**Course Description**

“Popular culture is the stage where we rehearse our identities.”
-- José Esteban Muñoz

Through this course, students will apply a critical lens to the representation of gender, race, and sexuality in popular cultural media including Dutch TV, film, radio, the Internet, music, magazines and literature. Comparisons will be made with similar representations in other European countries and the United States. Course materials pay special attention to questions of other identity markers such as race, economic status, disability and the body. The course combines key concepts and theoretical frameworks in critical theory and cultural studies with analyses of media and popular cultural sites. This course will include guest lectures from experts in the field, and site visits to community groups and NGOs promoting awareness of sexuality issues in the community.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Key Themes in the Study of Popular Culture</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key Themes in the Study of Popular Culture</strong></td>
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<td>Topics that will be covered:</td>
<td>basic concepts of popular culture; the history of critical cultural theory (focusing on cultural theory, the legacy of Stuart Hall); Unveiling Dutch policy development on culture by way of discourse analysis.</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Theorizing Gender, Race, and Sexuality</th>
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<td>Topics that will be covered:</td>
<td>the invention race, and sexuality; critical race theory (including the male gaze, the abject, the exotic other, uneven power relations, symbolic and enlightened racism, queerness, intersections)</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Theories (con’d) and Representations of Gender, Race, and Sexuality in Popular Culture</th>
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<td>Site visit: Bijlmerparktheatre, Amsterdam South-East (performative arts)</td>
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Topics that will be covered: foundational concepts in feminist theory, intersectionality, postfeminism; case study on the connections between gender and race in popular culture

Site visit: ATRIA, Institute on Gender Equality and Women’s History, Amsterdam

Site visit: COC Netherlands, national LGBT advocacy group, Amsterdam

Week 4 Connecting the Dots: Case Studies in Gender, Race, and Sexuality in Dutch and American popular culture

Topics that will be covered: case studies are presented by young professionals and junior researchers, studying and practicing expressions of race, gender and sexuality in popular culture, examining the subversive, DIY spaces.

Learning Objectives

When students have reached the end of this summer course, they are expected to:

- Be familiar with the history and dominant forms of popular culture, particularly in the Netherlands;
- Be able to address the mechanisms by which popular cultures serve as the dominant site of representations of identity;
- Have a basic understanding of the formal and institutional parameters of popular culture in the Netherlands, including the production, delivery and trade of visual and written media, as well as the rapidly changing practices of consuming popular culture in the internet age;
- Process, engage with, and interrogate theories of popular culture, specifically as they pertain to questions of identity formation;
- Show a deep understanding of the creation, maintenance and popular-cultural representation of the interconnected social categories of gender, race, and sexuality;
- Apply theories of popular culture and identity to pop-cultural artifacts, both orally and in writing;
- Understand and comment on the complex relationship between the creators, distributors, critics, and consumers of popular culture, and the key role played by media conglomerates therein;
- Identify and be sensitive to the power relationships that undergird the representation of gender, race, and sexuality in American and Dutch popular culture -- and society at large;
- Have become more discerning and critical consumers of film and television.

Course Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Popular Culture – except for an interest in popular culture and its representation of gender, race, and sexuality.

**Methods of Instruction**

This course runs for four weeks, and will be divided into four corresponding units: (1) key themes in the study of popular culture; (2) theorizing gender, race, and sexuality; (3) representations of gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture and (4) connecting the dots: case studies in gender, race, and sexuality in Dutch, European and American popular culture.

While lectures by the instructor will anchor every unit and serve as the basis of class discussions, these will be amply supplemented by guest lectures from experts in the field, as well as guided site visits, which will both make clear how a theoretical understanding of gender, race, and sexuality informs the representation of gendered identities in popular culture, which in turn determines how issues of gender, race, and sexuality are perceived in the “real world.”

Since this class is dedicated to understanding how the representation of gender, race, and sexuality inflects notions of identity, students will be expected to either watch, read or listen -- and take extensive notes on -- a number of films, television shows, books, and songs.

**Assessment and Final Grade**

Students’ final grades will be based on the following:

1. Attendance and class participation (=1a), including journal (=1b): 15%
2. “Outside the Box” presentation: 20%
3. Weekly papers: 25% (each counts for 12.5%)
4. Final paper: 40%

**1a. Class participation**

The success of any class 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 pop-cultural texts.

In class discussions, your “Inside the Box” popular culture journal will serve as your lifeline: you should already have written down a number of questions and discussion points prior to each class, which will drive our discussions (you can read more about the popular culture journal below).

**1b. “Inside the Box” popular culture journal**

Although most (if not all) of you are experienced consumers of popular culture, there is a difference between watching a movie in bed before you go to sleep or reading a book on the bus, and watching a movie in order to unpack its ideological underpinnings. While some of you may choose
to watch a film two times or do additional research online, 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 that you believe are meaningful and best illustrate your point of view.

