

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communications Studies COMS 401 L01**  
**FEMINIST MEDIA STUDIES**

**Spring 2016**

Mon., May 9 – Thurs., June 30 (excluding May 23; May 26 – June 5)

**MW 12:00 – 14:45**

**Instructor:** Dr. Samantha Thrift  
**Office:** SS 210  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-5320  
**E-Mail:** samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** M 10:00-11:00am and W 10:00-11:00am

### **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 401 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.

### **Additional Information**

Please note that we will study some challenging material in this course that may involve coarse language, sexuality, and discussion of misogyny and sexualized and racialized violence.

This is a seminar-style course emphasizing student participation and discussion. Coming to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material is essential to success in this course.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

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

Improper use of electronic devices will negatively impact your participation grade.

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

## Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assignment	Due
20%	Reading Responses	May 16; May 25; June 6; June 20; June 27
15%	Essay Proposal	May 18
20%	Literature Review	June 6
5%	Essay Draft – Workshop	June 15
10%	Essay Draft – Initial Submission	June 15
30%	Final Essay	June 29

### I. Reading Responses (20%)

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to write 5 in-class reading responses based on an assigned reading for that day. Your instructor will provide you with a writing prompt, such as a question about the author/authors' ideas or central concept(s), in order to focus your response. These responses 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 responses will be run at the start of class, so it is imperative that you arrive on time. Latecomers will be permitted to write for the remainder of the 15 minutes, but will not be given additional time.

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 (the lowest score or a "0" for a missed essay will be dropped)

Your reading responses will be evaluated primarily on your demonstrated familiarity with, and understanding of, the ideas and arguments made 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 author's 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. Media Analysis Essay**

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, a meme, Tumblr, hashtag or selfie. 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 five steps, described below.

### **i. Essay Proposal & Bibliography (15%)**      Due: May 18

You are required to submit a 2-page (approx. 600 word) essay proposal that presents your planned topic in concise, theoretically informed terms. In the proposal, you must present a clear research question, propose a preliminary thesis statement that answers the research question, and briefly describe how your chosen media example will illustrate or support your argument. You must also identify 3 main areas of analysis (or sub-arguments) to be addressed in your analysis. These must stem from ideas and concepts discussed in the assigned course readings.

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 (although you may include them). The bibliography does not contribute to the total word count required of the proposal.

### **ii. Literature Review & Bibliography (20%)**      Due: June 6

A literature review is a short essay that provides an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. In writing the literature review, your purpose is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. As a piece of writing, the literature review must be defined by a guiding concept (e.g., your research objective, the problem or issue you are discussing, or your argumentative thesis). It is not just a descriptive list of the material available, or a set of summaries.

For this assignment, you will conduct a 4-page literature review based on your approved essay topic. Your review will offer a critical appraisal of 4 scholarly sources (including 3 assigned course readings). As a research skills assignment, you must demonstrate mastery of either MLA or APA citation styles in the body of the essay (i.e., in-text citation) as well as in the bibliography.

**iii. Essay Draft Workshop (5%)** Due: June 15

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 your grade is based on your attendance and participation in the workshop.

**iv. Essay Draft – Initial Submission (10%)** Due: June 15

The initial draft of your essay will be submitted to the instructor on the same day as the draft workshop. Your initial draft will be evaluated for its completeness and overall quality.

**iv. Final Essay (30%)** Due: June 29

The final essay is the culmination of your media artifact analysis, stemming from the proposal, research skills assignment, 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 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

**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 marked final exams in SS 320. 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 and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **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.

### **Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### **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. 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course, letter grades will be used for Reading Responses. All other assignments will be graded using raw point scores.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF 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	0- 49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

### 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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve 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 . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</b></li> </ul>	<b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Online resources and tips</b></li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> 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 Lecture Topics and Readings

### **Monday May 9: Introduction to Feminist Media Studies**

Roxane Gay (2014). "Feminism (n.): Plural." *Bad Feminist: Essays*. New York: HarperCollins. ix-2.

### **Wednesday May 11: We Should All Be Feminists**

bell hooks (2000). "Introduction: Come Closer to Feminism," "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand," "Consciousness-Raising: A Constant Change of Heart," "Sisterhood is Still Powerful," "Feminist Education for Critical Consciousness," "Race and Gender," and "Visionary Feminism." *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press. vii-24, 55-60, 85-92, 110-118.

For discussion: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014), "We Should All be Feminists" *TED Talk*. Beyoncé, \*\*\*Flawless

### **Monday May 16: The Feminist Politics of Representation**

Linda Martin Alcoff (1991/2). "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique* 20: 5-32.

For discussion: Susana Loza (2014). "Hashtag Feminism, #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, and the Other #FemFuture." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology* 5 ("Queer Feminist Media Praxis"). Available: <http://adanewmedia.org/2014/07/issue5-loza/>

### **Wednesday May 18: Feminism(s) in the News**

Kaitlynn Mendes (2012). "Feminism Rules! Now, Where's My Swimsuit?': Re-evaluating Feminist Discourse in Print Media 1968-2008." *Media, Culture & Society* 34(5): 554-570.

