



## CIEE Amsterdam, the Netherlands

<b>Course name:</b>	Screen Cultures
<b>Course number:</b>	VIST 3001 NETH
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	Amsterdam Social Sciences and Humanities + Amsterdam Business and Culture
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. Semester Credits:</b>	3
<b>Contact Hours:</b>	45
<b>Term:</b>	Spring 2019

### Course Description

“Popular culture is the stage where we rehearse our identities.”

-- José Esteban Muñoz

Beginning from the premise that we live mediated lives, and that the visual media texts we consume on a daily basis shape our understanding of our own identity and the identity of others, *CIEE Screen Cultures* will explore the ways in which media at large – and film and television, in particular – produce meaning, articulate ideology and identity, and both reflect and effect cultural change, specifically as it concerns dominant and subversive articulations of gendered, raced, and sexual identity/ies. After a cursory overview of the major theoretical approaches that inform the study of gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture, this course will home in on the representation of discrete and historically situated lived identities across a wide range of film and television texts, hailing from the post-World War II period up to the present. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to illustrate how cultural theory and popular culture inform one another, paving the way for us to come to a renewed understanding of the complex dynamics that shape the changing representations of gender, race and sexuality – both *on* and *off* the screen.

### Learning Objectives

When students reach the end of this course, they will be expected to:

- Process, actively engage with, and interrogate theories of popular culture, specifically psychoanalytic theory, critical race theory, and (post)feminist interventions in the interpretation of gender, race, and sexuality on the small and big screen;
- Demonstrate a keen understanding of the changing conceptions of masculinity and femininity in American film and television from the 1950s to the present – and the way(s) in which these are inflected by questions of race, class, and sexuality;
- Apply theories of popular culture and feminist criticism to visual media texts, both orally and in writing;



- Understand and comment on the complex relationship between the creators, distributors, critics, and consumers of popular culture -- and how each encode and decode the film and television text in their own way;
- Have become more discerning and critical consumers of film and television.

### **Course Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for *CIEE Screen Cultures* – except for an interest in film and television!

### **Method of Instruction**

*CIEE Screen Cultures* runs for 15 weeks (in other words, it spans the entire length of the semester) and meets twice a week for 2 hours. Every single class, students will be assigned one or two theoretical texts and one or more primary texts (i.e. one film or two to three episodes of a television series). We will discuss the primary and secondary texts in unison, and since this class takes the form of a seminar, students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the interrelationship between the two in class by analyzing selected scenes from the film or television show under consideration.

Although each class will be introduced and facilitated throughout by the instructor, it is imperative that students contribute actively to the discussion. Seminar-style classes rise and fall by the participation of the students, which makes it essential that everyone comes to class prepared. At a minimum, students should have closely read the assigned texts, watched the assigned film or television show(s), and taken (extensive) notes on both.

### **Assessment and Final Grade**

Students' final grade will be based on the following:

- Class participation: 10%
- Two pop quizzes: 10%
- One podcast episode: 15%
- Three response papers: 35%
  - Response paper #1: 10%
  - Response paper #2: 10%
  - Comparative response paper: 15%
- Final exam: 30%

Class participation – 10%



As mentioned above, the success of seminar-style classes depends in no small part on the active – and informed – contributions of students; you will therefore be expected to come to class prepared and ready to engage with your fellow students on the assigned readings and visual media texts.

Note: Although all of you are experienced viewers of film and television, there is a difference between watching a movie in bed before you go to sleep and watching a movie in order to unpack its gendered underpinnings. While some of you may choose to watch a film two times, all of you will have to take copious notes and bring these to class in order to support your arguments with specific references to scenes, camera movements, dialogue, etc.

#### Two pop quizzes – 10%

These **two unannounced quizzes** are designed to test that students have read the assigned readings and watched the assigned visual media texts, while also giving you an idea of which type(s) of questions you can expect on the final exam. Students will have 20 minutes to answer one to three questions (ranging in level of difficulty); one of these questions will cover the plot of the assigned film or television show, while one or more will interrogate students' understanding of the assigned readings.

