

**AMST0230A -- FALL 2012**  
**Gender Images in American Popular Culture**

**SYLLABUS**

Mon., Wed. 8:40-9:55AM  
MBH148  
<http://f12.middlebury.edu/amst0230a>

Prof. Holly Allen  
Axinn 245, x2042  
office hours: M 10:30-12;  
W 1-2:30 or by appt.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Active, informed participation in all class meetings.
2. Weekly journal entries consisting of news clippings or other documents that relate to the topics under discussion. Please include a brief commentary on each document included in your journal. We will begin some class meetings by discussing your journals.
3. First expository essay (4-5 pages) due September 27.
4. Second expository essay (4-5 pages) due October 18.
5. Third expository essay (4-5 pages) due on November 8.
6. A short final research paper (5-7 pages) due Monday, December 9.

Please send your essays to me as email enclosures. You must include the academic honesty statement (<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/dos/honorcode>) in the email message to which your written work is attached.

**COURSE GOALS**

In this course, we will examine images of women and men in US popular culture, always attending to how gender intersects with race, class, and sexuality in popular culture representations and practices. We will consider a range of cultural forms, including film, television, literature, advertising, fashion, sports, and consumer goods. In addition to exploring how the media and consumer culture shape social roles and expectations for women and men, we will consider how various subcultures interact with and at times subvert the intended meanings of popular cultural forms.

Throughout the semester, we will entertain the following questions:

- What is popular culture, and how "popular" is it? To what extent is it shaped by profit-driven media conglomerates? To what extent does it reflect consumer desires and expectations?
- How do audiences understand and use the popular culture they consume? How and when does popular culture become a site of resistances to the "hegemony" of the dominant society?
- How does popular culture contribute to the social construction of gender?
- What are the political implications of popular culture representations and practices? How do gender and sexual images within media industries inform our ideas about citizenship?

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### 9/10 – Introduction

### 9/12 – Theoretical Approaches

Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," in Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, ed., *Gender Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, 3rd edition (2011), 7-18;

James Lull, "Hegemony," in Dines and Humez, ed., 33-36;

Gareth Palmer, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition: An American Fairy Tale, in Dines and Humez, ed., 37-44.

### Week 2 -- 2/16-2/18: Gender Outlaws in the Cold War Era

#### 9/17 – Lesbianism in Postwar Popular Culture

Ann Bannon, *I am a Woman*

Donna Penn, "The Meanings of Lesbianism in Postwar America," *Gender and History* (1991).

#### 9/17 – Screening – *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), 7:30 pm, location TBA

#### 9/19 – Bad Mothers and Mulattas in Postwar Culture

Ruth Feldstein, "'Imitation' Reconsidered: Consuming Images in the Late 1950s," *Motherhood in Black and White* (Cornell University Press, 2000), 111-138.

### Week 3 -- Twentieth-Century Pastimes: Reading Romance Novels / Playing with Barbie

#### 9/24 – Romance and Reception Theory

Janice Radway, "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context," in Dines and Humez, ed., 45-56;

Jane Bowers, "The Wayward Debutante-Sarah Elliott," *Romance Reviews Today*;

Sarah Elliott, *The Wayward Debutante* (Harlequin ebook, 2008). (e-book purchasable online for \$4.46 from [eharlequin.com](http://eharlequin.com)).

#### 9/25 – Screening – *Barbie Nation* on Monday, 9/25, 7:15 PM, location TBA.

#### 9/26 – Playing with Barbie

Mary Rogers, "Hetero Barbie?" in Dines Humez, ed., 71-74;

Karen Goldman, "La Princesa Plastica: Hegemonic and Oppositional Representations of *Latinidad* in Hispanic Barbie," in Dines and Humez, ed., 375-382;

Ducille, Ann. "Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandising of Difference. " *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6:1 (Spring 1994): 46(23).

#### 9/27 – FIRST ESSAY DUE.

### Week 4 – Prime Time Women and Gays

## 10/1 – Prime Time Women

Lisa M. Cuklanz and Sujata Moorti, "Television's 'New' Feminism: Prime-time Representations of Women and Victimization," in Dines and Humez, ed., 115-126.

In-class clips: *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*

## 10/3 – Queer Representations

Diane Raymond, "Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective," SAGE website;

Jay Clarkson, "The Limitations of the Discourse of Norms: Gay Visibility and Degrees of Transgression," in Dines and Humez, ed., 335-340;

In class clips: *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

## Week 5 – Advertising

### 10/8 – Race, Gender, and Advertising

Sut Jhally, "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture," in Dines and Humez, ed., 199-204;

Barbara Mueller, "Reaching African-American Consumers: African American Shopping Behavior," in Dines and Humez, ed., 213-220;

Jackson Katz, "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity: From BMWs to Bud Light," in Dines and Humez, ed., 261-270.

### 10/9 – Screening – *The Ad and the Ego*, 7:15 pm, location TBA

### 10/10 – Gender, Sex, and Advertising

Gloria Steinem, "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," in Dines and Humez, ed., 235-242;

Erika Engstrom, "Unraveling the Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media," in Dines and Humez, ed., 243-254;

Rosalind Gill, "Supersexualize Me! Advertising and the 'Midriffs,'" in Dines and Humez, ed., 255-260.

