**Women & Minorities in the Media**

**J Term 2014**

**Class times & dates:**

**9 a.m. to noon & 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.,**

**Monday, Jan. 6 – Friday, Jan. 10 &**

**Monday, Jan. 13- Wednesday, Jan. 15**

**Professor:** Camille Kraeplin, Ph.D.

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Office: 209 Umphrey Lee

Note: Since J-Term courses are so condensed, you will enjoy the class more and be better prepared if you complete the readings below before the session begins.

**Required Texts:**

* *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991),by Susan Faludi **(course packet available at Lone Star Shipping Company, 6611 Hillcrest Ave.; 214-987-2282; ask for Brad)**
* *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), by Naomi Wolf **(course packet available at Lone Star Shipping Company)**
* *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (University of California Press, 10th anniversary edition, 2003), by Susan Bordo **(course packet available at Lone Star Shipping Company)**
* Two Tales of One City: How Cultural Perspective Influenced the Framing of a Pre-Civil Rights Story in Dallas, in *American Journalism*, 25:1, 73-97, by Camille Kraeplin **(course packet available at Lone Star Shipping Company)**
* Rekindling the Fire: The Compromise that Initiated the Formal Integration of Daily Newspaper Newsrooms, in *American Journalism*, 25:3, 97-126, by Gwenyth Mellinger **(course packet available at Lone Star Shipping Company)**
* *Media, Minorities & Meaning: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011; ISBN 978-1-4331-1140-2/paperback), by Debra Merskin
* *Racism, Sexism & the Media: The Rise of Class Communication in Multicultural America* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2003; 3rd edition; ISBN 978-0-7619-2516-3/paperback), by Clint C. Wilson II, Felix Gutierrez, & Lena M. Chao
* *Reality Bites Back: The Troubling Truth about Guilty Pleasure TV* (Berkeley, Calif.: Seal Press, 2010; ISBN 978-1-58005-265-8/paperback), by Jennifer L. Pozner

**Learning objectives:**

* To explore the relationship between women and other minority groups and American mainstream media.
* To understand stereotyping, framing and other processes that shape the way audiences perceive women and minorities in the media.
* To conceive mainstream media as center, which give voice to the powerful and produce artifacts that reflect the views of the mainstream.
* To analyze media and media content of all kinds to assess the images of woman and minorities.
* To understand the effects of commercial and other pressures on how and when women and minorities appear in media content.
* To become more critical, aware consumers/creators of media content.
* To examine the role of media professional in shaping portrayals of minorities and women, as well as the effects of these portrayals/representations on the audience, at both the individual and societal levels.

**Course description:** Our goal this session will be to explore the topic – women, minorities & the media – with a critical eye. Media scholar/critic Linda Steiner writes: “In keeping with the larger feminist project, feminist ethics takes seriously intersecting issues of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation. Feminist ethics is aspirational. It promotes collaborative thinking and cooperative action. It emphasizes responsibilities as well as rights (i.e., as opposed to rights exclusively). And it begins with the experiences of those who are most marginalized, most powerless.” We will not exclusively emphasize a feminist approach to media criticism in this course. We will start our analysis from a critical/cultural perspective, one that incorporates feminist theory but is broader in scope. A critical/cultural perspective focuses on gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation. This theory will be our starting point for analyzing content produced by the handful of powerful conglomerates that today comprise “the mainstream media.” The goal of the mainstream media, as with any other business enterprise, is to make a profit for shareholders and executives alike. Thus the “cultural artifacts” – or films, TV show, newspapers, magazines, music DVDs, books, Web sites, etc. – they produce are designed to appeal to audiences who match advertisers’ sought-after demographic profile: young, affluent, primarily white. Those artifacts will generally also reflect the accepted norms and values of the society – in our case, youth, beauty and wealth, and privileging heterosexism, male dominance and “whiteness.” These media products, as you will see if you look around you, give voice to the powerful (politicians, celebrities) and ignore the powerless, lavish attention on the beautiful (airbrushed magazine models, sculpted starlets) and ignore the flawed, even the “normal.” Your job in this class will be to look below the surface of the media we turn to for entertainment and/or information to explore what they say about our political economy, our norms and values, our society.