#### Podcast episode – 15%

Since their arrival on the cultural scene in 2004, podcasts have undergone a period of unprecedented growth, and have become one of the most popular and influential media in the dissemination of news, opinion, and critical commentary. Today, podcasts play an influential role in shaping the national conversation, specifically as it concerns the historical and contemporary analysis and reception of film and television, with podcasts ranging from:

- weekly conversations about the state of popular culture in the US writ large (e.g. *Slate's Culture Gabfest*, *NPR's Pop Culture Happy Hour*, *Pop Rocket*, *The Watch*);
- debates on specific aspects of American film and television, from the representation of race (*Slate's Represent*), to the creation of television series (*Remote Controlled*), Hollywood as an industry (*Hollywood Breakdown*), and the state of film scholarship (*The Film Comment Podcast*);
- in-depth discussions of every episode of a particular television series (e.g. *Talk the Thrones*, *The Talking Dead*, *Mission Log*, *Gilmore Guys*);
- deep dives into specific genres or eras of Hollywood cinema (e.g. *You Must Remember This*, *Out of the Past*, *The Dead Air Podcast*).

You will be asked to follow in the footsteps of (amateur and professional) podcast hosts across the United States by contributing to the discussion and analysis of American film and television with a focus on unpacking the gendered, raced, and sexual dimensions of an American pop cultural text.

**In a fifteen-minute podcast episode (if you opt for a podcast with two hosts) or a twenty-minute episode (if you choose to have three hosts), you will demonstrate**



how your analytical skills have evolved by the halfway-point of the semester by parsing a film or TV series of your own choosing.

Envisioned as an oral response paper, your episode will be evaluated on the same criteria; needless to say, you will not be asked to quote authors at length, but you will have to weave their theoretical insights into your conversation. Ultimately, your podcast episode should take the form of a thoughtful conversation between two or three well-read individuals, which will advance your listeners' understanding of the gendered, raced, and sexual issues raised by the film or TV series you select as the focus of your podcast episode.

You have to submit your podcast episode by **Monday, April 2** in an audio format of your own choosing.

### Three response papers – 35%

Students will be asked to write **two 1,500-word response papers** (each worth 10%) and **one 2,000-word comparative response paper** (worth 15%), in which they will be given the opportunity to respond to that week's readings and viewings by providing an integrated analysis of both. These response papers should include:

- a title and subtitle
- an introduction, culminating in a thesis statement
- one or more paragraphs that refer to specific scenes from the student's chosen film and/or television show(s) and specific arguments made in the assigned reading(s) to support the thesis statement
- a conclusion, which may include further/future avenues of approach to the question(s) raised

These response papers must take the form of an argumentative research paper, which means that students must go beyond a mere one-to-one summary or application of the theory and the (visual media) text(s) under consideration and must instead craft and support an original argument about the chosen film or television show that is grounded in the assigned theoretical reading(s).

These papers must be formatted according to MLA guidelines, and must include a list of works cited; if a student is unfamiliar with the MLA annotation method, the instructor will provide the student with an overview of the most important MLA guidelines. In addition to this summary, students are encouraged to consult Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (or OWL), which offers a comprehensive and easy-to-use overview of the MLA citation method: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Crucially, students must write and submit **one response paper in block 4 and one in block 5**. Students who have prepared a response paper must upload it to Canvas no later than **13:00 on the day when their chosen film or television show(s) will be discussed**. Additionally, students who have written a response paper may be asked to share the points they raise in their paper during the in-class discussion.

The comparative response paper students will write must engage with a film or TV show screened outside of class; in other words, a film or TV show students watch by themselves. There is only a single criterion for these films or TV shows: they must either air new episodes (in the case of TV shows) or come out in Dutch theaters (in the case of films) during the Spring semester (i.e. between January 29 and May 31).

