



## **CIEE Global Institute – Rome**

<b>Course name:</b>	Media, Gender and Identity
<b>Course number:</b>	(GI) COMM 3009 ROIT
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	Rome Open Campus (Communications, Journalism and New Media Track)
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. semester credits:</b>	3
<b>Contact hours:</b>	45
<b>Term:</b>	Fall 2019

### **Course Description**

In this course, students will apply a critical lens to representations of gender and identity in contemporary media. Taking gender and sexuality as a critical starting point, we will examine the construction of identities under the simultaneous influence of race, class, and nationality. By focusing on popular representations in both the US and the European country where the course is taking place, we will gain a deeper understanding of identities as both culturally specific and influenced by global media. Instead of suggesting that contemporary identities are determined by what we see on TV screens, computers, and in local movie theaters, the course seeks to describe the complex interactions between national audiences and concrete media productions, and analyzes how different audiences reproduce or challenge traditional concepts and stereotypes of gender, race, sexuality, and class. By combining the study of theoretical texts with examples from the advertisement industry, television, the movies, and other forms of contemporary cultural expression, it offers a comprehensive and thorough introduction to contemporary studies of the media and identity.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the role of media in constructing gender, race and sexuality in contemporary societies
- Understand how gender is created and recognized a cultural product
- Develop a deepened understanding of contemporary Italian media
- Acquire a deepened understanding of Italian society
- Demonstrate an appropriate use of specific vocabulary in the field of cultural studies
- Develop the ability to write critically about gender and sexuality representation issues in Italy
- Critically analyze and explain the process of gender construction
- Develop informed knowledge around the notions of gender, race, sexuality, representation, popular culture, globalized media
- Contrast and compare popular culture in Italy and the U.S.
- Practice intercultural sensitivity by analyzing controversial issues within contemporary Italian society

### **Course Prerequisites**

No specific pre-requisites are needed for this course.



### **Methods of Instruction**

This course will combine lectures, class debates, walking tours, film screenings, press reviews and conversations with guest speakers.

### **Assessment and Final Grade**

3 Weekly Reviews:	15%
3 Quizzes:	15%
Group Presentation:	20%
Final Exam:	30%
Class Participation:	20%

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Weekly Reviews**

Students will be asked to write a very short essay on crucial questions of the course. The professor will indicate topics and format and will provide extensive and precise guidelines.

#### **Quizzes**

Students will take 3 quizzes throughout the course. Each quiz, based on the topics discussed during classes, will include true and false, multiple choice and short answer.

The professor will indicate specific topics and format and will provide extensive and precise guidelines before each quiz.

#### **Group Presentation**

In small groups students will illustrate the theoretical concepts discussed during the course as well as analyze the illustrative material assigned for the classes (movies, documentaries, short stories, art, TV etc.) or new media resources. The group will present the detailed content of the material and launch a discussion on the basis of the concepts discussed in class.

Each member of the group must participate in preparing and in delivering both a portion of the theoretical as much as the illustrative presentation.

#### **Final Exam**

Students will take a final exam at the end of the course. The exam will include all topics analyzed in class.

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#### **Participation**

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback



(after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

### **Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements.
10 – 20%	2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements; <b>written warning</b>
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 5 language classes	Automatic <b>course failure</b> , and possible expulsion

Please note this schedule is subject to change if opportunities arise to enhance the curriculum

### **Weekly Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

#### **The role of media in the construction of identities**

**1.1** The class will set the theme of this course: What is the role of media (mirroring, shaping or representing) in the construction of our identity? What is it to be a woman or a man? This introduction



intends to show that gender, race and sexuality are most important issues in popular culture due to their fundamental importance for a person's identity.

The syllabus will be presented and reviewed, with emphasis on assessment methods and course requirements.

**1.2** On-site class at the ***Casa Internazionale delle Donne***. The International Women's House is a self-financed not-for-profit organization, which works on promoting the rights, culture, knowledge, experiences and policies produced by and for women. Students will take part in a guided tour by the historian of art and feminism Loretta Bondi .

[www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org](http://www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org)

Readings from Healey (2013, pp.10-24) and Hodkinson (2010, pp.219-242)

## Week 2

### **Sexual Difference. Feminist Perspectives**

**2.1** The history of Italian Feminism. During the 15th century Italy, in a cultural atmosphere completely focused on men, women such as Catherine de Medici and Artemisia Gentileschi challenged the assumption that women should not be educated and should remain submissive to men.

Their efforts will be analyzed (through pictures and artworks) and interpreted as the seeds for the early feminist movement in Italy.

The first Italian feminist national congress was held in 1911, precisely in Fascist Italy: women fought for their divorce rights and their independence. Articles published in contemporary newspapers and visual documents will be analyzed within the historical and cultural context.

**1° QUIZ** in class

**2.2** What is it to be a woman over and above your body and brain? Feminists from the so-called second wave argue that liberalism and its insistence on the equality of rights have failed to emancipate women, given that it does ignore the fundamental difference between women and men. Although we cannot say that there is a natural or biological difference between women and men, there is nonetheless a metaphysical difference between the two genders

**Film screening and debate:** *Vogliamo anche le rose* (We want roses too, 2007) directed by Alina Marazzi, a documentary on the



1960s and 1970s sexual liberation and feminist movement in Italy. Debate in class.

**2.3** Are men obsolete? After feminism, should we engage in a new 'masculinism'? Was feminism so successful as to marginalize men? The argument we are discussing here is to what extent gender is a matter of socio-economic developments.

