

WMST 375/AFAM 390/INTS 375/COMM 365

Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Television

Room: Engineering Building 1103

Time: TR 3-4:15

Instructor: David Powers Corwin MA, MAIS

Office: Johnson Center 240KA

Office hours: By appointment both in person or virtually

Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement

Women and Gender Studies seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Course Description: This course will focus on constructions of race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary television and classical television. It examines television through genres, consumptions, and social justice issues.

Learning Outcomes: In this course, students will learn the history of television as an academic study and how media is analyzed based on the identities of the characters. This course is meant to be foundational course in the study of race, gender, sexuality and television studies. By the end of the course, students will

- Have some background in television studies as an academic discipline
- Understand intersectionality as a theoretical framework and how identity is represented in U.S. television
- Write an analysis of a television series through theoretical frameworks in women and gender studies, critical race studies, and queer studies,
- Begin a conversation about television as social commentary and television as social justice

Required Texts

All readings will be accessed through Blackboard.

Access to films online (Youtube, Amazon, Netflix); you will incur costs for some of these.

A Hulu Subscription (about \$7 a month); you can also try to see how long you can get a free trial for here.

You can get free trials for Netflix.

Look at the TV requirements ahead of time and plan AHEAD for your budget!

A note on the course text choices for class: I choose the texts I choose based on my expertise and what I feel is important for the canon of queer theory. I also feel that it is important to discuss the voices at the margins that may not be seen as “canonical,” which we will unpack what I mean in class. While I am always open to suggestions for things to read on my own time, I have made the choices I have made for this semester for a variety of reasons and do not welcome conversations about making changes to the texts or workload mid semester. The syllabus and all it encompasses stands from Day 1. You don’t have to love every text that we read to learn something from it; I certainly have not loved everything I have read for the 24 years I have been in school. 😊

Paper Policy: All papers are to be written in MLA or APA Style and submitted as a doc. or docx. Papers will be assessed on cohesion of the argument, critical analysis, media texts, syntax and sentence structure, grammar construction, and use of scholarly sources. A letter grade will be deducted for each page less than the minimum requirement. If the assignment is four pages, and three are turned in, I will begin the grade at a B+. You MUST turn in an acceptable final research paper in order to pass the course.

I don’t have a late policy for the course, which means I don’t accept late work without prior approval. However, in most circumstances, I am happy to provide an extension on most assignments.

See the last page of the syllabus for the University’s policy on academic integrity. All written assignments for this course must be in MLA or APA format. If you are unsure about a citation, ASK! Plagiarism is much more than submitting a paper you found online. If you do not include a works cited or fail to follow MLA or APA correctly, you will not receive a passing grade for the assignment and I am obligated as an instructor to report you to the Honor Board.

Technology Policy: Laptops are only to be in class the days we have readings from Blackboard. You are not to have them out on days we are only reading print texts. If you have a Kindle edition, you may bring your Kindle; however, no other exceptions to this policy. If you cannot take notes any other way (I would prefer you to), you must sit with your laptop at the front of the room. I know this sounds harsh, but so many students are surfing the net while they are taking notes and it is a distraction not only to me, but more importantly your peers.

Instructions via email and Blackboard are the same as instructions in the syllabus.

TV Viewing Policy: Unless noted “in-class screening” in the syllabus, all media should be watched BEFORE coming to class on the particular day it is listed. All of these films/television shows are accessible through the library, Netflix, Hulu, HBO Max, Youtube, and Amazon Instant video, or other online viewing sites. Some of these films may charge a rental fee. Please allow for these costs. You can also obtain Netflix and Amazon Prime for 30 days free as a trial if you do not already have access to these. If you need to watch these on campus, you are more than

welcome to watch them in the Women and Gender Studies Center, Johnson Center 240K. We have a Netflix account and I have copies of some of the films/television shows.

Cell phone policy: Cell phones will not be needed in this course for any reason. If you need to make a call or send a text, I am happy to make accommodations; however, you must discuss this with me AHEAD of time. If I see that you are using your cell phone during class, I will first give you a warning. After that, I will not say any more and will deduct three points off your final grade for every time moving forward that I see you using it.

