



# SCRN 288: GENDER AND FILM FALL 2018

**SEMINAR:** MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS, 4:15-5:30PM, TC 112

**SCREENINGS:** THURSDAYS, 7-9:30PM, RAZZO HALL

**PROF. ROXANNE SAMER**

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OFFICE: 202 TRAINA CENTER

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS, 3-4PM, & OTHER TIMES BY  
APPOINTMENT

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore how film has participated in the construction, deconstruction, and transformation of gender across the medium's history. We will read early examples of feminist film theory, which argue that Hollywood constructs women as "Woman" through its myths, signs, and appeal to "the male gaze." We will also study what happens when women filmmakers and audiences, including queer women, trans women, and women of color, look at and through cinema. Through its intersectional and critical approach to the study of gender and film, the course will examine cinema's participation in naturalizing the whiteness of dominant forms of "masculinity" and "femininity" as well as its repeated endeavors to reconfigure queer identities to fit heterosexuality's rigidly gendered categories. We will also study how feminist, queer, and Black cinema has contributed to the production of alternative forms of sociality. Finally, we will consider how transgender cinema has expanded the possibilities for thinking, representing, and imagining gender. Readings will primarily be theoretical and will include feminist, queer, and transgender theory as well as film theory.

Students should leave the class with:

- A thorough introduction to the interdisciplinary study of gender and film
- Greater knowledge of how conceptions of gender have changed over the course of history; insight into the most pressing concerns regarding gender today; and clearer understanding of film's ongoing contributions to such matters
- The tools and confidence necessary to analyze films—with regard to gender as it intersects with race, class, and sexuality—in both written and oral form

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts required for this course will be available as PDFs on Moodle.

## GRADING POLICIES

Seminar Participation: 10% of final grade

Response Essays: 40%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Paper/Video Essay (Proposal, Presentation, and Project): 30%

Your final grade will be calculated as a score out of 100 possible points for the semester. A standard 90-80-70-60 scale will be applied.

**“A” work** extends and expands our in-class discussions and offers original and creative thought. It meets all elements of the assignment or exam prompt and responds with a high degree of organizational foresight. “A” is reserved for outstanding work.

**“B” work** responds to the assignment or exam prompt insightfully, revealing strong command of the material we have covered. “B” is reserved for good work. “B” work, however, is less bold, less original, and/or less organized and well written than “A” work.

**“C” work** completes assignments and meets assignment requirements, while demonstrating a partial understanding of course content and minimal original thinking.

**“D” work** meets the technical requirements enumerated in the assignment or exam prompt, while failing to demonstrate any significant course-specific learning.

**“F” work** fails to meet the requirements of the assignment or exam, including but not limited to: lack of concrete textual analysis, inability to answer prompts, insufficient length, excessive grammatical and/or spelling errors, or late submission.

Response papers are due Sundays at 9pm (more info below). Late response papers will be marked down a third of a letter grade for each hour that they are late (submitted no later than Mondays at 9am). No other late assignments will be accepted.

Students who attend both the Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> and Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> extra credit screenings of the second and third *Matrix* films will be able to drop their lowest response paper grade.

## SEMINAR ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

This course is a seminar, which means students actively contribute to and shape the class' study of the topic. You are expected to attend every seminar meeting. You should come prepared to discuss the assigned screenings and readings. Good seminar participation involves contributing to the ongoing discussion in an informed manner, being attentive to that conversation, and being respectful of the participants in it.

This course, like all other 1 credit courses at Clark, comes with the expectation that over the course of the semester students will devote 180 hours to its study. This means that in

addition to the forty or so hours we will spend together in the classroom you should plan to devote another 140 hours to your readings, screenings, and assignments. Much of this time should go to reading (and arguably re-reading) each week. If you consistently put in this time, you ought to be prepared to serve as a productive seminar participant.

Phones must be put away for the duration of the class. Laptops and tablets should be used exclusively for taking notes and accessing readings. I encourage you to print the readings and take notes in a notebook if internet access will be a distraction for you.

Although you are welcome to re-watch our weekly films at the Traina Resource Library, attending our weekly Thursday night screenings is mandatory. Screening a film in a theater with an audience is vastly different than watching a film at home on your laptop. During screenings, all devices should be away. Use a paper and pen for any notes. Weeks when I am unable to attend, an attendance sheet will be passed around.