After watching their chosen film or TV show, students will be asked to write a comparative response paper by bringing one or more of the theoretical readings from the syllabus to bear on **an integrated analysis of both the film or TV show they chose to watch and one of the films or TV shows discussed in class.**

The comparative response paper may be handed in either in block 4 or block 5, but must be submitted no later than **Friday, June 1** (the very last day of the semester).

#### Final exam – 30%

This written exam is designed to test students' understanding of the theories discussed in class, and, crucially, how these help viewers make sense of the changing representation of men and women in film and television texts from 1950 until the present. During this cumulative exam, which will cover material culled from the entire length of the semester, students will be asked to answer three or four questions (out of seven questions that will be provided) and will have to demonstrate -- in a cogent and well-structured response -- their knowledge of the major changes in the lives and visual representations of men and women since the end of the Second World War.

#### **Attendance, class participation and classroom policies**

Each student is expected to attend all sessions of the course and to participate actively in class discussions. Attendance will be taken every class session by the course instructor. Absences will be penalized according to the CIEE Amsterdam attendance policy outlined below:

1 absence = allowed

2 absences = extra assignment (1 page in consultation with the instructor)

3 absences = 10 points (out of 100) are deducted from the student's final grade

4 absences = the student fails the course

- If a student comes in 15-30 minutes late to class, this counts as a ½ absence.
- At all times, the student needs to inform the instructor – before the start of class – in case he or she will incur an absence. Failure to notify the teacher in advance will result in an extra assignment.
- Note about all assignments: Late assignments will be marked down by 1 point (out of 10) for every day the assignment is late. Assignments that are more than 3 days (72 hours) late will not be accepted.

Students who make active connections to the concepts from the reading materials in class discussions, students who actively ask questions, and students who actively reflect on out-of-class experiences in class will receive extra points for participation.



Participation points will be deducted when students do not participate in class or have not read the assigned reading materials before coming to class.

Since we will be discussing culturally sensitive issues in class, the classroom must be a safe space in which students are able to express their opinions openly. Discriminatory comments or language of any kind will not be tolerated.

Laptops are allowed, but only when they are used to take notes or to look up information directly related to the class discussion. The instructor reserves the right to prohibit laptop use in case this distracts other students or this privilege is abused.

Important: Please note that in case you are not present for a pop quiz or the final exam -- or fail to hand in a response paper on time because of illness -- you are required to hand in a written doctor's note with your teacher.

Resits are not offered for CIEE courses.

### **CIEE Grade Conversion Scale and Rubric**

Your performance in this course will be graded in accordance with the CIEE course grading scale and rubric adopted for all CIEE courses, which you can access in your Canvas course page under Files.

### **Screenings**

A number of screenings will be organized throughout the semester, which will give students the opportunity to see a variety of films or TV shows that both function as additional and different illustrations of the theories discussed in class and lend themselves well to a comparative response paper.

While students are welcome to attend as many of the screenings as they want, they are not required to attend any – except the screening of *The Bold and the Beautiful*, which serves as the basis for our discussion on soap operas (see class #).

Since these screenings depend largely on the movies and TV shows that are shown in the movie theaters of the city of Amsterdam, most of these screenings will be announced on a rolling basis through Canvas.