Communication: I prefer communication via email at dcorwin@gmu.edu. Please do not email me at dcorwin@masonlive.gmu.edu as I do not check that account. Due to university policy, we are required to communicate with you through your Mason outlook email. Please send me emails through this account and check your email regularly (at least once a day) for class notifications. I am also happy to meet with you in person during office hours. If those times do not work for you, we can set up a separate appointment. To brainstorm research topics or to discuss grades, I require in-person communication. I will not discuss grades via email.

I will respond within 36 hours of receiving an email Monday-Thursdays. Emails sent Friday-Sunday will be responded to on by Monday evening as this is the time that I am doing my own research.

Tips for Analyzing Media Texts

- Allow enough time! Some of televisions shows are long and will need a large chunk of time to complete.
- Do NOT try to multitask while watching a film/TV show etc. You will not glean what you need to from them.
- Re-watch particular scenes from media texts that you feel are important.
- Put aside your love for a particular work and be able to analyze the media text. You can still have strong ties to a film/TV show but understand its problematic representation. 😊

My expectations for course preparation: This course is a discussion based course. While I may need to briefly lecture on some topics, we are a learning community that depends on everyone's voices rather than just mine. I rarely speak for the entire (or even half of) the class. I expect everyone to have read the texts, watched the films, and come with specific comments and questions for me, but more importantly for your peers. My classes do not operate as a relinquishing of information from me to you. We ALL have to generate class conversation and questions. If you can't commit to this type of environment, please see me after the first day of class.

Some specific examples of excellent class preparation:

- You should come to class with specific observations rather than "I found this text interesting."

- “I don’t understand this particular concept, does anyone have anything they can add” rather than “I don’t understand any of this text” or remaining silent
- “What can I say in class that would be helpful to me and my peers?” rather than “I don’t have anything to say in class or I usually don’t participate”
- “How can my instructor and peers help me with the course load and concepts? Rather than “This class is too much work.”
- Note taking is going to be really helpful when watching media texts for your in class participation, but also your assignments.
- Come to class with connections AMONG texts ACROSS THE SEMESTER. Think outside of the day we are in class. You will be asked to make these connections both through in class and outside of class writing assignments. I will also ask you to make connections between our class conversations and what is going on in the world as we speak.
- ANALYZE don’t summarize. We all know what the text says, but we don’t know what YOU have to say about the text.

Policy on Incompletes: I rarely give incompletes. The only circumstances that I will give one is a death/illness of a close loved one at the end of the semester or a severe illness or injury where a doctor says that due to these issues you cannot complete the course on time. You have to have at least 75% of the coursework completed as well in order to qualify for an incomplete. No exceptions to this policy.

Class Climate Rules:

Open, frank discussion without referring to groups by derogatory manner, that is, the use of terms that are or have been used to describe groups of people in a demeaning way will NOT be used in class. Confront ideas, concepts, theories. Do NOT confront/attack individuals. Emotion is great, but so is cognition.

To make this course work we’ll all need to:

- Afford each other mutual respect
- Confidentiality with regard to discussions in class
- Agree to disagree, agreeably!
- Examine self/explore
- Non-judgmental of others
- Know and say what you feel
- Value each other
- Be honest with self and others
- Show humility and keep an open mind
- Use appropriate humor
- Be direct
- Attack issues not individuals
- Listen constructively
- Question and participate

A Note on When Life Happens....

As someone that strives for social justice, identifies as a feminist, and whose research is on trauma-infused pedagogies, I understand that life gets out of our control more often than not. Since we are discussing emotionally charged issues, there may be discussions or readings that trigger particular past experiences that you or someone else has had. Please consult with me if you find yourself in this situation and we can figure out how to best support you through a reconfiguration of your engagement with that text and/or on campus resources. Any text in this course has the potential to be triggering to some folks.

Many of you have competing responsibilities in addition to school and I want to be supportive of those. While I hold high standards and all work has to be completed in the course, I am happy on a case by case basis to make adjustments to due dates when needed. I just ask for at least 24 hours notice and for a meeting to discuss how to best move forward if you regularly find that you can't meet requirements/due dates in the course. I do not, however, change the workload mid semester.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week One:

Tuesday 8/24

Introduction

What is Television Studies?

What is Gender, Race, and Sexuality?

Read: Phillips : "I" is for Intersection: At the Crux of Black and White and Gay and Straight"
(Blackboard)

Sietner " Qualitative Audience Research" (Blackboard)

Thursday 8/26:

***Specific Television episodes will be assigned in the week's folder in Blackboard**

I Love Lucy

Read: Alvey "Too many Kids and Old Ladies': Quality Demographics and 1960s U.S. Television;"

Lull "Hegemony" (Blackboard)

Bor "Lucy's Two Babies"

Tuesday 8/31

All in the Family

Maude

Read: Butsch " Why Television Sitcoms Kept Re-creating Working-class Buffoons for Decades"
(Blackboard)

Cohen-"How Archie Bunker Changed the American Sitcom for Decades" (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/1:

The Cosby Show

Read: Pinckney- "The Black Face That's a Mirror for Everyone" (Blackboard)

Tuesday 9/7:

Living Single

Read: *TV Female Foursomes and Their Fans* (selections on Blackboard)

Giorgis-"How the 90s Kinda World of Living Single Lives on Today" (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/9

The Golden Girls:

Read: *TV Female Foursomes and Their Fans* (selections on Blackboard)

Sewell-Deconstructing HIV/AIDS on *The Golden Girls* (selections on Blackboard)

Tuesday 9/14:

Friends

Read: "Be Your Own Windkeeper": *Friends*, Feminism, and Rhetorical Strategies of Depoliticization"-Naomi Rockler (Blackboard)

Judge-Erika Alexander Reminds David Schwimmer that he starred in a Lily White Reboot of *Living Single*" (Blackboard)

Cobb-"I'd Like Y'all to Get a Black Friend': The Politics of Race in *Friends*" (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/16

No Viewing

Media Content Analysis Instruction Day

Read: Leavy and Harris-**Blackboard**

Tuesday 9/21

Saved By the Bell

Dawson's Creek

Read: Doyle Greene " Free, White, and Teenage Male" (Blackboard)

Jenner "Let's Talk about Jack" (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/23

Dawson's Creek

Read: Brooker-"Living on Dawson's Creek" (Blackboard)

Tuesday 9/28

Soap Opera

Days of Our Lives; One Life to Live

Read: Levine "Toward a Paradigm for Media Production Research: Behind the Scenes at *General Hospital*" (Blackboard)
Allen "Making Sense of Soaps" (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/30:

Dr Quinn Medicine Woman

Read: Henderson-"*Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* and the Prime Time 'Outing' of Walt Whitman"

Focused TV Content Analysis Paper Due by 11:59pm

Tuesday 10/5

ER

Read: Wadson-"*ER's Gloria Reuben*"

Thursday 10/7

ER

Read: Vanarendonk-"*ERs Nurses*" (Blackboard)

Research Paper Proposal Due by Saturday at 11:59pm

Tuesday 10/12: No Class

Thursday 10/14 (Online Class)

Queer as Folk

Read: Becker-"Primetime Television in the Gay Nineties"

Doty -Chapter 1 (**Both on Blackboard**)

Manuel-"Becoming the homovoyeur: consuming homosexual representation in *Queer as Folk*"

Tuesday 10/19

No Viewing

Media Content Analysis Instruction Day

Read: Cobb-"I'd Like Y'all to Get a Black Friend': The Politics of Race in *Friends*" (reread)

Doty: "My Beautiful Wicked' *The Wizard of Oz* as Lesbian Fantasy (link to ebook is in Blackboard; will likely need Mason credentials to log in)

Thursday 10/21

The L Word

Read: Moorman-"Articulations of Bisexuality"

Wolfe and Roripaugh-"the (in)visible lesbian anxieties of representation in *The L Word*"

Tuesday 10/26

Noah's Arc

Read: Yep and Ellia-"Racialized Masculinities and the New Homonormativity in LOGO's *Noah's Arc*"

Cunningham-"Reconsidering established interpretations of masculinity, race, and sexuality through *Noah's Arc*"

Thursday 10/28:

Grey's Anatomy

Read: Warner "The Racial Logic of *Grey's Anatomy*" (Blackboard)

