Gender Representation in Pop Culture
NCLC 347, 4 credits, 1 experiential learning credit

Faculty Team
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Learning Community Meeting Time & Location: Wednesdays, 1:30-4:10 pm, Robinson A123

Celebrating Our Diversity
New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, awareness of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

“Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power.” ~ Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands, p 17

Learning Community Description
This interdisciplinary learning community explores the social construction of gender in pop culture, including the Internet, social and print media, film, television (including sports), music and art. Students will critically interrogate historical and contemporary representations of the female-male binary and the intersections of gender with race, class, ability, and sexuality. We focus on how these identities intersect with gender and affect gender roles and expectations. Visual and print representations of gender are the “pedagogical tools” through which we explore our love-hate relationship with popular culture—the ways we are attracted to and repulsed by many of the representations of masculinities and femininities.

Essential questions that we will explore include:
- Where and how do we see evidence of pop culture influencing the construction of gender in our lives and the lives of those around us?
- How do we see gender being represented in pop culture and how does that affect privilege and power?
- What are our assumptions and potential biases about gender, and how can we engage in disrupting them?
Learning Community Goals and Objectives
A primary objective of this learning community is for students to understand pop culture as an interdisciplinary field and to understand the major theoretical approaches to the study of gender. In addition, students will examine gender as a social construction and study the ways in which gender is represented in contemporary pop culture.

By the end of this learning community, students will be able to:
- Articulate the ways in which the masculine-feminine binary is reinforced through representations in pop culture;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the fluidity and social construction of gender;
- Apply the major communication theories associated with the study of gender roles to representations across a diverse array of pop culture;
- Critically interrogate gender representations in pop culture, especially as they relate to the intersectionality of sexuality, race, ability/disability, class, ethnicity/language of origin, and gender;
- Synthesize a working definition of feminism for themselves;
- Develop an understanding of how popular representations of gender affect privilege, power, and “Othering”;
- Uncover our own assumptions and potential biases about gender and develop strategies to disrupt those; and
- Develop an awareness of how pop culture influences our own conceptions of gender as well as the construction of gender in those around us.

This learning community emphasizes the following NCC competencies:
- Communication: written, verbal and visual
- Critical thinking: analysis of written and visual texts
- Group interaction: collaborative work and classroom discussions
- Aesthetic response: appreciation for and interpretation of popular culture

Required Texts

Relevant Campus and Academic Resources

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, & Questioning Resources
SUB 1, Suite 2200; 993-2702; http://lgbtq.gmu.edu/

Office of Disability Services (ODS)
Any student with documented learning differences or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB 1, Suite 2500; 993-2474; http://www.gmu.edu/depts/unilife/ods/) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk with us to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME)
SUB 1, Suite 2400; 993-2700; http://odime.gmu.edu
Community Guidelines for Learning & Academic Citizenship
Our success as a learning community depends on each of us actively engaging and contributing. We expect to have dynamic discussions about the ideas presented in this learning community, informed by your reading, viewing, research, and experiential learning activities. On the first day of class we will establish community guidelines for interacting with each other to support our exploration of these topics and ideas. We will return to these guidelines throughout the semester, particularly when we are working with controversial or difficult content. We pride ourselves on being one of the most diverse universities in the US, making it an incredibly rich environment for learning. It means, too, that we must continually be aware of the differences and avoid discriminatory remarks or practices based on ideas about race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender or sexual orientation.

Learning Community Policies

- **Texting and Cell Phones:** Please do not text during class time (or leave the room to accept a phone call or to answer a text unless arranged with us in advance). Please turn your phones off. We will have ours on vibrate and are registered to receive any Mason alerts which we will notify you about if they appear. Be aware that we take this rule quite seriously and will deduct 5 points from your learning community grade each time we see your phone.

- **Food:** We ask that you do not bring food to class (unless you have enough to share with all the other students— and us!). You may bring drinks.

- **Attendance and Timeliness:** We expect you to attend all classes and to be on time. Actively participating in our learning community sessions is critical to the strength of our entire community. Absences will negatively impact your participation grade. In extreme emergencies (death in the family, hospitalization, illness, etc.), we will need official documentation. In those instances, work other than in-class or daily assignments **may** be made up. Please do not expect to receive an excused absence for a doctor’s appointment, dentist appointment, a friend’s illness, a work situation, or anything else that could be arranged for another time. If you choose to leave the class or to be absent for non-emergencies, you will not be able to make up in-class work and will receive a zero for participation that day.

