COMM 455-001: Media and Gender

Dr. Cathy Rogers  
309 Comm/Music  865-3297  
crogers@loyno.edu

Office hours:  MWF 9-10:30, 11:30 a.m. - 12 noon ; TR 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m., T 2-3 p.m.  
Other times by appointment.

Prerequisites:  Students must have junior standing.

Materials To Help You Learn:


Selected readings via Blackboard and e-reserve, Monroe Library.

Course Objectives:

You will learn  
• to be more critical consumers of media products  
• to appreciate the impact of media’s gender images on individuals, society & culture  
• to understand the role of mass media in creating and reinforcing gender roles & ideals  
• to think and to write critically about the ways you respond to and use media products  
• to develop different perspectives to interpret pop culture & media messages

Course Overview:

At the beginning of a gender class, students may consider the subject a superficial, obvious topic because they often are unaware of the numerous ways gender ideals and expectations are communicated to us, both explicitly and implicitly throughout our lives, especially through the media. Part of the goal of this course is to help you understand how pervasive mass communication is in everyday life, and to help you become active and critical consumers of mass media messages, specifically in terms of gender representations. I want you to understand the interdependence of female and male gender ideals and the consequences of these ideals for both women and men. Finally, I hope to provide you with ways to interpret popular media and culture in which you do not take their meaning for granted. This course will encourage you to think about the ways you respond to & use media products and the way in which your preferences are shaped by other factors.

This is a criticism class. Your job will be to critique the media’s representations of women and men in various forms of media.

Grading:

Critical explorations & discussions (3 papers) 40%
Group research presentation 20%
*Participation (paper proposals, class-wide research, discussions, attendance, etc.) 20%
Weekly listserv reading journal entries (8 minimum) 20%

Note: to receive an A in participation, you must participate regularly during class discussion.

A  93-100  C  75-79
B+  90-92  D+  72-75
B  83-89  D  65-71
C+  80-82  F  Below 65
**Expectations:** My responsibility is to organize the course and class sessions to maximize your learning of the course material. Your responsibility is to attend class, do the necessary preparation and participate fully in class discussions. Guidelines are listed below:

1. **Attendance:** You cannot get maximum benefit from the course if you are not present and not participating. If you come to class, complete your assignments on time, participate in discussion and exercises, and keep up with the readings, your grades will be better. You are liable to receive an “F” at the discretion of the instructor if you miss 15 percent of the classes. (4 classes) Absences for ANY reason are included in this total. Two tardies equal one absence. You are responsible to make sure you are marked present if you come into class after roll is called. If you’re more than 15 minutes late, you will be counted absent.

2. **Arrivals & departures:** Late arrivals and early departures are rude and will count against you. Note tardy policy above.

3. **In-class participation:** Because this is a seminar class, you are expected to take an active part in class discussions. Without participation in discussion, you can earn no higher than a C in the course. Your attitude toward the class and the material we cover is also an important part of the class. In this class it is important to be open, considerate, respectful, non-judgmental, courteous and attentive regarding the ideas of your classmates. In addition to regular attendance, your participation points will reflect your openness and consideration. If you are disruptive, you will lose points.

4. **Reading assignments:** A lot of reading is required for this course. It is your responsibility to read the assignments listed on the syllabus before coming to class. We’ll be discussing the readings during class sessions and you will not be able to participate if you have not read the assignments.

5. **Conferences:** If at any point you have a problem with the class, please see me right away so it does not evolve into something major.

6. **Deadlines:** Missed assignments receive a grade of “F” and any oral assignments will not be rescheduled. Papers not submitted by class time on the due date will be penalized by a letter grade for every day it is late, starting after class on the due date. **I do not accept assignments via e-mail unless specified.**

7. **E-Mail Accounts:** You are required to use your university e-mail account and to check it daily.

8. **Academic Integrity:** If you plagiarize someone else’s work in any part of this course, you will receive an “F” for the course. Students who hand in similar or identical work will receive an “F” regardless of who copied from whom. I will provide instructions for you to use turnitin.com to avoid the risk of plagiarism. See the “Integrity of Scholarship and Grades” policy in the University Bulletin.

9. **Courteous classroom behavior:** You are required to turn off all cell phones and pagers when you enter the classroom. Laptops are allowed for notetaking; however I consider any other use during class unacceptable.

10. **Disability Services:** Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations in this class should contact Disability Services at 865-2990 as soon as possible so that warranted accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion. Disability Services are located in the Academic Enrichment Center, Monroe Hall 405.
Assignments

1. **Weekly Blackboard discussion board journal entries** (8 minimum).

2. **Discussion facilitation.**

3. **Critical Exploration and discussion:** 3 typed, double-spaced papers (APA or MLA) are required. 4-5 pp.
   a. For the first two, you will choose a media text to analyze (television or news program, newspaper, movie, magazine, advertisements, other organizational or public relations communications). You must analyze two different types of media texts. The first analysis must be news related; however, the second one may be on any text.