**\*\*ESSAY PROPOSALS DUE\*\***

Monday May 23: NO CLASS, Statutory Holiday

### **Wednesday May 25: Representing Feminism(s): Icons and Visual Style**

Guest speaker: Dr. Emily Truman, Postdoctoral Fellow (Department of Communication, Media and Film)

J. Nachbar and K. Lause (1992). "Living in the Material World: The Meaning and Power of Popular Icons". In *Popular Culture: An Introductory Text* (pp. 169-185). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.



Monday May 30-Wednesday June 1: NO CLASS, Congress 2016

**Monday June 6: Controlling Images of Black Female Sexuality**

Patricia Hill Collins (2004). "Get Your Freak On: Sex, Babies, and Images of Black Femininity." *Black Sexual Politics*. New York: Routledge, 119-148.

\*\*RESEARCH SKILLS ASSIGNMENT DUE\*\*

**Wednesday June 8: Hip Hop Feminism**

Aisha Durham, Brittney Cooper, Susana Morris (2013). "The Stage Hip Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay." *Signs* 38(3): 721-737.

Roxane Gay (2014). "The Politics of Respectability." *Bad Feminist: Essays*. New York: HarperCollins. 257-260.

For discussion: Andi Zeisler (2014). "The VMAs Cemented Feminism as Beyoncé's Brand: What Comes Next?" *Bitch Media* August 27. <https://bitchmedia.org/post/beyonc%C3%A9-has-claimed-feminism-as-her-brand-but-whats-next>

**Monday June 13: Blogging as Feminist Activism**

Jessalynn Keller (2012). "Virtual Feminisms: Girls' Blogging Communities, Feminist Activism and Participatory Politics." *Information, Communication & Society* 15(3): 429-447.

Tracy Kennedy (2007). "The Personal is Political: Feminist Blogging and Virtual Consciousness Raising." *Scholar and Feminist Online* 5(2). Available: [http://sfonline.barnard.edu/blogs/kennedy\\_01.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/blogs/kennedy_01.htm)

For discussion: Sue Montgomery (2014). "Opinion: #BeenRapedNeverReported Started a Global Discussion about Rape." *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November.

Crunk Feminist Collective (n.d.) "Mission Statement." *The Crunk Feminist Collective*. Available: <http://crunkfeministcollective.wordpress.com/about>

Moya Bailey (2010). "They're Not Talking About Me." *The Crunk Feminist Collective*, 14 March. Available: <http://crunkfeministcollective.wordpress.com/2010/03/14/they-arent-talking-about-me>

**Wednesday June 15: Feminist Memes**

Alice Marwick (2013). "Memes." *Contexts* 12(4): 12-13.

Rachel Seidman (2013). "Who Needs Feminism? Lessons from a Digital World." *Feminist Studies* 39(2): 549-562.

\*\*DRAFT WORKSHOP\*\*

\*\*INITIAL SUBMISSION DUE\*\*

### **Monday June 20: Cybersexism**

Laurie Penny (2014). "Cybersexism." *Unspeakable Things: Sex, Lies, and Revolution*. New York: Bloomsbury, 152-200.

For discussion: Amanda Hess (2014). "Why Women Aren't Welcome on the Internet." *Pacific Standard*, 6 January. Available: <https://psmag.com/why-women-aren-t-welcome-on-the-internet-aa21fdbc8d6#.imce764ks>

Recommended: Adrienne Massanari (2015). "#GamerGate and the Fapping: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *New Media & Society* DOI: 10.1177/1461444815608807.

### **Wednesday June 22: Fighting Back against Online Misogyny**

Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate M. Miltner (2016). "#MasculinitySoFragile: Culture, Structure, and Networked Misogyny." *Feminist Media Studies* 16(1): 171-174.

Carrie Rentschler (2014). "Rape Culture and the Feminist Politics of Social Media." *Girlhood Studies* 7(1): 65-82.

For discussion: Whitney Philips (2015). "We are the Reason We Can't Have Nice Things on the Internet." *Quartz* Available: <http://qz.com/582113/were-the-reason-we-can-t-have-nice-things-online/>

### **Monday June 27: Selfie Culture & the Politics of Self-Representation**

Alice Marwick (2015). "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy." *Public Culture* 27(1): 137-160.

For discussion: Jerry Saltz (2014). "Art as Arm's Length: A History of the Selfie" Available: <http://www.vulture.com/2014/01/history-of-the-selfie.html>

Nathan Jurgenson (2015). "What is a Selfie?" *Cyborgology*, 11 August. Available: <http://www.thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2015/08/11/no-pun-no-pun>

### **Wednesday June 29: Wild Card!**

\*\*FINAL ESSAYS DUE\*\*