## **BLOCK 4**

### Class 1:

#### **Introduction to CIEE Screen Cultures**

Reading: None

Viewing: a clip of a movie or television show that is a testament to your interest in/love for the medium

### **SECTION I: KEY CONCEPTS IN FEMINIST MEDIA STUDIES**

### Class 2:

#### **Under His Eye: Women, the Patriarchy, and Sexual Politics**

Reading:

- (a) De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (excerpt)
- (b) Millett, "Theory of Sexual Politics"

Viewing:

*The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-present): "Offred" (S1E1) and "Birth Day" (S1E2)

### Class 3:

#### **The Importance of Body Language: The Female Body, Above and Below**

Reading:

- (a) Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"
- (b) Sells, "Voice and Body in *The Little Mermaid*"

Viewing:

*The Little Mermaid* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1989)

### Class 4:

#### **From Top to Bottom: Spectatorship, Power, and Pleasure**

Reading:

- (c) Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema"



(d) Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (excerpt)

Viewing:

*Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

Class 5:9

### **A Flaw in the Iris: Theorizing the (Female) Spectator I**

Reading:

(c) Doane, "Film and the Masquerade"

(d) Cooper, "Sex/Knowledge/Power"

Viewing:

*Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974)

Class 6:

### **Looking (Back) at Difference I: Lacing in Femininity and Race**

Reading:

(a) McPherson, "Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South"

(b) Taylor, "The Racial Politics of *Gone with the Wind*"

Viewing:

*Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) [part 1 only]

Class 7:

### **Looking (Back) at Difference II: Lassoing Masculinity and Race**

Reading:

(a) Courtney, "Looking for (Race and Gender) Trouble"

(b) Connell "The Social Organization of Masculinity"

Viewing:

*The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)

Class 8:

### **Theorizing the (Female) Spectator II**



Reading:

- (a) hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze"
- (b) Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama"

Viewing:

*Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959)

Class 9:

### **Looking (Back) at Difference III: Queering Gentlemen, Queering Blondes**

Reading:

- (c) Doty, "There's Something Queer Here"
- (d) Rowe, *The Unruly Woman* (excerpts)

Viewing:

*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953)

Class 10:

### **Theorizing the (Female) Spectator III**

Reading:

- (e) Ang, "Melodramatic Identifications"
- (f) Modleski, "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas"

Viewing:

*The Bold and the Beautiful* (CBS, 1987-present): S1E12; S1E19; S1E21; S1E24 and "Stephanie unmask[s] the true predator of [the] Forrester family" (YouTube)

## **SECTION II: CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

Class 11:

### **Mad Women: Fixing Femininity in Post-World War II America**

Reading:



- (a) Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
- (b) Stansell, "Democratic Homemaking and Its Discontents"

Viewing:

*Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015): "Ladies Room" (S1E2) and "Babylon" (S1E6)

Class 12:

### **She's Got Some 'Splaining to Do: Consuming Unruly Femininity in the 1950s**

Reading:

- (a) Landay, "Commodification and the Lucy Phenomenon"
- (b) Mellencamp, "Situation Comedy, Feminism, and Freud"

Viewing:

*I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957): "Lucy Does a TV Commercial" (S1E30) and "Job Switching" (S2E1)

Class 13:

### **Mad Men: Manufacturing Masculinity in Post-World War II America**

Reading:

- (a) Falkof, "The Father, the Failure, and the Self-Made Man"
- (b) Kimmel, "Temporary About Myself"

Viewing:

*Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015): "Marriage of Figaro" (S1E3) and "The Grown-Ups" (S3E12)

Class 14:

### **Picture (Im)Perfect: Jackie Kennedy, Feminist Historiography and Counter-Memory**

Reading:

- (a) Hirsch and Smith, "Feminism and Cultural Memory"
- (b) Rommel-Ruiz, "History, Narrative, and the Struggle for Meaning"

Viewing:

*Jackie* (Pablo Larraín, 2016)



## **BLOCK 5**

### Class 15:

#### **Far from Perfect I: Historicizing Intersectionality**

##### Reading:

- (a) Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents”
- (b) Nash, “Re-Thinking Intersectionality”

##### Viewing:

*Far from Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002)

### Class 16:0

#### **Far from Perfect II: Historicizing Same-Sex Desire**

##### Reading:

- (c) Keller and Jones, “Brokeback Mountain: Masculinity and Manhood”
- (d) Sullivan, “The Social Construction of Same-Sex Desire” + “Assimilation or Liberation?”