   - Discuss how identities are constructed. What stereotypes are represented or violated? What messages are conveyed regarding gender, and how are they transmitted? What are the words, symbols, images? Consider how the text helps to transform or reflect social values or beliefs. What dynamics of power relationships are depicted, what is being said about issues of power, dominance, etc.? What does this suggest about society’s beliefs, values, gender roles, etc. Who’s under-represented; what ideas are under-represented, and why? What does the text tell us about ourselves? Generate some conclusions about the media text you analyze and its sexual stereotypes or lack of sexual stereotypes. You need lots of examples in your written analysis.

   - You must cite a minimum of three sources to justify why the area you’re examining is important, at least two of which are current scholarly research articles (within the past five years) not included in our required readings. Your analyses must include a review of literature in which you summarize these articles. **Photocopies of articles must be attached.**

   - Organize your paper in the traditional academic presentation: introduction and statement of purpose, literature review, method you used to analyze your subject, findings related to your research purpose, and conclusion.

   b. For the third paper, you will submit a Media & Gender Log and Essay. In the log, you should reference a range of sources including magazine and newspaper articles, broadcast news reports, internet-published articles, films, television shows or music recordings. There will be no “right” or “wrong” answers in this log, but it will be graded for its level of critical thought, analysis and effort. The finished product should include at least 10 entries and be between 10-20 pages in length. At mid-term, I will check your log.

In each entry, you should give the complete citation for your source. Your essay should describe and evaluate yourself as a media consumer. After broadly summarizing your complete media “diet,” you may want to select a particular area of the media for deeper analysis or focus entirely on the broader sense of your varied media habits. Your essay should be

- an overview of your media habits. Which media serve which functions for you? How much time do you spend with each medium? Are there some media you do not use at all? What is your history of media use? How did the media fit into your family life? This is the background about you as a media “consumer.”

- A discussion of how the media influences you. What appeals to you or turns you off about certain TV shows, radio programs, books, magazines, music, films, web sites? What is your reaction to images or role portrayals in these media? Are there characters in the entertainment media, people depicted on the news, or media professionals with which you particularly identify? Each student may concentrate more on some of these questions than others; however, you should include a self-critique of your relationship to each of the following broad topics:
  - news/news coverage of stories/events
  - advertising and its influence on you
  - entertainment media – TV, radio, films, books, magazines, web sites
• reaction to topics/images/characters
• music

c. Analyses will be graded on thoroughness, clarity and insight. Use specific examples to support your ideas and conclusions. To receive an A, you must cite numerous specific examples from readings, paper presentations, videos, and class discussions. Please note: Do not waste space with extended quotations. I’m looking for original observations and thoughts, not the regurgitation of what others have said.

d. Edit carefully. Well organized, concisely written, error-free work will be rewarded. Grammatical and spelling errors will lower your grade. Specifically, factual errors, misspelled proper nouns, fragments, and comma splices are examples of major errors that can cost you a letter grade per major error.

e. Information/data/quotation/opinion/statement of fact taken from any other source must be attributed. You may paraphrase statements of others, but must cite the source; if the material is taken directly from another source (i.e., newspapers, magazine articles, TV, etc.), it must be placed in quotes and reproduced with complete accuracy.

f. Indicate the author, date of publication, and page number in parentheses next to the material in the text of your paper. Finally, put the complete citation for all cited sources (author’s name, title of work, place of publication, publisher, date and page numbers where appropriate) in a reference list at the end of the paper. Failure to do so is plagiarism and grounds for failing the paper and the course.

4. Presentations
You will have 8 – 10 minutes to present the results of your first two explorations to the class. Bring examples from your critical analyses for your presentations (e.g., videotapes, magazine articles, etc.) Your job is to be the expert on the topic and lead the class in a discussion.

5. Group project
a. You will be assigned to a group to conduct a research project and present your results in 15-20 minutes to the class and can include up to five minutes of video clips, if applicable. The purpose is to use the course readings as a starting point to analyze contemporary trends in the representation of gender in media.

b. Each group must distribute an annotated list of web sites appropriate for links for this course. Your list may include the site of a media organization, an organization involved in gender issues, an online magazine, etc. Sites that contain any pornographic material should not be used. For each link, write a brief analysis and explain why you believe it is appropriate for this course.

Tentative Course Outline
Role of media in construction of gender
Defining gender roles and stereotypes in media
Detecting media bias
Feminist perspective in communication scholarship
Media, gender and body image
Gender and race and media
Thinking about Gender and News
Thinking about Gender and Television
Thinking about Gender and Film
Thinking about Gender and Magazines
Thinking about Gender and Advertising
Thinking about Gender and Internet
Thinking about Gender and Music
Thinking about Gender and Communication Careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11</td>
<td>Questionnaire and My Media and Gender Interests review due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 16</td>
<td>Read Gorham and Stabile article (to be posted on Blackboard site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 23</td>
<td>Paper proposals due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 idea for news related topic &amp; 1 idea for non-news related topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>Paper #1 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 8</td>
<td>Media &amp; Gender mid-term log due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 22</td>
<td>Paper #2 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– May 1</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Paper #3 due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>