  Late arrivals to class disrupt the class and demonstrate disregard for others in the class. Everyone knows that traffic and parking issues create special problems for mid-day classes; therefore, it is your responsibility to factor all possibilities into your travel plans. Please be aware that tardiness will also negatively impact your participation grade.

- **Late Work:** All assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus and must be handed in on time. Late work will be marked down one-half letter grade for each calendar day they are late. We will not accept work that is more than one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of a death in the family.
• **Email and Blackboard:** Please check your email and our Blackboard course site several times a week, as we will use both email and the Announcement page in Blackboard to communicate with you between classes. We also welcome your emails and usually respond quickly. Our policy is to always be sure to respond within 24 hours. If we are out of town for the weekend or a professional meeting, however, that may not be possible. If you have not received a reply within 24 hours, please be sure to follow up with us.

Please note that it is university policy that we respond only to your Mason email accounts – this is to protect your privacy – and we will not respond to gmail or other email accounts.

• **Honor Code, Plagiarism, Collaboration:** The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that:

  - All work submitted be your own;
  - When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and
  - If you are uncertain about the expectations for a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please talk with us or to a trusted friend or counselor to get your situation in perspective. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, and other related concerns.

Some projects are designed to be undertaken individually. For these projects, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, it is not appropriate to give your work to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, we have the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

Your group project and presentation are designed to be completed by your group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear. While individual group members may take the lead on different components of the project, we do expect that all group members will contribute significantly and expect it to be conceptually integrated in the final product.

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**Assignments and Evaluation**

Learning community participation and daily work (15%)
Media diaries (10%)
Self-portrait assignment (10%)
Integrated blog post assignment (20%)
Group project & presentation (10%)
Integrated analysis (15%)
Experiential learning (20%)

**Learning community participation and daily work (15%; due weekly)**

Through class discussions and assignments, you will have the opportunity to discover new perspectives and examine ideas that were previously unchallenged. Open discussion depends on the development of trust and safety among participants, as well as risk-taking and effective facilitation. Participation means more than coming to class, it means being fully present in class. It means coming to class ready to participate (having done the readings, arriving with textbooks and notes, and otherwise prepared). It means participating in class discussion and debates. It means asking questions. It means showing evidence of self-awareness through respectful dialogue, being willing to question your assumptions, and demonstrating inclusiveness. If you are still not sure, ask! In-class writing, submission of class discussion
questions, occasional reading quizzes and the like will also be part of the learning community. Lastly, you are encouraged to bring relevant materials from newspapers and other media to class.

**Student-Teacher Conferences.** You are each encouraged to make an appointment with Professor Scott Constantine before the midterm to discuss your performance and progress in the learning community. If you find yourself in trouble, do not wait until the end of the semester to talk with her. We are both available to meet with you during office hours or by appointment.

**Media diaries (10%; due September 24th and October 29th)**
In this assignment you will complete two media diaries that track and annotate your consumption of various forms of popular culture. In addition to completing the template we provide, this assignment asks that you reflect on and analyze your overall media consumption by completing the media diary survey.

**Verbal self-portrait assignment (10%; due September 10th)**
This assignment asks that you choose one identity you want to share with the class, create a verbal self-portrait to present, and write a paper reflecting on your process of creating your self-portrait.

**Integrated blog post assignment (20%; due weekly)**
At the beginning of the semester you will be assigned to a group of classmates with whom you will work the whole semester. For this assignment, your group will hold discussions on a weekly blog. Each week, we will ask you to post on Blackboard a 300-500 word response to the readings, viewings and any substantive discussion questions we provide. You must complete 10 blog posts in total, leaving you the option to either skip posting on the blog two weeks during the semester without penalty or drop your two lowest scores.

**Group Project and Presentation (10%; due November 12th and 19th)**
Your group will also be asked to demonstrate your learning through a group project and presentation. You will conduct research, analyze the data and create a technology-enhanced presentation for the class. You must use some form of technology beyond PowerPoint. You may use PhotoShop Elements or other image manipulation technologies or create a website to enhance your presentation.