Reading from Irigaray (1985, pp. 23-33) and Rosin, Dowd, Moran & Paglia (2014).

### **Due Date for submission of first review**

## **Week 3**

### **Queer Theory and Intersectionality**

#### **3.1** Queer Theory

"Queer means to fuck with gender. There are straight queers, bisexual queers, tranny queers, lez queers, fag queers, SM queers, fisting queers in every single street in this apathetic country of ours." We will pick the work of several Italian queer artists (<http://www.archivioqueeritalia.com/en/archivi/arte/#>) and discuss to what extent homosexuality, queer sexuality and transgressions can blur traditional gender categories.

#### **2° QUIZ** in class

**3.2** The theory of intersectionality argues that our personal identities are not only made up by gender, but also by other collective identities in particular race and class. Insofar as our identities are multiple, there is a substantial difference between, let's say, a white woman and a black woman, a white man and a black man. Reading the short story *Little Mother* by the Italian-Somalian novelist, Uxax Cristina Ali Farah, we are examining to what extent race differentiates gender.

#### **Due Date for submission of second review**

## **Week 4**

### **Naturalism and Biology: Are Sex and Gender Really that Distinct? But what about transgender?**

**4.1** The class will present the gender trouble in adolescence: attachment, trauma and personality in trans people and on gender identity development in gender nonconforming children and adolescents.

**Film screening and debate:** *Transgender Kids: Who Knows Best?* (2017) directed by John Conroy, a documentary produced by BBC. "Around the world there has been a huge increase in the number of



children being referred to gender clinics - boys saying they want to be girls and vice versa. Increasingly, parents are encouraged to adopt a 'gender affirmative' approach - fully supporting their children's change of identity. But is this approach right? In this challenging documentary, BBC Two's award-winning This World strand travels to Canada, where one of the world's leading experts in childhood gender dysphoria (the condition where children are unhappy with their biological sex) lost his job for challenging the new orthodoxy that children know best”.

### **3° QUIZ** in class

**4.2** Onsite class and meeting with representatives of **Arcigay**, the Italian LGBTI association. The meeting will provide a major introduction to the LGBTI scene in Rome and Italy more generally and we are going to analyze what it means to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender in Rome.

**4.3** The history of gay rights movement in Italy and U.S. told through media resources and key events.

Film screening and debate: *Milk* (2008) directed by Gus Van Sant, it is an American biographical film based on the life of gay rights activist and politician Harvey Milk, who was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California, as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Reading from National Geographic (2017, pp. 48-73)

### **Due Date for submission of third review**

## **Week 5**

### **Gender as Sexuality**

**5.1** Sexed Genders: According to Catharine MacKinnon, gender is a function of sexuality that is hierarchical in patriarchal societies. Gender is determined by a male point of view that is conditioned by pornography. Lesbianism and bans on pornography and prostitution can reestablish sexual equality.

A journey through key events and figure of Italian television in the 20th century will lead the debate on the representation of gender in popular TV shows, such as *Drive In* (1983-1988), *Non è la RAI* (1991-1995) and *Striscia la Notizia* (since 1988).

**5.2** The Power of Sexuality: Libertarians, as Gayle Rubin, strongly contest the reduction of gender and sexuality to oppression and violence. On the contrary, they reevaluate sexual pleasure and the



sexuality of the female body. Libertarians defend the agency and dignity of prostitutes, pin ups and porno actors.

**Film screening and debate:** *Videocracy* (2009) directed by Erik Gandini, a documentary film about Italian television and its impact, role and consequences on Italian cultural, political and social life.

Readings from MacKinnon (1989, chapter 7) and Rubin (1984)

## Week 6

### Group Presentation and Final Exam

**6.1** Group presentations, wrap-up and conclusions.

**6.2** Final Exam

## Course Materials

### Readings

Butler, Judith (1991), „Imitation and Gender Insubordination,“ in Diane Fuss (ed.), *Inside Out. Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, New York, Routledge.

Dines G. and Humez J. M. (2014), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, Print.

Dowd, Maureen, Caitlin Moran, Hanna Rosin & Camille Paglia (2014), *Are Men Obsolete? The Munk Debate on Gender*, House of Anansi Press.

Farah, Ubax Cristina Ali (2006), „Little Mother,“ in *Metamorphoses* 14 (1-2).

Gilligan, Carol (1982), *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press.

Healey J.F. (2013), *Diversity and Society: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*. Thousand Oaks, SAGE.

Hodkinson, Paul (2010) *Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, SAGE.

hooks, bell (2015, [1981]), *Ain't I a Woman. Black Women and Feminism*, New York, Routledge.

Irigaray, Luce (1985), *The Sex Which Is Not One*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1991), *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press.

National Geographic (2017). *Gender Revolution. The Shifting Landscape of Gender* (Special Issue), 231 (1).

Rubin, Gayle (1984), „Thinking Sex. Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,“ in Carole Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger. Exploring Female Sexuality*, London, Routledge.

### Media Resources

Gandini, E. (2009). *Videocracy* [Motion picture]. ORF.

Marazzi, A. (2007). *Vogliamo anche le rose* [Motion picture]. Dolmen Home Video.

Van Sant, G. (2008). *Milk* [Motion picture]. Momentum.

*Drive In* [Television series]. (1983). Milan: Italia 1.

*Non è la Rai* [Television series]. (1991). Lazio: Canale 5.

*Striscia la Notizia* [Television series].(1988). Milan: Canale 5.