We will spend most of our time in class discussing the assigned readings and analyzing media images, whether in news stories, fashion ads, or TV sitcoms. Given this arrangement, class meetings will be both more productive and interesting if we all participate. And, of course, you can’t participate if you are not present. To make intelligent contributions, you must come to class prepared. That means completing assigned readings by the date they are due.

In addition, it’s important we all work to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom. Many of the topics we’ll be discussing are complex, challenging and controversial. And the readings reflect a wide range of opinions and perspectives. So it’s more than likely that our responses will be mixed as well. That’s good. Spirited debate livens up class and fosters learning. But only if each participant approaches those inevitable disagreements with a willingness to listen and thoughtfully consider each opinion expressed.

**Attendance & other class policies:**

Clearly, you cannot miss class during a J-Term session. If you must miss any part of any day, notify me immediately. Roll will be taken every day. Any student who misses the first day of class **may** be dropped. Students may also be dropped from the course or receive an “F” for unexcused absences.

Even with an excused absence, all class work must be made up promptly. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COME TO ME TO DISCUSS YOUR MAKEUP WORK, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

Please note the SMU Health Center policy on providing forms for excused absences.  The policy is at <http://smu.edu/healthcenter/policy/absenceclass.asp>.  There is a PDF file in this information that students can download and submit to me for consideration of an excused absence. This form must be filled out fully for me to consider an absence as excused.  As in the past, if you consult a physician for an illness and receive specific certification for a recovery time, absences will be excused if I am given a form from the physician’s office.

Likewise, tardiness is rude both to your classmates and your professor. I will notice and it will adversely affect your grade.

Finally, many of you use laptops to take notes. That’s fine – as long as that is ALL you are doing on your laptops. You cannot be engaged in class while chatting on Facebook. Same goes for your phones. If I see your phone on your lap, as you text during class, you may not see it again -- at least for a while. Both habits are extremely rude; I expect better from you.

**Course requirements and evaluation:**

Response papers (4): 50%

Media diaries/analysis: 20%

Media “stereotyping” presentation   20%

Participation 10%

* **“Response papers”** – You will be asked to write 4 5-page papers (12-point font, double-spaced) based on course readings, class discussion, films, presentations, etc. In other words, anything and everything we cover during classtime. The goal of these assignments is to help you think critically about core issues and theories, as well as express your own views. Any opinions expressed, however, must be backed up with facts, and the source of those facts should be cited. Formal citations with footnotes are not necessary. Instead, cite sources informally as you would in an essay: “Author Debra Merskin writes that (and so on).”
* **Media diary:** Please keep track of all the media you “consume” – i.e. the sitcoms or reality programs you watch, newspapers you read (paper or online), cable news channel you tune in to, websites you visit, etc. Record the name of the outlet, summary or highlights of content, the time, and ideally, streaming video or video clips. We will refer to these during class, and you will be asked to present examples from your media diary during class and relate them back to class material. On the last day of class, you will present an analysis of your media diary to the class (the analysis should of course include a summary of the contents of your diary). In your analysis, you should answer two questions: 1) Have I become a more critical media consumer as a result of this class? Am I more likely to look at the media I consume with a critical eye? 2) Am I likely to seek out different media as a result of this class? If so, how and why?
* **Stereotype presentation:** You will select a “subculture” or group -- such as rap/hip-hop fans, followers of far-right talk show hosts, teen moms, members of the underclass/those in poverty, etc. – that is stereotyped in the media to analyze. Your job is to separate the mediated myths/stereotypes from reality. Your research should include examining media images of the group as well as statistics and other material that provide a more realistic picture of who these people really are. Your presentation may include a PowerPoint or other multimedia effort and should be accompanied by a one-page handout that summarizes your findings.

Final course grades will be assigned along the following guidelines (following SMU policy):

93-100=A 73-76=C

90-93=A- 70-72=C-

87-89=B+ 67-69=D+

83-86=B 63-66=D

80-82=B- 60-62=D-

77-79=C+ Below 60=F

**SMU Honor Code:**It is your responsibility to read and understand the SMU Honor Code. Please note that the code calls upon students who are aware of academic dishonesty to report such matters to the instructor. Violations will be dealt with in the prescribed manner.

