

EngC 613: Feminist Media Studies

Winter 2007

Monday 2:30-5:30pm, W-5 Arts Bldg.

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Course Description: Defined by its inter-disciplinary reach into Cultural Studies, film and television studies, political economy, literary studies and public sphere studies (among other fields), Feminist Media Studies is a broad ranging and, at its best, a deeply politicized intellectual field of inquiry. While this course does not, and will not, espouse a particular feminist politics, it does explore the political and ethical dimensions of feminist scholarship as two of its defining features. As this course suggests, it is the political focus and their investments in feminist visions of change that make feminist media studies *feminist*, rather than particular objects of study (e.g. women) or conceptual tools (such as “gender” and “sexuality”). Several of our course readings plumb the meaning and practice of *feminisms* within a broad array of media studies.

This semester, the course pays particular attention to the legacies of Cultural Studies, political economy and public sphere studies in terms of their impact on Feminist Media Studies. The first part of the course examines the state of feminism within media studies and cultural studies through commentary pieces published from the late 1980s to the present. The course then looks at feminist critiques of “postfeminism” and popular culture, sexual politics and issues of embodiment as key terrain on which much recent feminist work has wrestled, particularly around the relationship of materialism and post-structural theories of sexual subjectivity. The course then examines feminist political economic scholarship and its critique of gendered, sexed and queered commodity culture. This section of the course is directed at understanding the links between feminist theory and anti-capitalist critique, practice and imagination. The final part of the course turns to the spaces and practices of “feminist publics.” In this section of the course, we will examine the relationship among the *circulation* of publicity and media objects, the *movement* of affect and emotion, and the *place* of public-making.

Course Readings: A packet of readings has been prepared for this course. To enable the proper citation of readings in your writing assignments for the seminar, the reading schedule below contains full bibliographic information on each course reading. Additionally, we will be reading two books this term that are available for purchase at Paragraphe Bookstore located at the corner of Sherbrooke St. and McGill College Ave.

The books:

Samantha King (2006). *Pink Ribbons, Inc. Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006). *A Post-Capitalist Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Course Assignments: The following writing and presentation assignments constitute the whole of required work over the seminar.

Discussion Facilitation (20 % of final grade): Student-facilitated discussion will comprise a good portion of our seminar time over the semester. Discussion facilitation will consist of two tasks:

- 1) The first part of the presentation will consist of the presenter's provision of 3 significant passages from three of the texts we have read for that day, and 3 well-crafted discussion questions that ask us to discuss more fully the argumentation and interpretation of the text(s) at hand. The goal of this assignment is to grapple with significant and/or particularly difficult passages in the texts we read, and to discuss their details through directed questioning. Questions can probe the meaning of particular textual passages, offer interpretations of the concepts and objects of study our readings address, and/or ask us to consider the relationship between previous readings and current ones under discussion, among other things. The more grounded in the texts your questions are, the better they will foster discussion.
- 2) The second part of the presentation will involve the demonstration of a media object or practice. The goal of the media demonstration is to offer concrete media objects and practices to further discussion and try out concepts in application. The best media demonstrations are those in which the presenter has put careful thought into the choice of a media document and his/her interpretation of it. During the demonstration, the presenter will introduce the media object to us, explain why it has been chosen for demonstration, and offer at least one additional question about the media object that engages with the issues/ideas in one or more of our week's readings. Examples can be drawn from one's own research, but are not required to be.

Presenters must submit copies of their passages and questions to the course listserv by Sunday afternoon at 5pm. Every seminar participant is responsible for printing out their own copies of the passages and questions.

While it is the discussion facilitator's job to open up and direct discussion from the outset, it is everyone's shared responsibility to engage in conversation and to insure that they are lively and respectful.

Sign up for presentation days will be held at the first seminar meeting. Please note that you cannot "make up" discussion facilitation. If you run into a scheduling problem around a presentation date, it is your responsibility to find another seminar participant with whom to switch presentation dates.

If you have any particular AV needs for your demonstration that cannot be met with the classroom technologies we have available to us, please contact Matthew Dupuis (matthew.dupuis@mcgill.ca) for assistance in this matter by Friday morning before you present on Monday.

Midterm Seminar Paper Proposal (20% of final grade): On **Monday March 5th**, seminar participants will turn in a 5-page seminar paper proposal. The proposal should indicate which of the four seminar paper options you have chosen (see below). In the proposal, you must clearly describe the subject of your paper, the research and/or theoretical question(s) you seek to answer, and why they are significant or interesting. Include a bibliography of work that you have consulted in order to write the proposal – it should accurately reflect your preliminary research and additional reading you have done.

