



VM 402 - FALL 2019
4 CREDITS - TUESDAYS 6-9:45PM - WALKER 524

Once you open up the Pandora's box of race and gender... you are never done.
Kara Walker

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By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will do a deep dive into contemporary issues around race and gender in American film, television, and digital media cultures by integrating feminist theory, critical race theory, industry texts, and personal narratives from industry specialists to understand this complex moment in Hollywood's history—onscreen and behind-the-scenes. Students will engage deeply with current issues through weekly readings, weekly writing assignments, oral presentations, and a final research project.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through readings, screenings, discussion, weekly writing assignments, oral presentations, and a final research project, students will:

- Formulate critical responses to issues of gender and race within cultures of media production
- Practice academic writing and engage academic research on a weekly basis
- Conduct research collection and perform thoughtful historical and cultural analysis to answer proposed research questions regarding diversity and inclusivity in Hollywood
- Develop an understanding of theories and models used to understand gender, race, and media in order to formulate arguments around contemporary texts, debates, and controversies in American culture
- Investigate, analyze, and critique past and current social and professional discussions of race and gender specific to Hollywood

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Engaged discussion is a key component of this course. These guidelines foster a respectful classroom climate:

- Respect your peers. Disagreements are natural (and welcome!), but grant everyone courtesy whether or not you agree with what they say.
- You do not have to express your own opinion on a subject, but if you do, expect others to disagree.
- Some of you may wish to bring up personal experiences when relevant to class discussion. Please do! But note that your comments are then a potential topic for discussion.
- Respect your classmates' privacy when you leave the classroom. Las Vegas rules apply.
- You are free to change your mind on any topic at any time (one of the great benefits of being human). Personal transformation encouraged.

PARTICIPATION / ATTENDANCE

This course requires informed and committed participation (10% of final grade). Come to class ready to actively listen and discuss the assigned readings. Bring in the questions you have related to the week's material. Be attentive, engage in discussions, and take notes on the material presented in lectures, readings, and screenings. If you know you will miss a class due to a religious holiday or serious illness, please inform me prior to class. More than two absences will lower your final grade by a letter. For example, if you earn an A- but miss three classes, you will receive a B-. If you miss four or more classes, you will fail the course.

We always hear about the rights of democracy, but the major responsibility of it is participation.
Wynton Marsalis

COURSE READINGS

All readings will be posted on Canvas. As some of the class texts are theoretically sophisticated, you should allow enough time for close reading and analysis. It is helpful to take notes on the readings, as well as to formulate questions that can contribute to class discussion. You are required to bring your reading materials to class to facilitate your participation. I highly recommend printing readings so you can bring them to class each week with easily accessible notes.

Check Canvas and the syllabus regularly to keep up with the course.

GRADING

This course is a media arts seminar (surprise!). That means you are developing your skills in media scholarship—research, close analysis, and academic writing. While some of you may be more accustomed to media production, it is important to become well-versed in the “academic side” of the media industry. It will help you be more thoughtful in your creation and who knows? You might end up getting published one day!

Participation	10%
Weekly “Nuggets”	30%
In-class presentation of article	10%
Final research paper annotated bibliography	5%
Final research paper outline	10%
Final research paper presentation	10%
Final research paper	25%

ASSIGNMENTS

Further details on all assignments will be shared in class.

Weekly “Nuggets” (30% of final grade)

Due weekly, up to 12 hours before class (see Canvas)

Each week, post on Canvas a summary of your thoughts on that week's readings/screenings. You can post these any time, up to 12 hours before class (by 6am Tuesday morning). I will check that you complete these and assign a holistic grade to your responses at the end of the semester, accounting for progress and engagement. Complete the week's readings BEFORE class—you are exploring the issues before class so that you are ready to discuss them.

These are not papers! Nuggets should be 2-3 paragraphs, and respond to the week's material using any format or order you choose. Each should include a brief review (really brief! 2-4 sentences) of the main argument in each piece, your thoughts about each individual piece and/or your thoughts overall, and a brief discussion of how media you have seen (in class or not!) illustrate the week's theme.

Typically, a nugget will include:

- A brief review of the main takeaway of each reading: what is the author arguing for (or against)? In what context?
- How does the piece fit into our theme?
- How is each piece in conversation with the others?
- Can you think of media examples that work with the readings?
- What aspects of the reading/viewing would you like to talk about in class?
- What concept(s) emerged as most important for you after reviewing all the material?
- What points or sections do you have questions about?

