

# JRMC8130 – Spring 2004

## Gender, Media, and Consumer Culture

### Instructor:

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### Office Hours:

Tuesday 1:30-2:30,  
Thursday 9:30-10:30  
or by appointment

### Course description and objectives:

This course explores the intersection of media culture (i.e., production, representation, reception, and identity), commercial media imperatives, gender, and consumer culture in the United States. Additionally, it examines the development and direction of scholarly/research approaches to these areas. Clearly, these issues could engage us for many semesters; hence, I've had to be selective in terms of emphasis. Recognizing that "the way things are" is not a natural occurrence, but rather a confluence of specific, historical, societal, and cultural constructs, this class has a strong historical underpinning. And, while the class is not a feminist theory course or a course in popular culture per se, it draws heavily upon feminist research/approaches and focuses on popular culture more so than upon news content.

The material and activities I've selected have been chosen with two primary goals in mind. First, to encourage reflection upon media/gender/consumption processes and our personal engagement with those processes, toward the goal of developing a critical media literacy. In response to media scholar Stan Denski's observation that "we must begin to act wherever and from whatever position we find ourselves," I acknowledge that my personal stance is one of advocacy/activism for change. Second, to help you acquire analytic skills to explore enduring and emerging issues related to gender, media, and consumer culture. Toward this end we will identify key questions which have been/might be raised in these areas, examine a variety of scholarly approaches, and enhance our abilities to research, speak, and write toward answering those questions.

### Required Texts:

Cohen, Lisbeth, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

Davila, Arlene, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Douglas, Susan J., *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, (New York: Random House, 1994).

Farrell, Amy Erdman, *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Finnegan, Margaret, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Shields, Vickie, with Dawn Heinecken, *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2002.

Readings packet.

### Expectations and Evaluation:

Your grade in this course will be based upon the following activities:

Final project		50%
"Media moment" (group) research and presentation	20%	
Critical reflection papers (2; 10% each)	20%	
Participation		10%

**Final Project (50%).** This project can take a variety of forms, depending upon your interests, and academic and

career goals. Some examples might be:

1. a paper appropriate for conference presentation or submission for consideration for publication in a scholarly research journal
2. a series of magazine articles or in-depth newspaper stories for possible publication
3. a television documentary
4. a scholarly bibliographic essay in a particular area
5. a book review essay on several books in a related area
6. an annotated bibliography
7. research for/production of advocacy/intervention materials

I will “contract” with each of you so that our expectations in each individual case are clear. We’ll discuss this further in class.

**Media Moment (20%).** As I put this course together, I realized that my approach tends to be a “macro” one; I look at broad sweeps rather than specifics. My selection of readings illustrates this. To “fill out the picture,” this group project (2-3 individuals) is designed to draw our attention to particular moments of media culture (both historical and contemporary) which illustrate complex connections between production/representation/reception of media images and notions of gender and consumption in America. For example, Walters, in writing about the brouhaha that surrounded *Thelma and Louise*, writes: “As is true of so many ‘explosive’ media moments, we can learn more from the contentious public discourse that surrounded the film than from the film itself” (6). Another “media moment” is the speech in which then-vice president Dan Quayle attacked Murphy Brown for “mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone...” (see readings, March 25).

In this project, then, I ask each group to research a “moment” in media culture, tell its story, analyze its dimensions, and discuss its implications in the context of this course in a presentation (30-45 minutes) to the class. This presentation can take any format that your group believes to be effective. After week 5, we will begin having one presentation in each class period. We will draw for order of presentation.

I will identify some possibilities in class, however, each group should feel free to explore “moments” which are of particular interest to you. I ask that you clear your project with me.

**Critical Reflection Papers (20%).** These short written assignments (3-4 pages) are intended to provide you with an opportunity to discuss, reflect upon, and interrogate an idea or ideas arising out of readings, videos, class discussions, presentations, etc., and place those ideas in the context of your own experience with media and popular culture in a consumer society. We will discuss requirements for these papers more thoroughly in class. They will be due on **February 12** and **March 18**.

**Participation (10%).** The success of the course depends very heavily on your active participation, which includes listening and responding as well as speaking. Participation also includes the quality of your comments and evidence that you have read and thoughtfully considered the readings, relating them to each other and to your life experience. I strongly suggest that you keep a reading journal in which you make notes and observations, and pose questions regarding the readings. This will facilitate your active participation in class.