We will discuss more of the specifics of the assignment as the semester progresses, but in essence you will be asked to identify an issue related to representations of gender that you think is problematic and/or limiting. After you have researched your identified issue, you will create a product, applying what you have learned. This product might be a floor display or plan, educational video, children’s book, film or multimedia presentation, set of greeting cards, or keynote address with slides and/or handouts. As group collaboration is one of the NCC competencies we are focusing on, you will be asked to evaluate the contributions of yourself and your group members.

**Group contract (due September 17th):** We ask that each group draft, modify and agree upon a contract to facilitate your group’s work over the semester. The contract should be a written statement about how you will work together and what you can expect from each other in teamwork.

Questions to consider include:

- How will you make decisions – by vote or by consensus? How will you check to make sure everyone is satisfied with a decision? What will you do if someone remains unsatisfied?
- Do you want to create some formal roles in the group? A group leader? A facilitator? A record-keeper? Should these roles rotate among group members or do you want to use group members’ specific strengths and allocate roles on that basis?
- What are your expectations about participation? About dividing up work and working together? About attending and contributing to meetings?
- How will you handle conflict between group members? Remember, conflict is normal when we work in a group: new ideas will not emerge if we all agree all the time. Groups only run into problems...
when they have not worked out how to resolve creative conflicts.
• What if one or more group member fails to live up to expectations? What should the consequences be? How will that affect your evaluation of that group member?

Integrated analysis (15%; due December 3rd)
This assignment, near the end of the semester, asks you to demonstrate your learning through an integrated analysis.

Experiential learning requirements (20%; due December 3rd)
This learning community has one experiential learning (EL) credit embedded in it, so plan on participating in multiple out-of-class activities that we shall bring back to the classroom (approximately 45 hours of outside work). You will need to make sure you work on EL hours every week in order to complete the work required. Students are required to keep field notes on all outside work and will write a paper at the end of the term that integrates observations, personal reflections and theoretical concepts from the learning community.

