Syllabus

Com 4414: Race and Gender in Popular Film and Television

Dr. Dubrofsky
Office: CIS 3040
E-mail: rdubrofsky@usf.edu
Telephone: 813.974.2145
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:45-2:45 p.m. and by appointment. Please e-mail 24 hrs in advance to make an appointment.

Course Description
This course explores representations of gender and race in popular films and television shows to understand how these reflect important ideas in U.S. culture. There will be significant feminist content since much of the scholarship on these topics is from a feminist perspective. Our concern is with understanding how conceptions of race and gender are discursively (are unfixed, change according to context, culture and so on) constructed in media texts. For instance, we ask, what ideas about women emerge in contemporary popular television shows and films? How might examining these representations assist us in understanding the problem of gender oppression in the U.S.? The aim of the course is political and active, starting with the assumption that we live in an unequal system when it comes to race and gender. Our aim is to think critically about issues of inequality and oppression and work to change these.

Course Objectives and Outcomes
During this course, students will
1) learn theories about race and gender
2) learn theories about film and television
3) learn theories about social inequality
4) apply theories to specific media texts
5) build arguments about how race and gender are represented in the media
6) think critically about media
7) appreciate the importance of media in shaping our culture.

At the end of the course, students will demonstrate
1) improved written and oral communication skills
2) improved critical thinking skills through the use of media theory and analysis
3) creative engagement with the media environment relating to issues of racial and gender identity
4) an understanding of issues of race and gender oppression.

Contact Information
The best way to reach me is by e-mail, or by making an appointment to meet with me during my office hours.

Course Readings
All readings are available on Canvas in the “Files” tab in the folder labeled “Readings.” Please bring a paper or electronic copy of the readings to class each week.

Course Screenings
Some of the screenings will be viewed during class time, some on your own time—you need to have access to media equipment that allows you to play and view these. You also need to be able to obtain the screenings by your own means (local video stores, online etc.). Plan accordingly and in advance. Viewing all screenings by the deadline is mandatory. Here’s a list of the films you will view on your own time with the dates by which they must be viewed:
September 10: Thelma & Louise
September 17: Devil Wears Prada
October 22: Avatar
November 5: Mean Girls
November 19: Fight Club

Attendance Policy and Classroom Decorum
You are strongly encouraged to participate in discussion and activities.

Attendance impacts final grades. Attendance is necessary for acquiring most of the learning outcomes in the class, so the attendance policy is based on learning outcomes: you must be in class for a minimum amount of time to reach the expected learning outcome for each grade level. Missing class, for ANY reason, is missed learning time, and can have a direct impact on your grade.

Only in exceptional extenuating circumstances, on a case-by-case basis, will make-up work be considered—if it is even possible—to allow you to meet the learning outcomes for a missed class.

To ensure the best classroom environment, cell phones and any communication devices must be turned off (including turning off the vibrate mode). You will be asked to leave if these devices are on.

Religious Observances
Students who anticipate being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious holiday must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes.

Disability Services
Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability should consult with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services to arrange appropriate accommodations: SVC 1133 (974-4309) or visit their website at http://www.sds.usf.edu. Students are required to give reasonable notice prior to requesting an accommodation. Please meet with me by the second week of classes—I will do my best to make accommodations to facilitate your success in class.

Writing Center
There is a significant writing component to the course. If you are having difficulty with your writing skills, the university has a learning services center with tutors who can provide assistance. The center is located in LIB 206, and can be reached by calling: 813-974-2713.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism
Familiarize yourself with the USF Undergraduate Catalog’s definitions and policies regarding academic integrity at http://www.ugs.usf.edu/catalogs/0809/adapad.htm.

Plagiarism is when someone else’s ideas are presented as your own (even if unintentionally)—including ideas from a published source, an online source or another student’s paper. Always give other people credit for their ideas in your own work. Failure to do so in any work for the course (including in oral and video/online presentations) will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

USF has an account with an automated plagiarism detection service which allows instructors to submit student assignments to be checked for plagiarism. I reserve the right to submit assignments to this detection system. Assignments are compared automatically with a huge database of journal articles, web articles, and
previously submitted papers. The instructor receives a report showing exactly how a student's paper was plagiarized (including links to online sites where information was taken).

You cannot submit any work for this class that has already been submitted for credit in another class—doing so will result in an automatic grade of "F" for the work, and potentially for the course.

**NOTE:** Keep copies of ALL graded work until your final grade is submitted. In case there is a problem tabulating your grades, a review of the original copies of your work with the instructor’s comments and grade will be the only way to fix this problem. In these instances, failure to provide the original graded work will most likely result in an unsatisfactory grade.