In-class presentation of article (10% of final grade)*Dates TBD*

You will facilitate discussion on a class reading once during the semester. Article presentations should include a concise summary and critique of, as well as stimulating questions about, topics addressed in the reading. Students are encouraged to prepare additional materials (e.g. handouts, slides, etc.) that might be helpful in clarifying the reading and its relation to that week's topic. Essentially, you are teaching the class your assigned article. Dates will be assigned on 9/17 (second week of class).

Final research paper annotated bibliography (5% of final grade)*Due October 29*

This is a prelude to your final paper. Find three scholarly sources that you believe will have bearing on the topic chosen for your final project. If you have chosen a current event, your sources are not likely to deal explicitly with your topic. Instead, this assignment asks you to consult sources that are related to the general field, such as feminist blogging, queer fandom, horror films, neoliberalism, reality television, female celebrity, etc. (I am happy to help you figure out your general field and offer suggestions for authors/topics.)

The assignment has two parts:

- Produce an annotated bibliography for each of your three articles. Explain their central points, supporting evidence, and attempted intervention in the field. Essentially, these are "nugget-esque" summaries of each article.
- Write a 2-3 paragraph overview where you explain what you learned, and how these articles aid your general understanding of your final paper topic. It is ok if not all of the articles are equally useful. Part of the point of this assignment is to help you recognize the difference. In your analysis, explain how (and if) these articles taught you to look at your topic in a new light. What did they help you to see? What questions still remain?

Final research paper outline (10% of final grade)*Due November 19*

You will bring to class a detailed outline of your research paper. It should include thesis statements, topic sentences, quotations you will use from your readings, etc. Show the structure of your argument and your conclusions. You will peer-review these in class.

Final research paper presentation (10% of final grade)*No more than 25 minutes; due December 3 or December 10*

You will deliver a presentation about your research topic area. In this presentation, you teach the class the meaning of your topic and argue why it is significant to current debates about race and gender in contemporary Hollywood. You have complete license to determine the structure and format of your presentation. You may include clips, slides, or original videos created by you. Overall, the idea is to teach an audience unfamiliar with the topic what is at stake.

Final research paper (25% of final grade)*Approximately 15 pages; due December 17*

For your final research paper, select an event, issue, or media text that you believe is (or has been) meaningful to current debates within feminist media studies and/or critical race theory. Your approach should be intersectional, and should include a combination of research sources including scholarly articles, trade press, and popular press. One option is to take a current issue and provide an account of at least two contrasting perspectives—there may be more than two sides—and a thesis statement about the stakes of the issue. Regardless of your ultimate topic, you should present multiple perspectives on the stakes and illustrate why your topic should be of concern to a gender/race/media scholar. You will present your paper ideas for feedback on October 15.

DRAFT SCHEDULE

Syllabus is subject to change. Check the schedule weekly: tinyurl.com/vm402ckp

Week 1: September 10	Introduction
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Week 2: September 17	<p>Female Friendship and the Buddy Comedy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine dates for article presentations - Field trip to see <i>Booksmart</i> (2019) (Bright Lights Film Series) <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alexandra Donald, "Girls Against the World: Female Representation in Modern Hollywood" - Alison Willmore, "<i>Booksmart</i> Has a Blind Spot When It Comes to Class" - bell hooks, "Sisterhood is Still Powerful"
Week 3: September 24	<p>Defining Terms: Studying Culture, Identity, and Media Systems of Power and Resistance</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz, "Key Concepts in Media Industry Studies" - Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture" - bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" - Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" - Caroline Siede, "If you like <i>Return of the Jedi</i> but hate the Ewoks, you understand feminist criticism"
Week 4: October 1	<p>Feminism, The Other, and Questioning the "Post" Identity</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Angela McRobbie, "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture" - Mary Beltrán, "The Hollywood Latina Body as Site of Social Struggle: Media Constructions of Stardom and Jennifer Lopez's 'Crossover Butt'" - Ralina Joseph, "'Tyra Banks is Fat': Reading (Post-)Racism and (Post-)Feminism in the New Millennium" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rawiya Kameir, "Lupita Nyong'o's 'Acceptable Blackness' and the Myth of a Post-Racial Hollywood"
Week 5: October 8	<p>White Privilege and Benevolent Racism</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" - Luigi Esposito and Victor Romano, "Benevolent Racism: Upholding Racial Inequality in the Name of Black Empowerment" - Jillian Boger, "Manipulations of Stereotypes and Horror Clichés to Criticize Post-Racial White Liberalism in Jordan Peele's <i>Get Out</i>"
Week 6: October 15	<p>Inequity in the Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Come to class with a few solid ideas for your final research paper <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kristen Warner, "Strategies for Success? Navigating Hollywood's 'Postracial' Labor Practices" - Patricia Hill Collins, selections from "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images" - Vicki Mayer, "To Communicate Is Human; to Chat is Female: The feminization of US Media Work"

