

SOC 255: Gender in Film and Television, Spring 2015
Tue / Thurs 9:45-11:00 AM, Mills C
Instructor: Kristi Brownfield

If you need to contact me:

Mills 206

Office Hours:

M-Th: 12PM-2PM (viewing hours available on Monday and Tuesday)

brownfield@hendrix.edu (preferred) or 450-1209 (office)

We will be using Moodle frequently; this includes both turning in work and the weekly readings.

If you have trouble accessing the course, let me know ASAP.

Required Texts:

Kidd, Dustin. 2014. *Pop Culture Freaks: Identity, Mass Media, and Society*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sprague, Joey. 2005. *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*, Edited by J. A. Howard, Barbara Risman and Joey Sprague. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Recommended Texts:

Berg, Bruce L. 2011. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston, MA: Pearson and AB.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.

The Kidd and Sprague texts will be your primary textbooks throughout the class. You will NEED to get a copy of this book to pass the class. The other items under “recommended texts” are simply reference books that may be useful when conducting research. These are not required for class but I do suggest you take the time to at least look them (or similar items) over while preparing to conduct research.

Course Objectives:

Gender is portrayed in and produced through film and television. The course examines key concepts of gender by examining how masculinities and femininities are portrayed in film and television and shaped by categories of race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Students are introduced to content analysis and use it to produce research about contemporary media trends.

Popular culture surrounds us. It has been labeled different things; dismissed as trivial entertainment, a tool of deception that creates couch potatoes and fashion victims concerned only for consuming, and even as an agent for social change. In this course we will take a step back and look at (mostly American) popular culture sociologically to understand how ideas and ideologies are transmitted, how popular culture is contested terrain, and the subcultures that are devoted to popular culture. We will investigate popular culture from both sides of the equation:

production/distribution and consumption, with an emphasis on understanding the themes and meanings present in the media we consume.

This course is designated Undergraduate Research (UR) within the Odyssey Experience and will require substantial research on the part of the student. You will also be required to participate in a poster session at the end of the semester for public presentation of the research you conduct.

Plagiarism:

See the student handbook for a definition of plagiarism. Taking another person's work and passing it off as your own will not be tolerated in this class. You will receive an immediate zero for plagiarized work. The second attempt at plagiarism will be reported to the university and I reserve the right to give a failing grade for the course at that point. Please be sure to **cite your sources** and do not assume that I do not check them or your writing.

Secondly, please **do not** cite Wikipedia. Feel free to use Wikipedia as an information resource but be aware that: (a) the information there is not absolute, is frequently changed, and may be wrong and (b) any information put on Wikipedia comes from *other sources* and it is those sources you should be looking at and citing.

Electronics:

Electronics are welcome and, on some days, will be encouraged in this class. However, your electronics use should be *related to* this class and should not be disruptive to other students. This means please turn off cell phone ringers. Do not play music or videos. No headphones. Be respectful of the classroom as a learning environment. Please note that if you're being disruptive or I notice your inattention you will be required to write a thousand-word essay about a sociological concept of my choosing.

Discussion Ground Rules:

During the semester students will be able to share thoughts, opinions, and beliefs about their own experiences. We will also read articles and books that will offer academic perspectives. The differences in these perspectives will add depth and richness to this course. Please be respectful of those differences. Here are some ground rules for discussion I expect people to follow in class:

1. Acknowledge your privilege! We all have advantages and information we have been given that colors our perceptions of the world and how the world works. Understand and acknowledge those privileges, from white privilege, to male privilege, to class privilege, to able-bodied privilege, to heterosexual privilege, and many other types of privileges.
2. Be willing to listen to the perspective of others – *especially* when they come from different backgrounds and experiences.
3. Acknowledge that discrimination – both individual and institutional – exists. Acknowledge that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, and other such prejudices exist and affect the lives of people every day.
4. We do not blame victims for their experiences of oppression.
5. We do not demean or put down anyone in this class for their experiences.
6. Anecdotes are not the best form of evidence to use for your claims. Anecdotes are a *type* of evidence and should be judged alongside other evidence such as scientific research or

collected testimonials. If your claim begins with “I saw someone once” or “I knew someone who” be ready to back your claim up with other evidence.

7. The classroom will be a safe space to discuss issues that are often sensitive and the cause of strong emotions. If a student within the class makes a comment they do not wish repeated outside of the classroom, please preface your remarks saying so and the class will agree to the student’s wishes.

ADA Accommodations:

It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student who needs accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. In order to receive accommodations, students with disabilities are directed to contact Julie Brown in Academic Support Services at 505-2954.

Course Format:

This is a writing intensive class. Class time will be spent in discussion, during which we concern ourselves with understanding the readings and with learning how to "read" and analyze all sorts of other things, including snapshots, ads, fashion, grocery store shelves, rock videos, public performances, social norms, blockbuster movies, and Starbucks—to name just a few!