**Religious accommodations:**Religiously observant students who will be absent on holidays must notify the teacher in writing at the beginning of the semester.

**Disability accommodations:**If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies, 214-768-1470/www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp, to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. You should also notify your instructor in time to make any necessary arrangements. A verification letter is required.

**Grading Policies for Written Assignments:**This course is a journalism critical studies course. The primary purpose of every written assignment should be to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the concepts conveyed in class. Of course, as most of you know by now, there is a connection between good writing and clear thinking. Therefore, we will deduct points on written assignments if your presentation is not clear and effective. Likewise, we will also deduct points if your grammar is poor or if you misspell words, especially proper names.

All written assignments in this course should abide by the Journalism Division’s general guidelines for written work. First, all written assignments will be graded based on their content: Is there a clear thesis statement, or explanation of the issue/problem you will address? Does the paper provide sufficient background about the issue? If you are taking a position, which you should do in the critical/analytical papers you will write for this course, is that position clearly stated? Is the argument you are forwarding well-reasoned and supported (through statistics, interview material, outside sources, etc.)? Do you address any possible objections or problems with your position, and how well do you respond to/counter these objections/problems?

Written assignments will also be graded for mechanics (grammar, punctuation, flow, use of transitions, general organization, etc.). You will lose points for the following:

\*Errors of punctuation or grammar: 2 or more points

\*Misspelled words, especially proper nouns: deduct 10 or more points for misspelled proper nouns and 2 or more points for all other spelling errors

\*Awkward or unclear phrasing: 2 or more points per incident

\*Poor organization: 2 points or more per incident

**How to earn an "F" on a written project:** Miss a deadline. Misquote or misrepresent someone. Rewrite or submit a paper that was produced for another class.

**Plagiarism and Fabrication:**Plagiarism is stealing someone's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. Fabrication is making stuff up. We will deal with plagiarism and fabrication in the harshest manner possible, including referral to the Honor Council**.**

**Women & Minorities in the Media**

**Schedule**

**ALL** DATES AND DEADLINES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

**Class times & dates:**

**9 a.m. to noon & 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

**Monday, Jan. 6 – Friday, Jan. 10**

**Monday, Jan. 13- Wednesday, Jan. 15**

**Monday (1-6)**

Intro to class & each other

Reading: *Media, Minorities & Meaning (MMM), Section 1*

Discuss Response Paper assignments/Rubric

Discuss Media Diary assignments/Rubric

Watch film: *Crash*

Media analysis

**Tuesday (1-7)**

**Response paper 1 due/Critique**

**Media diary entries due**

Reading: *MMM, Section 2*

Film: *Miss Representation*

**Wednesday (1-8)**

**Response paper 2 due/Critique**

**Media diary entries due**

Reading assignment: *The Beauty Myth/Unbearable Weight/Backlash (*reading packet*)\**

Film: *Killing Us Softly 3*

**Thursday (1-9)**

**Response paper 3 due/Critique**

**Media diary entries due**

Reading: *Racism, Sexism & the Media,* Chapters1-8

**\***Course packets available at Lone Star Shipping Company, 6611 Hillcrest Ave., 214-987-2282.

**Friday (1-10)**

**Stereotyping presentations due**

Reading: *Racism, Sexism & the Media,* Chapters9-12

**Monday (1-13)**

**Response paper 4 due/Critique**

**Media diary entries due**

Reading: “A Tale of Two Cities”& “Rekindling the Fire”\*

Film: TBA

**Tuesday (1-14)**

**Response paper 5 due/Critique**

**Media diary entries due**

Reading: *Reality Bites Back (RBB),* Chapters 1-6

Film: TBA

**Wednesday (1-15)**

Reading: *RBB,* Chapters 7-11

Media diary analysis

**\***Course packets available at Lone Star Shipping Company, 6611 Hillcrest Ave., 214-987-2282.