

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 401 L01
Special Topics in COMS: Feminist Media Studies

Spring 2015

Thursday, May 14 – Friday, June 26 (May 18th excluded)
MW 12:00-14:45

Instructor: Samantha C. Thrift
Office: SS 210
Office Phone: 403-220-5320
E-Mail: samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: W 15:00-17:00

Course Description

Feminist Media Studies introduces students to the critical perspectives and practices of feminist studies of the media. Defined by its interdisciplinary reach into cultural studies, film and television studies, political economy, literary studies and public sphere studies (among other fields), feminist media studies is a broad ranging and, at its best, deeply politicized and socially-conscious intellectual field.

COMS 310 engages a range of feminist scholarship that interrogates media culture as a privileged site where knowledge about ourselves and others is (re)produced daily. While this course does not espouse a particular feminist standpoint, we will be openly discussing feminist politics (past, present, and future) and feminist researchers' politicization of media studies, particularly concerning socially differentiated relations of power. Over the semester, we will examine specific objects of feminist analysis - femininity, masculinity, and racialized and sexualized subjectivities - and the ways in which these subjects shape and are shaped by different media practices. Through a combination of lecture and class discussion, students will learn about recent debates in feminist media studies, including postfeminism and popular culture, racialized and sexualized gender subjectivities, and the possibilities for feminist, queer, and trans media activism.

Additional Information

This is a seminar-style course emphasizing student participation and discussion.

Textbooks and Readings

A digital course pack has been prepared and will be made available via the COMS 401 L01 D2L course website.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time.

If you engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will confiscate the device for the duration of that class.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
15-Minute Essays (4)	20%	once/week, in-class
Class Facilitation	25%	TBD
Essay Proposal	15%	June 3
Essay Draft Workshop	10%	June 17
Final Essay	30%	June 24

I. 15-Minute Essays (4 x 5%)

Once a week, you will be asked to write a “15-Minute Essay” based on that day’s assigned reading(s). The in-class essay won’t be announced in advance of class, so it’s best to arrive at every class prepared and having read the assigned material. Your instructor will provide you with a writing prompt, such as a question about the author’s ideas or central concept(s), in order to focus your essay response. These essays are open book, so be sure to bring a copy of the assigned reading(s) to class everyday (or the technology to access them online). The essays will be run at the start of class, so it is imperative that students arrive on time. Latecomers will be permitted to write for the remainder of the 15 minutes.

Please note:

- The instructor will not provide a copy of the readings.
- A missed essay cannot be made-up for any reason.
- Your top 4 scores will be used to calculate your overall grade (your lowest grade or a “0” for a missed essay will be dropped).

Your essays will be evaluated primarily on your demonstrated familiarity with, and understanding of the ideas and arguments developed by the author in their work:

A-level work will demonstrate nuanced understanding of the argument presented by the author; correctly identify and define key concepts developed by the author; and show a thorough knowledge of the authors' ideas (by way of example or detailed explanation).

B-level work will demonstrate solid understanding of the argument presented by the author; correctly identify and describe concepts developed by the author; and show a working knowledge of the core ideas being raised by the author.

C-level work will demonstrate a basic knowledge of the argument presented by the author; identify concepts, but in a cursory fashion; and show perfunctory or incomplete understanding of the material.

D-level work demonstrates a general lack of understanding of the argument presented by the author; does not identify key concepts; and shows minimal engagement with the material.

II. Class Facilitation (25%)

In groups, you will lead a presentation and class discussion for 45-60 minutes. You will present on selected readings for our classes from May 25 to June 24. Each group will be responsible for one topic area and the text associated with the topic for that week. Each group is responsible for summarizing and highlighting the key ideas presented in the text(s), considering the reading in relation to contemporary debates, and generating discussion about their topic.

A sign-up sheet for presentation groups will be available on the first day of class – those who do not sign up will be assigned to a group.

Submission Requirements:

- You must provide a copy of your presentation outline (notes are fine) and 2-3 discussion questions to the instructor **by noon the day before class**.
- You must submit a Task List the day of the presentation. The Task List should indicate each group member's contribution to preparing the facilitation, and must be signed by all members.
- If you create a PPT/Prezi, send the final version via email to the instructor for posting to the course D2L.