**Notetaking/Taping of Class Lectures**
You do not have permission to tape any lectures or class sessions. You do not have permission to sell notes or tapes of class lectures.

**Late Work/Make-up Policy**
I do not accept late work nor do I allow make-up work, but I may consider individual cases in the event of extenuating circumstances.

**Grading Scheme**
I grade using letter grades (A, A-, B, B-, C, C-, D, D- and F). The “I” grade (Incomplete) may be considered only if a student has completed 80% of the course assignments and only if circumstances outside the student’s control prevent completion of the class during the semester.

**Grading Policy**
The course is designed to encourage independent thinking and promote an active engagement with the material. To this end, you choose the level of academic engagement that best serves your needs. All assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis. Course grades are based on satisfactorily completing the following number of requirements:

**If you want to earn an “A,” you must**
- Satisfactorily complete (on time and receive a “pass”) at least 12 written assignments (any combination of the journal or screening assignments)
  - Miss 2 or fewer class meetings
  - Satisfactorily complete the workshop Sept. 3 (submitted online, by 9 a.m.)
  - Satisfactorily present your scene analysis project to the class on assigned day (Oct 1st or 3rd—everyone must be prepared to present on the 1st)
  - Satisfactorily present your creative project to the class on assigned day (Dec. 3rd or 5th—everyone must be prepared to present on the 3rd)

**If you want to earn a “B,” you must**
- Satisfactorily complete (on time and receive a “pass”) at least 10 written assignments (any combination of the journal or screening assignments)
  - Miss 3 or fewer class meetings
  - Satisfactorily complete the workshop Sept. 3 (submitted online by 9 a.m.)
  - Satisfactorily present your scene analysis project to the class on assigned day (Oct 1st or 3rd—Everyone must be prepared to present on the 1st)
  - Satisfactorily present your creative project to the class on assigned day (Dec. 3rd or 5th—Everyone must be prepared to present on the 3rd)
If you want to earn a “C,” you must
- Satisfactorily complete (on time and receive a “pass”) at least 8 written assignments (any combination of the journal or screening assignments)
- Miss 4 or fewer class meetings
- Satisfactorily complete the workshop Sept. 3 (submitted online by 9 a.m.)
- Satisfactorily present your scene analysis project to the class on assigned day (Oct 1st or 3rd—Everyone must be prepared to present on the 1st.
- Satisfactorily complete and turn in a creative project on Dec. 3rd in a format that can be submitted for grading (since it will not be presented to class)

If you want to earn a “D,” you must
- Satisfactorily complete (on time and receive a “pass”) at least 6 written assignments (any combination of the journal or screening assignments)
- Miss 5 or fewer class meetings
- Satisfactorily complete the workshop Sept. 3 (submitted online by 9 a.m.)
- Satisfactorily present your scene analysis project to the class on assigned day (Oct 1st or 3rd—Everyone must be prepared to present on the 1st.
- Satisfactorily complete and turn in a creative project on Dec. 3rd in a format that can be submitted for grading (since it will not be presented to class)

EVERYONE: Your final grade can be lowered as follows:
- Failure to do the following will result in a lowering of your final course grade by half a letter grade (for example, an “A” turns into an "A-"):  
  - Complete the Workshop by the deadline
  - Receive a passing grade on the Workshop
- If you do not present the Scene Analysis to class you will be required to submit it in hard copy, and your final course grade will be lowered by half a letter-grade
- If you are aiming for an A or a B and do not present the Creative Project to class, you will be required to submit it in hard copy and your final course grade will be lowered by half a letter-grade
- If you do not receive a passing grade on your Image Analysis or Creative Project, your final course grade will be lowered by half a letter-grade in each instance.

➢ All of this works cumulatively for more than one item (for example, failure to submit the workshop, and failure to complete one of the presentations, results in a lowering of your final course grade by a full letter grade: an “A” turns into a “B”).

Assignments
Journals and Screening Assignments: These must be a minimum of one page single-spaced. There are detailed assignment sheets on Canvas.

Workshop
This is prep work for the “Scene Analysis Presentation” (outlined below). You will submit a 60 sec (or less) clip online on Canvas of a scene for us to analyze in class together. Provide: (1) a link to the clip (upload it on www.youtube.com if it is not already available online) for a TV show or film; (2) Tell me what you think is being conveyed in this clip (a mood, feeling) and: (3) what two formal elements (use the Image Analysis Handout) you would look at to explain how this is conveyed.

Scene Analysis Presentation
Pick one scene (90 secs or less) from a film or TV show of your choosing (different than the one selected for the Workshop). The film or TV show must be from the last 10 years, and from the United States or Canada.
This is a presentation, with no written component. The presentation should last 10-15 mins (NO longer). You can do this as a solo project (NO longer than 10 mins solo) or in groups of 2-3 people, but no larger. Please see the assignment sheet on Canvas for details.

**Final Creative Project**

There is a detailed assignment sheet posted on Canvas. This assignment allows you to experiment expressively about course ideas. It should be about 5-8 minutes per person. By “creative” I mean you should do something other than standard types of presentations (for instance, something OTHER than a power point presentation discussing negative images of women in the media). Think outside the box. Choose your mode and tone of expression. Your project can be poetic, humorous, angry, prophetic, hopeful, or sobering. Its form can be written, web-based, video-based, performance-based, or musical—however, you are responsible for securing the necessary equipment to complete the project. The two limitations are that the project must: 1) clearly engage with course concepts and ideas; 2) cannot simply summarize course material without adding new insight/a new perspective.

**Format for Assignments**

All written assignments must be typed, in a reasonably sized 12-point font and have one-inch margins. If you cite (and you are NOT obligated to do so), use proper MLA or APA format.

Any creative projects using AV equipment must be tested on the equipment in our classroom PRIOR to your presentation and any glitches fixed before your presentation date.

**Discussion**

Since this is a discussion course, it works best if people attend regularly. Remember that one of the basic objectives of this course is to talk about how we talk about media and culture.

Some of the readings for this course are challenging and abstract. You don’t have to completely “get” the material to participate; you just need to be willing to engage with the material with an open mind.

Even if you do not complete a journal entry on a reading or screening, to attend class you must have read the assigned reading and viewed the screening—you will be called upon to speak intelligently about these. Be prepared to do so.

**In The Event of an Emergency**

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USF, College, and department websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

**The fine print**

To obtain the grade you are aiming for, you may need to write more entries than the required number for that grade. This means that if you receive 2 unsatisfactory grades on two reading journal entries, you may need to submit a total of 14 journal entries to obtain 12 satisfactory grades to get an “A” in the course.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1: August 27- 29: Introduction**

Tuesday
Course Intro
- Come to class with a printed copy (available on Canvas) of: the syllabus, the “Weekly Journal” sheet, the “Image Analysis” handout and the “Writing about Films and TV Shows” Handout.
  - Prepare at least 2 questions about the syllabus and 2 questions about the journal assignment
- Course Covenant discussed (due Thursday)

**Thursday: Journal due on Ore reading**
- Reading: Ore, Tracy E. The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality.
- Course Covenant: come to class with 3 elements for the covenant
- In-Class Exercise

**Week 2: September 3-5: Gender & Analysis Workshop**

**Tuesday**
- 9 A.M.: submit your scene analysis workshop clip & details online
- In-Class Screening of: The Codes of Gender: Identity and Performance in Pop Culture, 2009, (hour and 13 min)

**Thursday**
- In-Class workshop on scene analysis
  - We will analyze a few of the clips you emailed Tuesday

**Week 3: September 10-12: Feminism: Thelma & Louise**

**Tuesday: Journal due on hooks reading**
- Lecture on First, Second & Third Wave Feminism

**Thursday: Screening Assignment due on reading (Walters/Outlaw Women) and film Thelma and Louise**
- At-home screening (watch for today’s class): Thelma and Louise (1991, 2 hrs & 15 min)

**Questions about the reading and film (to discuss, but not hand in)**
- According to Walters, what is a “symptomatic text”? 
- How and why is Thelma and Louise a “symptomatic text”? 
- In what ways can this film be considered feminist? 
- In what ways can this film be considered not feminist? 
- How might class (both women are working class) be a factor in Thelma and Louise’s predicament? 
- Is the ending of the film liberating? Depressing? Both? Why

**Week 4: September 17-19: Postfeminism: Devil Wears Prada**

**Tuesday: Screening Assignment due on Walters/Postfeminism reading and film Devil Wears Prada**
- Readings
  - (very short: 1 pg) Frank, R. H. (2010). A labor market punishing to mothers. New York Times. online at:


- At-home screening (watch for today’s class): Devil Wears Prada (2006, 1 hr & 50 minutes)

Thursday
- In-Class Screening, excerpts of Ally McBeal “They Eat Horses, Don’t They?”