In order to be prepared for class, thus, you will need to spend your time outside of class doing a lot more than just reading. You will need to be writing and also be "out-in-the-world" doing some data collection of your own. You will also need a ways to take pictures that can be shared with the class. A camera, or a cell phone equipped with a camera, will do nicely.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Weekly Analyses: 10 points each x 10 weeks = 100 points

Group Project and Presentation: 50 points

Midterm Essay: 100 points

Final Essay: 100 points

Research Paper: 150 points

Total points possible: 500 points

Grading Scale:

450 and above: A

400-449: B

350-399: C

300-349: D

299 and below: F

Participation and Attendance:

I expect students to attend class every day and to come to class on Tuesdays having reviewed the assigned readings for that week, which we will discuss with greater specificity as the week progresses. Obviously, students often have other priorities or circumstances that interfere with meeting these expectations. I keep track of attendance, participation in classroom discussions, and visits to my office, all of which I take into consideration if your final grade is borderline. The more often you are here, participate, and come see me if needed, the more likely I am to raise a

borderline grade. The more frequently you are absent without telling me why, or you come in late, the less likely I am to raise a borderline grade.

Weekly Analyses:

Students are expected to finish all the readings before class and participate in the discussion of the reading materials in class. In addition to in class discussions, the readings will be posted weekly on a forum in Moodle. Everyone is expected to post a 200-word response analyzing aspects of the readings in relation to assigned films or television shows. You are required to post analyses at least ten times out of the twelve weeks of readings. Each week's readings and prompt will be posted on Friday mornings and you will have a week until the next Friday (9am) to post a response. These will be semi-directed assignments. For example, your assignment may be something like this:

Week 13: Cybercultures

PCF CH8

To watch [PICK TWO]: *Virtuosity* (1995), *Grandma's Boy* (2006), *The Guild* season 1 (2007)

Analyze: Discuss the ways in which technology is represented within these films/webseries.

How does the ability to use technology interact with the presentation of self for the characters?

You will always be given three options to choose from and you will be required to pick two of the three. You may also choose to pick one and write about an outside option; however, if you choose this, you must complete 250 words for that week's assignment and include a brief discussion of how your outside pick fits both the weekly prompt and the assigned option you chose.

These assignments are read and will be given comments to help you improve your analytical abilities but will be solely graded on the following criteria:

- (a) Does the writing assignment meet the required length?
- (b) Does the writing assignment address the prompt?

If both (a) and (b) are complete, you will receive the full ten points. If, for example, (b) is complete but you only write 180 words, you will receive partial credit. If (a) is complete but your writing does not address the topic, you will receive partial credit. You will receive a zero for weeks in which the assignment is not completed.

At least two of the three options every week will be available on Netflix. There is a Netflix streaming account for this class; however, due to Netflix's limitations, only two people may stream at the same time in different locations. So I would ask that you please be responsible in your use of the class Netflix account. That includes:

- (a) Not sharing the account information with anyone not in the class
- (b) Only using the account for class-related viewing (and I do check the past viewing logs to see if anyone is watching things not assigned)

The class Netflix account information is:

Username: brownfield@hendrix.edu

Password: SOCHendrix255

Group Project and Presentation:

The majority of what we will talk about in class will be based in American popular culture. You will be asked to branch out in a semester-long group project on popular culture around the world.

This is a separate assignment from your research paper. Groups of 2-3 students will work together to research a country in a different region of the world (South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, or Australia) and make a PowerPoint presentation of fifteen to twenty minutes in the last three weeks of class. I will allow only one country per group on a first-come, first-serve basis (i.e., the first group to claim “Ireland” is the only group allowed to discuss popular culture from Ireland). I will also only allow two European countries. The presentation should be on a piece of popular culture present (for example Japanese animation, or anime) within that country; topics you should touch on in your talk should be things like:

The origin and history of the artifact (i.e., the first anime ever made and how anime became popular)

The cultural ideologies present in famous pieces of popular culture (i.e., what the movie *Akira* says about Japan in the 1980s)

Images and themes about race, class, gender, and sexuality within popular culture (i.e., how are women constructed within anime)

Essentially, this presentation should demonstrate **WHAT** the cultural artifact is, **WHY** it is considered a piece of *popular* culture, and **HOW** the artifact reflects the ideologies, signs, symbols, attitudes, anxieties, beliefs, and so forth of the culture that produced it. You will also be required to turn in a one page summary that details exactly what each group member did to research and prepare for this presentation. This paper must be signed by each group member to receive credit. Be sure to work together on this as everyone in the group will be receiving the same grade!