## RESPONSE PAPERS

Over the course of the semester, you will compose **eight 750-word essays** in response to the weekly screenings and readings. For the first four screenings, everyone in the class will each write an essay, receiving detailed feedback from the professor. Everyone will also write essays in response to our two outside screenings (*Born in Flames* and *The Matrix*). Finally, half the class will write essays on *Set It Off* and *Dance, Girl, Dance*, while the other half will write essays on *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Fire* (no essays will be written on *To Love, Honor, and Obey*; *Sink or Swim*; *Damned If You Don't*; *I Cannot Tell You How I Feel*; *Paris Is Burning*; *Kiki*; *Boys Don't Cry*, *The Matrix Reloaded* or *The Matrix Revolutions*, though you are expected to watch the films just as closely). In these essays, you will analyze aspects of a screening in relation to one of the next week's assigned readings (those assigned to write about *The Talented Mr. Ripley* will need to reference either Dyer's "Coming Out as Going in: The Image of the Homosexual as a Sad Young Man" or Wood's "The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock's Homophobia"). Each essay should advance a clear and coherent thesis about the screening that connects your analysis of the film and your understanding of the reading. Do not summarize the film or evaluate its quality. Instead, carefully articulate a thesis statement about a specific element of the film and support it with analysis of the film and reading. Just as you should not be writing about the film in its entirety, you should be engaging with only one or two of the reading's key ideas. **Essays are due via email by 9pm each Sunday.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### INTRO TO "GENDER & FILM"

Aug. 27

Read: Manohla Dargis, "Harvey Weinstein Is Gone. But Hollywood Still Has a Problem."

Aug. 29 | Read: Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" from *Gender Trouble*

**UNIT I: THEORIES OF  
GENDER &  
SPECTATORSHIP**

Aug. 30 | Screen: *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women* (Angela Robinson, 2017)

Sept. 3 | LABOR DAY (NO CLASS)

Sept. 5 | Read: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; and Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public"

Sept. 6 | Screen: *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) & *Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1982)

Sept. 10 & 12 | Read: Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator"; Tania Modleski, "Woman and the Labyrinth"; and bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze"

Sept. 13 | Screen: *Victor/Victoria* (Blake Edwards, 1982)

Sept. 17 & 19 | Read: Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess"; and Chris Straayer, "Redressing the 'Natural': The Temporary Transvestite Film"

**UNIT II: SCREENING  
MASCULINITY**

Sept. 20 | Screen: *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988)

Sept. 24 & 26 | Read: Sharon Willis, "Mutilated Masculinities and Their Protheses: Die Hards and Lethal Weapons"; and Kara Keeling, "'We'll Just Have to Get Guns and Be Men': The Cinematic Appearance of Black Revolutionary Women"

Sept. 27 | Screen: *Set It Off* (F. Gary Gray, 1996)

Oct. 1 & 3	Read: Kara Keeling, "'What's Up with That? She Don't Talk?': <i>Set It Off</i> 's Black Lesbian Butch-Femme"; and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, "'We're Going to Be Legends, just like Columbus Is': The Butch-Fem Image and the Lesbian Fight for Public Space"
Oct. 4	Screen: <i>The Talented Mr. Ripley</i> (Anthony Minghella, 1999)
Oct. 8	FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)
Oct. 10	Read: Richard Dyer, "Coming Out as Going in: The Image of the Homosexual as a Sad Young Man"; and Robin Wood, "The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock's Homophobia"

**UNIT III: WOMEN'S  
COUNTER CINEMA**

Oct. 11	Screen: <i>Dance, Girl, Dance</i> (Dorothy Arzner, 1940)
Oct. 15	Read: Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema"; and Judith Mayne, "Female Authorship Reconsidered"
Oct. 17	In-Class Midterm
Oct. 18	Screen: <i>To Love, Honor, and Obey</i> (Christine Choy and Marlene Dann, 1980); and <i>Sink or Swim</i> (Su Friedrich, 1990)
Oct. 22 & 24	Read: Julia Lesage, "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary"; Michael Renov, "Domestic Ethnography and the Construction of the 'Other' Self"; and Su Friedrich, "Does Radical Content Deserve Radical Form?"