As we engage in class discussion, it is imperative that everyone’s opinions and views are respected at all times. **There is absolutely no place in this course for rudeness, discourtesy, and intolerance.** Not everyone will agree with everything that is said or written—that’s okay, as long as we create and maintain a learning environment that encourages open and honest exchanges of ideas and opinions at all times.

## General Comments:

I feel very strongly that in addition to a solid knowledge base and the ability to think critically, each and every student should possess strong oral and written communications skills. As such, **I value thoughtful class participation and I reward careful grammar, logic, and presentation in written assignments and presentations.**

All written assignments should be typed and double-spaced. **No late work will be accepted** except in the case of documented illness or documented family emergency. In either instance, it is absolutely necessary to inform me of your inability to complete your work **prior** to the class meeting at which the assignment is due.

## Honor Code:

The University of Georgia policy on academic honesty states: "All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense."

Academic honesty will be enforced strictly in this class. Please read the policy at:

<http://www.uga.edu/vpaa/polproc/ahpol/main.html>.

## Discussion Topics and Readings

**January 8**      **Orientation to the course. Expectations. Getting to know each other.**

**January 15**      **Core concepts: gender, consumer culture, media literacy, feminism, what is it about consumer culture that is gendered?**

- i Glickman, Lawrence B., "Born to Shop? Consumer History and American History," in Lawrence B. Glickman (ed.), *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-14.
- i Kellner, Douglas, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism and Media Culture," in Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (eds.), *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 5-17.
- i Cirksena, Kathryn and Lisa Cuklanz, "Male is to Female As \_\_\_ is to \_\_\_; A Guided Tour of Five Feminist Frameworks for Communication Studies," in Lana Rakow (ed.) *Women Making Meaning*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 18-43.
- i McAllister, Matthew P., *The Commercialization of American Culture*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), Chapter 2, "Advertising's External and Internal Control: Social Implications," 37-52.
- i Bartky, Sandra Lee, "'Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,'" in Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 63-82.
- i Shields, Vickie, with Dawn Heineken, *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), "Preface," ix-xvi.
- i de Grazia, Victoria, "Introduction," and "Changing Consumption Regimes," in de Grazia, Victoria, and Ellen Furlough (eds.), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 1-10, 11-24.

**January 22**      **The Victorian Era: "Separate Spheres" and The Cult of True Womanhood; magazines, fashion, and fiction**

- i Welter, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, Summer 1966, 151-174.
- i Kitch, Carolyn, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), "Introduction," 1-16; "From True Woman to New Woman," 17-36; "The American Girl," 37-55; and "Dangerous Women and the Crisis of Masculinity," 56-74.
- i Enstad, Nan, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), "Cheap Dresses and Dime Novels: The First Commodities for Working Women," 17-47; "Ladies of Labor: Fashion, Fiction, and Working Women's Culture," 48-83.
- i Peiss, Kathy, "Making Up, Making Over: Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women's Identity," in de Grazia, Victoria, and Ellen Furlough

(eds.), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 311-336.

- i Weems, Robert R., Jr., "Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity," in Jennifer Scanlon (ed.), *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 166-178.

### **January 29      The Politics of Consumption: The Suffrage Movement**

- i Finnegan, Margaret, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- i Scanlon, Jennifer, "Advertising Women: The J. Walter Thompson Company Women's Editorial Department," in Jennifer Scanlon (ed.), *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 201-225.

### **February 5      The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America**

- i Cohen, Lisbeth, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 1-191.
- i Altman, Karen, E. "Consuming Ideology: The Better Homes in America Campaign," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 7(1990), 286-307.
- i Breaseale, Kenon, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," in Jennifer Scanlon (ed.), *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000) 226-244.
- i Dines, Gail, "Dirty Business: *Playboy* Magazine and the Mainstreaming of Pornography," in Gail Dines, Robert Jensen, and Ann Russo, *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 37-63.

### **February 12      The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America (con't)**

Critical Reflection #1 due today

- i Cohen, Lisbeth, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 194-410.

### **February 19      Return to Domesticity. The Emergence of the Second-Wave Feminist Movement**

- i Haralovich, Mary Beth, "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Position the 1950s Homemaker," in Lynn Spiegel, and Denise Mann (eds.), *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 111-141.
- i Spiegel, Lynn, "Installing the Television Set: Popular Discourses on Television and Domestic Space, 1948-1955," in Lynn Spiegel, and Denise Mann (eds.), *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 3-38.
- i Mann, Denise, "The Spectacularization of Everyday Life: Recycling Hollywood Stars and Fans in Early Television Variety Shows," in Lynn Spiegel, and Denise Mann (eds.), *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 41-69.
- i Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: Doubleday, 1963), "The Problem That Has No Name," 15-32; "The Sexual Sell," 206-232.