Week 5: September 24-26: The Game & Prepping Scene Analysis Projects & Final Projects

Tuesday: Journal due on Springer reading
- In-Class screening: The Game: "The Big Chill"

Thursday
- Prep. for Scene Analysis Presentation: Prior to class, typed on a sheet of paper to hand in (can be in point form):
  - Write your name and the names of your group mates if working in a group
  - The Name of the film or TV show you will analyze
  - The 2-4 elements from the image analysis handout you will use
  - The mood/feeling/idea/atmosphere that will be the focus of your analysis (that you will build a case for in your presentation)
- Come to class with a paper and pen. Do some brainstorming before class to prepare for Final Presentations:
  - Think through what issues are important to you when it comes to race and gender in the shows and/or films you watch. Think about a form of writing you would like to try—poetry? A short story? Think about what tone you might like to use: Humor? Anger? Sadness?
  - Screening Assignment due on in-class screening of Ally McBeal

Week 6: October 1-3: Scene Analysis Projects

Tuesday: Scene Analysis Project Presentations
Thursday: Scene Analysis Project Presentations
- Screening Assignment due on in-class screening of The Game

Week 7: October 8-10: Postracism & Glee

Tuesday: Journal due on Ono/Postracism and West readings
- Lecture on postracism
- Readings

Thursday
- In-Class Screening, excerpts: Glee “Throwdown”

Week 8: October 15-17: Postracism & Mad Men

Tuesday: Journal due on Ono reading (on Mad Men)
Thursday: Screening Assignment due on *Glee* in-class Screening
- In-class screening, excerpts: *Mad Men*: “Smoke Gets in your Eyes” (45 minutes)
- Today is the deadline for obtaining my approval for the topic of your final creative presentation/project, and for permission to work in a group.

**Week 9: October 22-24: Neocolonialism, Pocahontas & Avatar**
**Tuesday: Screening Assignment due on Ono & Buescher reading and film Avatar**
- At-home screening (watch for today’s class): *Avatar* (2009), (2 hrs and 42 min)

**Thursday: Screening Assignment due on in-class screening of Mad Men**
- In-class screening, excerpts: *Pocahontas* (1995)

**Week 10: October 29-31: Cho: I’m The One That I Want & All American Girl**
**Tuesday: Journal due on Li Po Price and Kim Readings**
- Readings

**Thursday: Screening Assignment due on in-class screening of Pocahontas**
- In-Class Screenings
  - Excerpts of: *I’m The One That I Want* (2000)
  - Excerpts of: *All American Girl*: “Mom, Dad, this is Kyle”

**Week 11: November 5-7: Mean Girls**
**Tuesday: Screening Assignment due on Ryalls reading and film Mean Girls**
- At-home screening:
  - *Mean Girls* (2004), (1 hr 37 minutes): **Watch this AGAIN if you have not seen it in the last year—it needs to be fresh in your mind**

**Thursday: Screening Assignment due on Cho in-class screening**
- In-class screening, excerpts: *Heathers* (1988)(1 hr 43 minutes)

**Week 12: November 12-14: Californication & Hung**
**Tuesday: Journal due on Lehman and Hunt readings**
- Readings
- In-Class Screenings (first half): Californication: “Pilot”

**Thursday: Screening Assignment due on in-class screening of Heathers**
- In-Class Screenings, excerpts:
  - *Californication*: “Pilot” (second half)
  - *Hung*: “Pilot”
Week 13: November 19: *Fight Club*

Tuesday: Screening Assignment due on in-class screenings of *Californication* and *Hung* (April 11)
Screening Assignment due on Ashcraft and Flores reading and film *Fight Club*
- At-home screening (watch for today’s class): *Fight Club* (1999) (2 hours & 20 minutes)

**Questions about Fight Club (to discuss, but not hand in)**
- What is the relationship of masculinity to the role of women in the film?
- What is the relationship of masculinity to race in the film?
- What do you make of the ending of this film?
- What do you make of Marla’s character?
- What are the issues the men in this film face—what are the conflicts in their lives?

Thursday: NO CLASS (National Communication Association)

Week 14: November 26, 28: Work on your own & Thanksgiving: NO CLASS

Tuesday: WORK ON FINAL PROJECTS
- Use this time to work on your final creative projects (Esp. if you are doing a group project, this is an ideal time to meet and get the work done), and use this time to make sure whatever equipment you need for your presentation works in the classroom.
- Send me any questions you have about your final projects by e-mail and I will answer these by the end of the day
- Make sure any programs, equipment etc. works in the classroom

Thursday: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Week 15: December 3-5: Final Projects

Tuesday
- Final Creative Project PRESENTATIONs

Thursday
- Final Creative Project PRESENTATIONs