## Week 6 – Virtual Adolescence/Virtual Genders

### 10/15 – Midterm Recess

### 10/17 – Adolescent Media Consumers

Danah Boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life," in Dines and Humez, ed., 409-418;

John Sanbonmatsu, "Video Games and Machine Dreams of Domination," in Dines and Humez, ed., 427-436;

Elena Bertozzi, "You Play Like a Girl: Cross-Gender Competition and the Uneven Playing Field," in Dines and Humez, ed., 443-454.

### 10/18 – SECOND ESSAY DUE

## Week 7 -- Representing Sexualities

### 10/22 – Pornography

Gail Dines, "White Man's Burden: Gonzo Pornography and the Construction of Black Masculinity," in Dines and Humez, ed., 275-282;

Feona Attwood, "No Money Shot? Commerce, Pornography and New Sex Taste Cultures," in Dines and Humez, ed., 283-292;

Karen Boyle, "'That's So Fun': Selling Pornography for Men to Women in The Girls Next Door," in Dines and Humez, ed., 293-300.

### 10/24 – Sexual Objectification

Jane Caputi, "The Pornography of Everyday Life," in Dines and Humez, ed., 307-320;

Tricia Rose, "There Are Bitches and Hoes," in Dines and Humez, ed., 321-326;

James McCay and Helen Johnson, ed., "Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen," in Dines and Humez, ed., 85-94.

## Week 8-- Gender and Reality Television

### 10/29 – Race and Gender in Reality TV

Chris Jordan, "Marketing 'Reality' to the World: Survivor, Post-Fordism and Reality Television," in Dines and Humez, ed., 459-466;

Debra C. Smith, "Critiquing Reality-Based Televisual Black Fatherhood: A Critical Analysis of Run's House and Snoop Dogg's Father Hood," in Dines and Humez, ed., 469-480.

### 10/31 – Reality TV and Women

Sharon Sharp, "Disciplining the Housewife in *Desperate Housewives* and Domestic Reality Television," in Dines and Humez, ed., 481-486;

Ralina L. Joseph, "'Tyra Banks Is Fat': Reading (Post-Racism and Post-Feminism in the New Millennium)," in Dines and Humez, ed., 519-530;

In-class screening: to be determined.

## Week 9 -- Media Constructions of the Latina Body

### 11/5 – *Ugly Betty*

Jennifer Esposito, "What Does Race Have to Do With *Ugly Betty*: An Analysis of Privilege and Postracial (?) Representation on a Television Sitcom," in Dines and Humez, ed.;

Mary Beltran, "Rooting for Betty." *FlowTV* Vol. 5, Issue 4.

In-class screening: *Ugly Betty* (excerpts).

### 11/7 – Latina Stereotypes

Debra Merskin, "Three Faces of Eva: Perpetuation of the Hot-Latina Stereotype in *Desperate Housewives*," in Dines and Humez, ed., 481-486.

11/8 – ESSAY 3 DUE.

## **Week 10 – Gender and the Culture of Sport**

11/12 -- Representing Female Athletes

Abigail Feder-Kane, "A Radiant Smile from a Lovely Lady': Overdetermining Femininity in 'Ladies' Figure Skating," in Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, ed., *Reading Sport: Essays on Power and Representation* (2000);

Nancy E. Spencer, "From 'Child's Play' to 'Party Crasher': Venus Williams, Racism and Professional Women's Tennis," in David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, ed., *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity* (2001);

Susan K. Cahn, "From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sport," *Feminist Studies* 19:2(Summer 1993), 343-368.

11/14 – Race, Sex, and Sports Media

Katherine L. Lavelle, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Black Masculinity in NBA Game Commentary," *Howard Journal of Communications* 21:3 (August 2010), 294-314;

David Nylund, "When in Rome: Heterosexism, Homophobia, and Sports Talk Radio," in Dines and Humez, ed., 171-184.

## **Week 11 -- Bad Mothers (Again)**

11/19 – Prime-Time Motherhood

Douglas and Michaels, "The Mommy Wars: How Media Turned Motherhood into a Catfight," *Ms. Magazine* (Feb/March 2000);

Shelley Cobb, "Mother of the Year: Kathy Hilton, Lynne Spears, Dina Lohan and Bad Celebrity Motherhood," in Dines and Humez, ed., 127-136;

Marlo David Azikwe, "More than Baby Mamas: Black Mothers and Hip-Hop Feminism," in Dines and Humez, ed.; 137-134;

In-class clips: *Teen Mom* and *Toddlers and Tiaras*.

## **Week 12 -- Beauty, the Body, and Disability**

11/26 – Hegemonic Beauty Myths and Makeover Culture

Samantha Kwan, "Navigating Public Spaces: Gender, Race, and Body Privilege in Everyday Life," *Feminist Formations* 22:2 (Summer 2010), 144-166;

Bell Hooks, "Straightening Our Hair," *Z Magazine* (September 1988).

11/28 – Disability

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *NWSA Journal* 14:3 (Fall 2002), 1-32.

## **Week 13 – presentations of final projects.**