### **February 26      Growing Up Female with the Mass Media**

- i Douglas, Susan J., *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, (New York: Random House, 1994).

### **March 4      Ms. Magazine : Popular Feminism—cause? commodity?**

- i Farrell, Amy Erdman, *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.)

i Steinem, Gloria, "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," *Ms.*, July/August 1990. 18-28.

**March 11 No Class – Spring Break**

**March 18 Emergence of Feminist Critique. Keynote Address–Women’s History Month**

Critical Reflection #2 due today

i Macdonald, Myra, *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media*, (London: Arnold, 1995), "Disciplined Approaches: Redefining Femininity," 11-40.

i Walters, Suzanna, Danuta, *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), "Introduction: On Outlaw Women and Single Mothers," 1-28; and "From Images of Women to Woman as Image," 29-49.

i Dow, Bonnie, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement Since 1970*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996), "Introduction: The Rhetoric of Television, Criticism, and Theory," 1-23.

i Mulvey, Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in Thornham, Sue (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 1999, 58-69.

**7:30 Keynote Address– Women’s History Month. Katha Pollitt**

Katha Pollitt writes a bi-weekly column, "Subject to Debate," for *The Nation*. She won the National Magazine Award for "Columns and Commentary" in 2003. The awarding committee wrote: "Katha Pollitt is a proudly reconstructed feminist, yet one who never shies from noting weaknesses and contradictions in conventional thinking about women’s issues and other issues of social importance. Her ability to combine wit and passion in a forceful argument is a model of concise commentary. These are gems of polished writing."

**March 25 Feminist Critique (con’t). Backlash. Post Feminism. Third Wave.**

i Faludi, Susan, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, (New York: Doubleday, 1991), "Introduction: Blame It on Feminism," ix-xxiii; and "The Backlash in Popular Culture," 75-226.

i Dow, Bonnie, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement Since 1970*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996), "After the Revolution": 1980s Television, Post Feminism, and *Designing Women*," 866-134; "Afterword: Feminist Images, Feminist Politics," 203-217.

i D’Acci, Julie, "Defining women: The Case of *Cagney and Lacey*" in Lynn Spiegel, and Denise Mann (eds.), *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 168-200.

i Walkowitz, Rebecca L., "Reproducing Reality: Murphy Brown and Illegitimate Politics," in Brunson, Charlotte, Julie D’Acci, and Lynn Spigel (eds.), *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 323-336.

i Brunson, Charlotte, "Identity in Television Criticism," in Brunson, Charlotte, Julie D’Acci, and Lynn Spigel (eds.), *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 114-125.

i Lotz, Amanda D., "Communicating Third-Wave Feminism and New Social Movements: Challenges for the Next Century of Feminist Endeavor," *Women and Language*, 2003, 26(1), 2-9.

**April 1 Gendered Genre**

i Kuhn, Annette, "Women’s Genre" in Brunson, Charlotte, Julie D’Acci, and Lynn Spigel (eds.), *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 145-154.

i Radway, Janice, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (eds.) *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, 465-486.

i Modleski, Tania, "The Search for Tomorrow in Today’s Soap Operas," in Brunson, Charlotte, Julie D’Acci, and Lynn Spigel (eds.), *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 36-47.

(continued on next page)

- i Acosta, Alzuru, "Tackling the Issues: Meaning Making in a Telenovela," typescript (now published in *Popular Communication*)
- ii Doyle, Kegan and Dany Lacombe, "Porn power: sex, violence, and the meaning of images in 1980s feminism," in Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (eds.) *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls": Women, Sex and Power in the Nineties*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
- iii Squire, Corinne, "Empowering Women? The *Oprah Winfrey Show*," in Brunson, Charlotte, Julie D'Acci, and Lynn Spigel (eds.), *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 98-113.

**April 8                    Segmented Marketing/Media Representations**

- i Davila, Arlene, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

**April 15                   Advertising**

- i Shields, Vickie, with Dawn Heineken, *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

**April 22                   Reflections. Presentations of Final Projects.**

**May 4 (Tues)           Final Exam Period. Presentations of final projects  
7:00-10:00**

Please note that deviations in this syllabus may be announced in class or via e-mail.