Oct. 25	Special Screening and Q&A at 7:30pm: <i>Damned If You Don't</i> (1987) and <i>I Cannot Tell You How I Feel</i> (2016) with filmmaker Su Friedrich in person  Screen on Your Own: <i>Born in Flames</i> (Lizzie Borden, 1983)
Oct. 29 & 31	Read: Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"; and Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's Cinema"
Nov. 1	Screen: <i>Fire</i> (Deepa Mehta, 1996)
Nov. 5	Read: Chandra Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism"; and Gayatri Gopinath, "Local Sites/Global Contexts"
Nov. 7	In-Class Research & Citation Tutorial by Clark Instruction/Reference Librarian Andrew Haggarty

#### **UNIT IV: TRANSGENDER CINEMA**

Nov. 8	Special Screening and Q&A at 7:30pm: <i>Kiki</i> (2016) with filmmaker Sara Jordenö in person  Screen on Your Own: <i>Paris Is Burning</i> (Jennie Livingston, 1990)
Nov. 12 & 14	Read: bell hooks, "Is Paris Burning?"; Judith Butler, "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion,"; and Jay Prosser, "Judith Butler, Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex"
Nov. 15	Screen: <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> (Kimberly Pierce, 1999)
Nov. 19	Read: Jack Halberstam, "The Transgender Look"

	Final Paper/Video Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due
Nov. 21 & 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)  Screen on Your Own: <i>The Matrix</i> (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 1999)
Nov. 26 & 28	Read: Cáel M. Keegan, selections from <i>Lana and Lilly Wachowski: Sensing Transgender</i>  Final Project Conferences with Prof. Samer
Nov. 29	Screen: <i>The Matrix Reloaded</i> (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 2003)

### **WRAPPING UP**

Dec. 3 & 5	Final Presentations, Part I & II
Dec. 6	Screen: <i>The Matrix Revolutions</i> (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 2003)
Dec. 10	Final Presentations, Part III
Dec. 18	Final Paper/Video Essay Due

### **SCREENING CONTENT WARNING**

Some films contain physical violence, sexual violence, and/or other sexual situations. Please speak to me at the start of the semester if you have any concerns.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is a basic value for all higher learning. Simply expressed, it requires that work presented must be wholly one's own and unique to that course. All direct quotations must be identified by source. Academic integrity can be violated in many ways: for example, by submitting someone else's paper as one's own; cheating on an exam; submitting one paper to more than one class; copying a computer program; altering data in an experiment; or quoting published material without proper citation of references or sources. Attempts to alter an official academic record will also be treated as violations of academic integrity.

To ensure academic integrity and safeguard students' rights, all suspected violations of academic integrity are reported to the College Board. Such reports must be carefully documented, and students accused of the infraction are notified of the charge. In the case of proven academic dishonesty, the student will receive a sanction, which may range from an F in the assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the University.

The complete academic integrity policy is available with Academic Advising at <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>

## **ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

If you require accommodations in this course due to a disability or a personal circumstance that will affect your learning in this course, please contact me, so we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs. Any student who needs accommodations for disabilities should also register with the Office of Disability Services. For information, please contact Adam Kosakowski, Director of Disability Services, at 508-798-4368 or at <AKosakowski@clarku.edu>.

## **NOTICE: FACULTY MEMBERS ARE “RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEES”**

This notice is to inform you that the faculty member associated with this course is considered a “Responsible Employee” by Clark University. As such, I am required to report all alleged sexual offenses to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, Lynn Levey, [llevey@clarku.edu](mailto:llevey@clarku.edu). The only exceptions to this reporting responsibility are the community members who have been designated and/or trained as “Confidential” Sources. This includes the professional staff in Clark's Center for Counseling and Personal Growth and the medical providers at the Health Center, as well as other individuals listed at <http://bit.ly/2eUOGGx>

## **DISCLAIMER**

As the professor, I reserve the right to make changes to any information contained in this syllabus at any time during the semester. Changes will be announced, and an updated version of the syllabus will be posted on Moodle and/or distributed to students.