	<p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Martha Lauzen, "The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2018" - Kristen Warner, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the (Nearly Impossible to Win) Game: Analysis of Minority Employment"
<p>Week 7: October 22</p>	<p>Performative Masculinity in Hollywood and the Music Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final approval of final research paper topics <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priscilla Peña Ovalle, "Viva Viagra! Or, How Race Dances Around Erectile Dysfunction" - Jake Nevins, "Boys on Film: What We Can Learn About Masculinity from Hollywood" - Mary Celeste Kearney, "How Film Schools Lead to Pipelines Full of Weinsteins" - Felicia Henderson, "The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers' Room" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Megan Twohey, Jodi Kantor, Susan Dominus, Jim Rutenberg, and Steve Eder, "Weinstein's Complicity Machine" - Nina Menkes, "The Visual Language of Oppression: Harvey Wasn't Working in a Vacuum"
<p>Week 8: October 29</p>	<p>Bodies Tamed and Untamed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final research paper annotated bibliography due <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hunter Hargraves, "'You Better Work': The Commodification of HIV in <i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i>" - Priscilla Peña Ovalle, "Head & Shoulders Gives Good Hair: Dance, Hair, And Latina Representation" - Yeidy Rivero, "Beautiful Betty" - Amita Nijhawan, "Mindy Calling: Size, Beauty, Race in the Mindy Project" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linda Mizejewski, "Queen Latifah, Unruly Women, and the Bodies of Romantic Comedy"
<p>Week 9: November 5</p>	<p>Queer Identities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class next week (Monday schedule observed on November 12) <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GLAAD, "2017 Studio Responsibility Index" - Catherine Sender, "Dualcasting: Bravo's Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences" - Adrienne Shaw, "Putting the Gay in Games: Cultural Production and GLBT Content in Video Games" - Wendy Peters, "Teen TV's Post Closet and Postracial Fictions" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willa Paskin, "Lesbians are Having a TV Moment, But Where Are the Gay Men?"
<p>Week 10: November 19</p>	<p>Multiculturalism and Multi-racial Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final research paper outline due (bring two paper copies) - Determine dates for final presentations

	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mary Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious, (and Multiracial) Will Survive" - Madhavi Mallapragada, "The Market of the Future...and Now: Media Industries in the US and the Race to Capitalize on "Multicultural" Consumers"
<p>Week 11: November 26</p>	<p>Power and Performing Identities: Cultural Appropriation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class will be held remotely (details forthcoming) <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lisa Nakamura, "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet" - Carvell Wallace, "Stolen Language: The Strange Case of Meghan Trainor's Blaccent" - Shilpa Davé, "Rethinking Accents in America"
<p>Week 12: December 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final research presentations
<p>Week 13: December 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final research presentations (continued) <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sara Ahmed, "A Killjoy Manifesto"
<p>Week 14: December 17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final research papers due by 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)

Diversity Statement

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with the course instructor or to contact the Social Justice Center at 617-824-8528 or by email at sjc@emerson.edu.

Title IX Statement

I am a responsible employee at Emerson College which means I am not a confidential resource. I am required to report disclosures that may violate Emerson's Sexual Misconduct Policy. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Healing and Advocacy Collective, Counseling and Psychological Services, and/or the Center for Health and Wellness. If you would like to report an incident involving a possible violation of Emerson's Sexual Misconduct Policy, please contact our Title IX Coordinator at titleix@emerson.edu or 617-824-8999. You can also report online: www.emerson.edu/reportaconcern

Accessibility Statement

Emerson College is committed to providing equal access and support to all students who qualify through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may fully participate in the Emerson experience. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services at SAS@emerson.edu or 617-824-8592 to make an appointment with an SAS staff member. Students are encouraged to contact SAS early in the semester. Please be aware that accommodations are not applied retroactively.

Plagiarism Statement

It is the responsibility of all Emerson students to know and adhere to the College's policy on plagiarism, which can be found at: www.emerson.edu/policy/plagiarism. If you have any questions concerning the Emerson plagiarism policy or about documentation of sources in work you produce in this course, speak to your instructor.