Midterm and Final Essays:

There will be two short take-home essay exams in the course. Exams should be typed using 12-point, double-spaced font. The short answer questions will cover material from the readings, lectures, class discussions, movies, or online materials and *will be cumulative*. You are expected to do your own work! No blocks of quotes from the course materials! No use of Wikipedia! You will be given the option to either take the “traditional” written midterm/final exams OR take a “creative” option. More information (and past examples) about this option will be available as we get closer to the dates of the exams.

Midterm: March 5

Final: TBD

Term Paper:

You are required to write a 2500 to 3750 word (10-15 pages) term paper conducting content analyses of the way gender is used in a film or television show you enjoy OR to conduct audience response research on the ways media consumers react to the gender portrayals within a piece of media you enjoy. As part of the Odyssey research requirement you will be presenting your research at the end of the semester during a poster session open to any visitors.

Proposal: 5 points

Annotated Bibliography: 5 points
Draft 1: 10 points
Draft 2: 10 points
Peer Review: 15 points
Research Presentation: 5 points
Final Paper: 100 points

Turning Work In:

I ask that students turn their work in digitally through Moodle. If you have issues uploading, you may also email an attached copy of your work to [brownfield@hendrix.edu]. All work should be sent by 9:00am on the day that it is due. Assignments should be turned in as PDF or Word (.doc or .docx) files. No other formats will be accepted.

Late Work:

Turn in your assignments when they are due! **Late work will not be accepted within this class – you will receive a zero if you do not complete your assignments on time.**

Tentative Course Schedule: (topics/readings subject to change)

PCF: Pop Culture Freaks

FM: Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers

Week 1 (Jan 22): Introduction to Gender and Pop Culture

Read: PCF CH1

To Watch: She's All That (1999, Netflix), School Daze (1988, Netflix), Brooklyn Nine-Nine season 1 episodes 1 ("Pilot"), 8 ("Old School"), 14 ("The Ebony Falcon")

Analyze: Discuss masculinity and femininity and how the characters interact with each pole on the gender spectrum.

Week 2 (Jan 27, 29): Doing Sociological Research

Read: Maasik, Solomon: Popular Signs, or Everything You Always Knew About American Culture (but Nobody Asked)

FM CH1

To Watch: Who Framed Roger Rabbit (1988, Netflix), Avalon High (2010, Netflix), Power Rangers (1993, Netflix) season 1 episode 1 ("Day of the Dumpster), episode three ("High Five), episode eight ("Switching Places")

Analyze: If you were to create a research project on change in children's film and television over time, what research questions might you ask? Why would you pick those questions? How might those questions be formulated in feminist ways?

Week 3 (Feb 3, 5): Reading and Interpreting "Signs" of Popular Culture

Read: Goewey: "Careful, You May Run Out of Planet": SUVs and the Exploitation of the American Myth [<http://www.uvm.edu/~jhaig/Myth/SUVs.pdf>]

FM: CH2

Due: Paper Proposal (Feb 5)

Week 4 (Feb 10, 12): American Idols and American Icons

Read: Wasko: Corporate Disney in Action [<http://www.scribd.com/doc/54459570/17/Chapter-17>]

PCF CH7

Week 5 (Feb 17, 19): Race and Ethnicity

Read: PCF CH2, FM CH3

Fung: Looking for my Penis [<http://www.richardfung.ca/index.php/?articles/looking-for-my-penis-1991/>]

Browse: Racebending [<http://www.racebending.com/v4/>]

Due: Annotated Bibliography (Feb 19)

Week 6 (Feb 24, 26): Social Power

Read: PCF CH3, FM CH4

Week 7 (March 3, 5): Gender

Read: PCF CH4, FM CH5

Tannen: There is No Unmarked Woman

[<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/nyt062093.htm>]

Collection of Twilight parodies and spoofs [<http://www.squidoo.com/twilight-spoof>], Ladies, Don't Let Anyone Tell You You're Not Awesome by Sarah Rees Brennan

[<http://sarahales.livejournal.com/188663.html>]

Due: Midterm Exam (March 5)

Week 8 (March 10, 12): Sexuality

PCF CH5

Due: Paper Rough Draft 1 (March 12)

Week 9 (March 17, 19): Ability

PCF CH6

Week 10 (March 24, 26): Spring Break

Week 11 (March 31, April 2): The Body

FM CH6

Week 12 (April 7, 9): Work

FM CH7

Due: Rough Draft Paper 2 (April 9)

Week 13 (April 14, 16): Subcultures and Countercultures

PCF CH8

Read: Mullens: Get a Life? [<http://cinema.usc.edu/archivedassets/097/15727.pdf>]

Browse: Fandom_Wank [http://www.journalfen.net/community/fandom_wank/]

Week 14 (April 21, 23): Country Group Presentations

Week 15 (April 28, 30): Country Group Presentations, Poster Session
Due: Final Exam (TBD), Research Paper Final Draft (TBD)