Joseph-"Strategically Ambiguous Shonda Rhimes: Respectability Politics of a Black Woman Showrunner" (Blackboard)

Tuesday 11/2

Grey's Anatomy

Albertson-"Sleeping With the Enemy" (Blackboard)

Thursday 11/4:

Blackish

Read:

Hall "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media" (Blackboard)

Draft of Paper Due by 11:59pm and conferences begin

Tuesday 11/9:

Dear White People

Read: Amanda Lotz *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (Chapter 1

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb08239> You will need your Mason credentials to log in or you can use the scanned version on Blackboard)

Thursday 11/11

One Day at a Time

Read: Bradley-"Why One Day at a Time's Cancellation is so disappointing"

del Rio and Moran-"Remaking Television: *One Day at a Time's* Digital Delivery and Latina/o Cultural Specificity"

TV as Social Justice Project Proposal Due at class time

Conferences end today

Tuesday 11/16

Orange is the New Black

Read: "Don't Drop the Soap VS. The Soap Opera: The Representation of Male and Female Prisoners on U.S. Television" (Blackboard)

Fischer-"Queer and Trans Approaches to Media Studies" (Blackboard)

Thursday 11/18:

Pose

Read: Padilioni-"The Realness of *Pose*"

Research Papers are due by Saturday at 11:59pm

Tuesday 11/23

Nashville

Standford-“You’ve Got the Wrong Song”

Amanda Lotz *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (Chapter 3

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb08239>

You will need your Mason credentials to log in or use the scanned copy in Blackboard)

Thursday 11/25-No class

Tuesday 11/30

This is Us

Read: Chaney- “The Safe Progressivism of *This is Us*”

Thursday 12/2

Hollywood

Read: Christian-Chapter 3 *Open TV* (**Blackboard**)

Final Exam Period Thursday 12/9 1:30-4:15pm

Hollywood

No Reading Just Watching

TV as Social Justice Project Due and 3 minute presentations

Course Reflections

Grade Breakdown

Participation (Reading, watching films, in-class writing, occasional short-out of class writing, discussion, evidence of having read the text): **30%**

- Participation is NOT just attending class, but it is difficult to participate without attending class. It is engaging with the text through class discussion and showing evidence of having read the text. Also, showing proof that you are paying attention your classmates and the instructor contributes to my assessment of participation. This class does not have an attendance policy; however, you cannot participate if you are not in class.
- Frequent tardiness will result in a reduction of your participation grade.
- Occasionally, I may ask a question in class and ask you to go home and write a few paragraphs in response to that. Also, I may ask for the same in class and build the discussion around your responses.
- If I see that the class as a whole is falling behind in the readings/media texts, I will give reading quizzes rather than in class writing or take home questions. These quizzes will count toward your participation grade.

- I will give you a grade of 15 pts for your participation grade after the midterm and another one at the end of the semester.

Focused TV Content Analysis Paper 15%

Research Paper 25%

Process Grade for Research Paper 5% (proposal, draft, and conference)

TV as Social Justice Project 25%

See assignment sheets on Blackboard.

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100%

A: 93-96%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89%

B: 83-86%

B-: 80-82%

C+: 77-79%

C: 73-76%

C-: 70-72%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% or below

Campus Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support.

[University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/)

(<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

Campus Resources

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474.

All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications. It is best to make an appointment; walk-ins are accepted if there are openings at that time. Assistance is also offered online. You are highly encouraged to take advantage of this free service! After the first writing assignment, I may recommend that you visit the writing center.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian" <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CENTER; JC 240K (703) 993-2986; <http://wmst.gmu.edu/center/>

The Women and Gender Studies Center sponsors programs and events that are relevant to this course. It has a library of material that may be checked out. We also support several student

organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. Hours: Monday-Thursday: 9-6; Friday: 9-5

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) Resource Center:

SUB I, Room 2200 703-993-2702 lgbtq.gmu.edu

Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE)

SUB I, Room 2400 703-993-2700 odime.gmu.edu

Student Support and Advocacy Center

SUB I, Room 3200 703-993-3686 ssac.gmu.edu

24 hr Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Crisis Line: 703-380-1434