##### Viewing:

*Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005)

### Class 17:

#### **Who’s Gonna Make It After All?: Television Feminism in the 1970s**

##### Reading:

- (a) Dicker, “Second Wave Feminism”
- (b) hooks, “Racism and Feminism”

##### Viewing:

*The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (CBS, 1970-1977): “Love Is All Around” (S1E1) and “What’s Wrong with Swimming?” (S7E4) | *Maude* (CBS, 1972-1978): “Maude Meets Florida” (S1E3) and “Maude’s Reunion” (S1E11)

### Class 18:

#### **Wave(s) of Fear I: Slashing Away at the 1970s**

##### Reading:



- (a) Clover, "Gender in the Slasher Film"
- (b) Wood, "The American Nightmare"

Viewing:

*Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978)

Class 19:

### **Wave(s) of Fear II: Feminism in Outer Space**

Reading:

- (a) Creed, "*Alien* and the Monstrous Feminine"
- (b) ---, "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine"

Viewing:

*Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986)

Class 20:

### **Wave(s) of Fear III: Back(s)lash Feminism in the 1980s**

Reading:

- (a) Faludi, *Backlash*
- (b) Jermyn, "Rereading the Bitches from Hell"

Viewing:

*Fatal Attraction* (Adrien Lyne, 1987)

Class 21:

### **Millennial Masculinity I: *Top Gun***

Reading:

- (a) Kellner, "*Top Gun*"
- (b) Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle"

Viewing:

*Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986)

Class 22:



## **Millennial Masculinity II: The Un-Making of White Men**

Reading:

- (a) Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept"
- (b) DiAngelo, "White Fragility"

Viewing:

*Vice Principals* (HBO, 2016-present): "The Principal" (S1E1), "A Trusty Steed" (S1E2) and "Run for the Money" (S1E4)

Class 23:

## **Millennial Masculinity III: The Un-Making of Black Men**

Reading:

- (c) Kellner, "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture"
- (d) hooks, *Black Looks* (excerpts)

Viewing:

*Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017)

Class 24:

## **Queering Femininity – or the Three Faces of Ellen**

Reading:

- (a) Becker, "Prime-Time Television and Gay Politics"
- (b) Reed, "Public Lesbian Number One"

Viewing:

*Ellen* (ABC, 1994-1998): "The Puppy Episode" (Part 1) and "The Puppy Episode" (Part 2)

Class 25:

## **Postfeminism – or Carrie's Right to Shoes**

Reading:

- (c) Arthurs, "*Sex and the City* and Consumer Culture"



(d) Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture"

Viewing:

*Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004): "Ring a Ding Ding" (S4E16) and "A Woman's Right to Shoes" (S6E9)

Class 26:

### **Pictures of a Revolution I: Transgender Representation in Contemporary Television**

Reading:

- (e) Bissinger, "Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story"
- (f) Sullivan, "Transsexual Empires and Transgender Warriors"

Viewing:

*20/20* (ABC, 1978-present): "Bruce Jenner, In His Own Words"\* | *I Am Cait* (E!, 2015-2016): "Meeting Cait" (S1E1) | *Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix, 2013-present): "Lesbian Request Denied" (S1E3)

\*Available on YouTube

Class 27:

### **Latina from the Block: Situating the Latina in the Contemporary Sitcom**

Reading:

- (g) Butler, *Gender Trouble* (excerpts)
- (h) Wortham, "Is *RuPaul's Drag Race* the Most Radical Show on TV?"

Viewing:

*RuPaul's Drag Race* (Logo/VH1, 2009-present): "Glitter Ball" (S6E11; 20:41-35:25) and "RuPaul Book Ball" (S8E8)

Class 28

### **Final Exam**

Reading:



Everything!

Viewing:

None

**Readings**

All the required readings listed above (along with a complete bibliography) will be posted on Canvas under Files.