For all assignments, more detailed information will be posted to Blackboard.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Distinguished work; virtually perfect in grammar and mechanics. Superior in content, substance, and structure. Work reflects critical thinking/viewing and astute analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent work; may have one or two minor mechanical errors. Outstanding in critical thinking &amp; analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent work in content, substance, and structure reflecting good analytical &amp; critical thinking skills; may have a few minor mechanical or grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Very strong work; demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the subject and good analytical &amp; critical thinking skills. May have structural or mechanical issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very good work. Shows good working knowledge of subject matter; demonstrates some critical thinking &amp; analytical skills. May have structural, grammatical and mechanical issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Good work. Demonstrates adequate knowledge of subject matter and shows some limited critical thinking &amp; analytical skills. May have issues related to structure, content and grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Satisfactory work, but with limited knowledge of the subject and superficial critical thinking &amp; analytical skills. May have multiple errors in thinking, structure, grammar and mechanics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Borderline satisfactory work, with limited knowledge of the subject and insufficient critical thinking &amp; analytical skills. May have multiple grammatical and mechanical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Weak work. Demonstrates only cursory knowledge of the subject; may have attempted using critical thinking &amp; analytical skills but they are not applied appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory. The work is complete but shows minimal understanding of the subject, has multiple problems with content, structure and substance. Errors impede understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure. The work lacks coherent structure, inaccurate content, and no evidence of critical thinking or analytical skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Drop-Add-Withdrawal Periods
- Last Day to Add or to Drop without penalty: Sept 2
- Last Day to Drop (33% tuition penalty): Sept 16
- Final Day to Drop (67% tuition penalty): Sept 26
- Selective Withdrawal Period: Sept 29-Oct 17
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Viewing Assignment (To be completed before class)</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Week 1 8/27| *Introductions  
*LC overview  
*Form groups  
*Opening our dialogue | **Read:** Wood, Introduction, pp 1-13  
| Week 2 9/3 | *Conceptual foundations  
View: *Iron Jawed Angels (YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, Mason Library, etc.)* | **Read:** Wood, Chpt 1, pp 14-36; Bromley, Chpts 1 and 3, pp 1-12 and 37-46  
**View:** [Iron Jawed Angels](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YA13GNT8Mc) | *Integrated blog post 1                                      |
| Week 3 9/10| *Understanding gender and intersecting identities  
**View:** *This is what a feminist looks like*? (12 min.)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg) | **Read:** Wood, Chpt 2, pp 37-59; Bromley, Chapter 4, pp 47-63  
**View:** [This is what a feminist looks like](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg) | *Integrated blog post 2  
*Verbal self-portrait assignment                                                                 |
| Week 4 9/17| *Understanding gendered media  
**View:** Ted talk Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie: “The danger of a single story” (19 min.)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg) | **Read:** Wood, Chpts 6 and 11, pp 123-141 and pp 231-252  
**View:** Ted talk Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie: “The danger of a single story” (19 min.)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg) | *Integrated blog post 3  
*Group contract  
| Week 5 9/24| *Representing men and masculinities  
*View clips: *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*  
**View:** *Tough Guise 2 (81 min.)*  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Wood, Chapter 4, pp 81-101; Bromley, Chapter 9, pp 151-171; Hobson, pp 87-90 (Hip Hop Hegemony)  
**View:** [Tough Guise 2](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | *Integrated blog post 4  
| Week 6 10/1| *Delving deeper into the issues  
*Understanding privilege and power  
**View:** *The Codes of Gender: Identity and Performance in Pop Culture* (73 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Bromley, Chapter 6, pp 91-113  
**View:** [The Codes of Gender: Identity and Performance in Pop Culture](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | *Integrated blog post 5  
*Group project proposal  
*Competencies in action [http://bit.ly/1q7tXOh](http://bit.ly/1q7tXOh) |
| Week 7 10/8| *Understanding gendered power and violence  
*View *Killing us softly 4* (46 min.)  
**View:** *Flirting with Danger – Power & Choice in Heterosexual Relationships* (52 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Wood, Chapter 12, pp 253-276  
**View:** *Flirting with Danger – Power & Choice in Heterosexual Relationships* (52 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  | *Integrated blog post 6                                      |
| Week 8 10/15| *Examining assumptions about racism  
*Midterm assessment  
**View:** *Ethnic Notions* (on reserve in Mason Library)  
**View:*
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Hobson, Intro and Chapter 1, pp 3-41  
**View:** *Ethnic Notions* (on reserve in Mason Library)  
**View:** [https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | *Integrated blog post 7  
NOTE: All conferences should be completed                                      |
| Week 9 10/22| *Destabilizing gender and race  
**View:** *Race, Power, and American Sports* (45 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Hobson, Chapter 2, pp 43-63  
**View:** *Race, Power, and American Sports* (45 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  | *Integrated blog post 8                                      |
| Week 10 10/29| *Seeing whiteness  
**View:** *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* (50 min.) (on reserve in Mason Library)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Hobson, Chapter 3, pp 65-86  
**View:** *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* (50 min.) (on reserve in Mason Library)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  | *Integrated blog post 9  
| Week 11 11/5| *Evaluating and racializing the digital divide  
**View:** *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (51 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | **Read:** Hobson, Chapter 4, pp 93-114  
**View:** *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (51 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com)  | *Integrated blog post 10  

**Fall 2014**

Weekly Schedule (Subject to change)
# Fall 2014
## Weekly Schedule (Subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Viewing Assignment (To be completed before class)</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 12** 11/12 | *Disrupting the digital divide  
*Presentations | **Read:** Hobson, Chapter 5, pp 115-138  
**View:** *Latinos Beyond Reel: Challenging a Media Stereotype* (Abridged version, 61 min.)  
[https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com](https://gmu.kanopystreaming.com) | *Integrated blog post 11  
* Presentations for Groups 1, 2, & 3 |
| **Week 13** 11/19   | *Widening the frame  
*Presentations  
*Integrated analysis assignment posted to Bb | **Read:** Hobson, Chapter 6, pp139-162  
**View:** Palestinian American spoken word artist  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIN6qbtNjec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIN6qbtNjec)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xarc5PFknfw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xarc5PFknfw) | *Integrated blog post 12  
* Presentations for Groups 4, 5, & 6  
*Competencies in action  
[http://bit.ly/1q7IX0h](http://bit.ly/1q7IX0h) |
| **Week 14** 11/26   | **No Class: Happy Thanksgiving! 😊** | | |
| **Week 15** 12/3   | *Looking ahead  
*Final integration and wrap up | **Read:** Bromley Chapters 10 and 11, pp 173-212; Wood, Epilogue, pp 277-281 | *Post integrated analysis assignment to Bb  
*EL assignment due  
*LC evaluations |