For each of the assigned viewings and readings, students will have to identify, transcribe and comment on (at least) one or two key scenes/passages, and write down which topics or issues had an impact on you or raised question and discussion points. In addition to this, students are encouraged to jot down errant thoughts and observations, as well.

Use the journal entries as a basis for your paper assignments and outside the box presentations.

2. “Outside the Box” presentation

Students will give an ‘outside the box’ five to ten minute presentation were they present their observations of Amsterdam/Dutch popular culture in events, posters, street fashion, and encounters in the street, bar or at home. In this way, students test their abilities to observe and analyze what they see/hear/smell (what is you bodily experience?) and connect it to theory in class and readings. The observations are explained verbally, using excerpts of your inside the box journal, and accompanied by pics taken, which are posted on instagram under the hashtag #popcultureNL.

The outside the box part means that students broaden the scope of the discussion by drawing connections that go beyond the assigned readings and/or viewings in class.

3. Weekly paper (2-3 pages)

For their weekly paper (twice during this course), students will write a short paper.

Paper 1: look up real life or online examples of Dutch/ European expressions of popular culture with racialized and or gendered overtones, describe what you see and use anything you heard in class for your description. Hand in via email on Monday morning July 3rd before 10am.

Paper 2: use a combination of inside or outside of the classroom examples and analyze them by adopting one or more of the theoretical frameworks that were dealt with in class. Students should go beyond merely applying the theory by embedding it in a cogent argument that convinces the reader of the validity of their reading. Hand in via email on Monday morning July 10th before 10am.

Students are allowed to cite any of the articles that were read in class, but they are not allowed to cite only these articles (in other words, students must venture outside the confines of the required reading list).

4. Final paper and presentation (8-10 pages) Hand in via email on due date

This paper is designed to test students’ understanding of the theories discussed in class, and, crucially, how these help viewers make sense of the representation of both men, women, as well as racial and other minority groups in popular culture texts from the Netherlands, Europe, and the United States. Pick a topic that will cover material offered during of the course.

In the paper you demonstrate -- in a cogent and well-structured manner-- your knowledge of the theoretical texts and pop-cultural examples discussed in class. Or you take a relevant case study
and describe and analyze this case study, while using theory offered during class. In any case, you are showing your ability to formulate a research question, write an academic paper, and your ability to argue your case, using proper citations.

This paper will be presented during class in a ten to fifteen minute presentation, followed by questions and discussion points from the class members (circara 20 minutes per presentation). A successful final presentation will show the students’ ability to connect theory and praxis and bring everyday life to a meta-level. Students enter into a critical dialogue with the topic showing how the subject at hand is not limited to a handful of readings, or the pop-cultural text at hand.

In General

Students are expected to do their homework and to hand in their assignments before the given deadline (preferably by email, unless communicated otherwise). A specific course schedule will be distributed during the first class, outlining a weekly schedule of the lessons, homework and assignments.

All assigned homework is mandatory, including homework that does not have to be handed in. The teacher will check whether students have done their homework on a regular basis.

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. If a student is found guilty of plagiarism, he or she will fail the course with no chance of a resit. All assignments will be assessed on Academic Standards (with regard to language, use of sources etc.) All of the papers can be written with double spacing.

Late assignments will be marked down with 1 point off. Assignments more than 3 days (72 hours) late will not be accepted.

Attendance and participation

Each student is expected to attend all sessions of the course and to participate actively in class discussion and during field trips. Attendance will be taken every week by the course instructor. Participation will be assessed according to the CIEE Amsterdam attendance policy:

1x absence = ok
2x absence = extra assignment (1 page in consultation with the professor)
3x absence = 1 point off final grade
4x absence = fail 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 professor before the start of class in case of an absence. Failure to notify the teacher regarding an absence in advance will result in an extra assignment.

Important: please note that in case you cannot attend a graded examination or assignment (e.g. midterm exam, final exam, presentation, graded fieldtrip) because of illness, it is required to hand in a written doctor’s note with your teacher.
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 who have not read the materials before coming to class.

Weekly Schedule (may vary due to circumstances)

Week 1:
Cultural studies & Stuart Hall
Identity, difference and representation
Out of the box presentation

Week 2:
Race Part I: NL and the colonies
Race Part II: theory and current movements
Visit cultural organizations
Whiteness in the Dutch context
Queerness & sexuality

Week 3:
Gender & masculinity
‘Gender trouble’
Intersectionality
Visit organization on LGBTQ
Analyze Dutch movie related to subject

Week 4:
Subversive aesthetics in a postcolonial cultural industry
Celebrity feminism
Black feminism
Visit organizations
Final presentations

Suggested readings

The following is a select bibliography:


