci, and Lynn Spigel (Eds.) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (167-183).
View: *The Women of Brewster Place* (1989)
- T 2-19 **Feminisms in Film During the Second Wave**
Discuss: *The Women of Brewster Place*
- Th 2-21 **Exam One**
Exams due to me at 2:00 pm. No class.
- T 2-26 **Group Project Set-Up**
- Th 2-28 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
Read: Borda, J. L. (2011). Hollywood's Working-Class Heroines: *Norma Rae*, *Silkwood*, and the Politics of the Docudrama. In *Women Labor Activists in the Movies: Nine Depictions of Workplace Organizers, 1954-2005*.
View: *Norma Rae* (1979)
- T 3-5 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
Discuss: *Norma Rae*
- Th 3-7 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
View: *Silkwood*
- T 3-12 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
Discuss: *Silkwood*
- Th 3-14 **Group Project Working Day**
- T 3-19 **Group Project Reports**
- Th 3-21 No Class
- T 3-26 Spring Break
- Th 3-28 Spring break
- T 4-2 **Group Project Reports**

- Th 4-4 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
Read: Borda, J. L. (2011). Hollywood's Feminist Labor Heroines Moving into the Twenty-first Century: Have We Really Come a Long Way? In *Women Labor Activists in the Movies: Nine Depictions of Workplace Organizers, 1954-2005*.
View: *North Country* (2005)
- T 4-9 **Remembering the Second Wave in Film**
Discuss: *North Country*
- Th 4-11 **Second Wave Legacies**
There is no assigned reading today; instead, please find, read, and bring two reviews of the movie *Wonder Woman* to class. Be prepared to summarize the reviews for the group.
View: *Wonder Woman*
- T 4-16 **Second Wave Legacies**
Discuss: *Wonder Woman*
- Th 4-18 **Second Wave Legacies**
Read: Vint, C. (2007). The New Backlash: Popular Culture's "Marriage" with Feminism or Love Is All You Need. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 34, 4. 160-169.
View: *The Stepford Wives* (2004)
- T 4-23 **Second Wave Legacies**
Discuss: *The Stepford Wives*
- Th 4-25 **Wrap Up Week Three**
Read: Jarvis, M. (2018) Review Essay: Anger Translator—Jordan Peele's *Get Out*
View: *Get Out* (2017)
Discuss: *Get Out*
- M 4-29 **Exam Two**
Due at 1:00 pm. No class.

Please Note:

This course is registered with the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. Students taking this course may count it toward a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Major or toward a Minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in conjunction with any major. Graduate students may count it toward the Certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. If you enjoy learning about women, gender, and/or sexuality and would like to know more about the Women's Studies Program, please visit our website www.cas.umt.edu/wsprog.

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <<http://www.umt.edu/disability>>.

Incompletes will be given only in emergencies and only with my prior consent. If you foresee having difficulty finishing the course, come speak with me immediately.

The 45th instructional day is the last day to drop classes or change your grading option. After that date, you may drop this class only if you meet the criteria set out by the University – see your university catalog or come speak with me. Incompletes will be given only in emergencies and only with my prior consent. If you foresee having difficulty finishing the course, come speak with me immediately.