Your moderation will be evaluated according to several criteria, including:

1. Knowledge and understanding of course materials
2. Quality of presentation (i.e., creativity and enthusiasm: how do you engage your audience?)
3. Quality of discussion (i.e., ability to create and sustain substantive, relevant discussion with your peers)

Facilitators:

As facilitators, your role is to moderate and direct the discussion, which includes listening to your classmates' responses, ensuring equitable participation from all class members, drawing connections between individual responses when appropriate, and maintaining focus on the materials at hand. Also, your facilitation must not dramatically exceed or fall short of time expectations.

Audience Members:

Although it is the responsibility of the facilitators to begin and direct discussion, there is a responsibility on all class members to assist them in their task by having read the material and participating in a thoughtful, constructive manner.

III. Media Artifact Analysis (Essay Assignment)

The main piece of writing for this course is an 8-10 page (2500 word) essay that analyzes a media artifact from a feminist perspective. "Media artifact" can refer to any of a wide variety of cultural objects, from videos, to sounds, to documentaries, interviews, photos, product packaging, magazine pages, memes. The artifact can be a media practice, event, text, performance, or document that is defined as or declared as feminist.

Alternately, you can choose a media artifact that is not defined or declared as feminist (or, perhaps, potentially so) but which you will analyze from a feminist perspective. The artifact may be contemporary or historical. Whatever the object you choose, your task is to analyze it drawing on the tools of feminist media analysis. Your paper must explain and argue a thesis (that is, your paper must have a point to demonstrate). Ideally, your thesis will investigate the triangulated relationship between gender, media and society, as it is manifested in, through, or by your chosen artifact. You must substantially use at least three readings from the course. This assignment will be completed in three phases: a proposal (with bibliography), an essay workshop, and the final paper.

i. Proposal (15%)

Due: June 3

You are required to submit a 2-page (500-600 word) essay proposal that presents your proposed case study in concise, theoretically informed terms. In the proposal, you must clearly describe the object of your analysis (i.e., the media artifact), the course concepts you will draw upon to conduct your analysis, how you intend to use these concepts, and the theoretical question(s) you plan to address. Your proposal should include a preliminary thesis statement.

Your proposal should give the instructor a clear understanding of what issues are at stake in this artifact analysis; that is, you must clearly identify what this case study illuminates about the ways in which gender, sexuality, race, and class politics intersect in the production, consumption and/or circulation of your chosen media artifact.

Bibliography

Your proposal must also include a bibliography of four relevant, academic sources.

Three (3) of the four must be assigned course readings. You will not receive credit for Wikipedia entries, popular and/or news media articles.

ii. Essay Draft Workshop (10%)

Due: June 17

In-class time will be provided for sharing and discussing a draft version of your final paper in peer groups. Students need to prepare a complete (introduction, body, conclusion, bibliography) draft of their final essay and bring TWO copies to class.

The goal of this exercise is to encourage you to work on your project throughout the semester; to critically reflect on how the assigned readings and class discussions relate to, and can be incorporated into your individual projects; and to learn how to assess other work with diligence and care. This will develop your understanding of the assessment criteria that will be used by the instructor to evaluate your final submission.

Workshop attendance is critical, as 5% of the grade is based on your performance in the workshop. The remaining 5% of the grade is based on the instructor's evaluation of the completeness of your draft.

iii. Final Essay (30%)

Due: June 24

The final essay is the culmination of your media artifact analysis, stemming from the proposal, essay draft, and feedback received during the workshop and from the instructor. The final essay must be 8-10 pages (approx. 2500 words) in length, double-spaced, and include a complete bibliography.

Both the body of the essay and the bibliography must be properly formatted using MLA or APA style guides (see "Plagiarism" section below for links to online citation style guides).

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

PLEASE NOTE: All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including

the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Late work will not be accepted one week past the original deadline without appropriate documentation (such as a doctor's note). Late work will not receive written feedback.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%

1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The Schedule of Readings will be posted to D2L before the first class.