Seminar Paper (60% of final grade): The course will culminate with a 20-25 page seminar paper. Seminar papers should not greatly exceed this page limit. If you are thinking about writing a longer paper (at 5 pages or more over the maximum), you must consult with me first. The seminar paper will be due on **Friday April 20th**, in hard copy. I will also need a self-addressed envelope so that I can mail my comments to you.

There are four options for the seminar paper.

Option #1: Proposal for a research study. There is often little time in graduate reading seminars for students to conduct original research, so this option enables you to engage in the process of research creation by working up a proposal for a project you would like to conduct (without any of the requirements that you actually *do* conduct the research). This option will be good practice for when you apply for research funding from SSHRC (Canadian social sciences and humanities research council) and FQRSC (Quebec Provincial funding for social science and humanistic research), though the final product for this option will be significantly longer than the space limits of most granting agency applications. For Ph.D. students, it is also great practice for writing a dissertation proposal (minus the budget).

The proposal should include the following:

1. A statement of your object of study, its significance, and the questions or issues you will explore in your research. Why study it? What new or innovative approach do you have toward the topic?
2. A literature review. Your proposal should trace a path through the existing scholarship on your object of study, keeping in mind particularly significant publications and recent scholarship. Situate your project vis-à-vis the literature you cite.
3. A plan of research. How will you conduct your research? What methods will you use, and why? What materials will you analyze, and how will you analyze them? Methods discussions can be the hardest statements to write in research proposals, and the most difficult to communicate to a general academic audience. Keep this audience in mind while you write.
4. Timetable for completion of your research. How long will it take you to conduct your research, and what is the process through which you'll conduct it?
5. Budget. What kinds of funding do you need, and for what? What kinds of resources do you need access to: Feminist archives? Rare print collections outside of Canada? Travel to conduct ethnographic research? A special conference or workshop? What could you do with a lot of money?

Option #2: Literature review of an area of feminist media studies. In this option, your task is to familiarize yourself with the published scholarship in an area of feminist media studies. Literature reviews require significant library research and reading, so please only choose this option if you are really committed to doing a lot of reading. Part of the task of doing a literature review is defining the area of scholarly study you are reviewing, which will determine which texts “count” and which are extraneous or unrelated to the area. The review should include a description of the research area in feminist media studies that you have chosen, a discussion of several exemplary texts and how they construct and analyze their object of study (with citations for additional texts in the area which you have chosen not to discuss in much detail), blind spots or limitations of the existing literature, and ways that scholars can expand on and/or open up the feminist study of media in this area. Be critical but also recognize what researchers’ methods and object construction accomplishes in the area of study. The literature review should not consist only of negative critique –

consider how this area of scholarship could be useful to current scholarship. Examples could include: feminist audience studies, gender and youth culture, feminist popular music studies, feminist television studies, feminist public sphere studies, lesbian and queer media studies, the relation of feminist disability theory to feminist media study, etc.

Option #3: Application paper. In this option, your task is to choose a set of media representations, media practices, or other set of objects and “apply” a set of concepts we have addressed over the seminar. Unlike a literature review, you will not be expected to do a full work-up on an area of feminist media studies scholarship, but you will be expected to: 1) do some additional outside reading, 2) analyze your chosen set of representations/practices/other objects, and 3) reflect and comment upon the course readings you use as a result of your application and analysis of their concepts.

Option #4: Revision of a current project or paper. This option enables you to develop and significantly revise a current or former project around the materials we have discussed in this course. The revision must truly be significant, and not simply copy-editing. Offer a different analysis than the original. Revisit your research materials. Conduct additional literature reviews, and engage directly with our course readings. This is a particularly good option for those of you looking to significantly revise a paper for publication, but it is not limited to this purpose. While revision may seem like an easier option than the other three, reworking a prior piece of scholarship takes great skill and commitment and is a difficult practice.

Expectations and Policies: There are several expectations that I have of you as participants in a graduate seminar. I expect that you will: attend every seminar meeting and come prepared to discuss each of our readings, do all of the readings and have something to say about them, turn in your seminar work on time and in completed fashion, and openly communicate about anything of concern to you in the course (e.g. if you know you will have trouble meeting a deadline or if there is anything that will prevent you from fully participating in the seminar).

Discussion Etiquette: Discussion makes up a great percentage of our time in class. Following a few basic discussion guidelines will help insure that this time is productive, enlightening and above all, fun.

1. Work to create a shared climate of friendly and lively discussion. Try to avoid personal attacks and insults, jabs, and grand-standing behaviors.
2. Disagreements are natural and welcome in scholarly discussion. So are arguments. But arguments are not contests. Please grant your fellow seminar participants courtesy and respect, whether you agree with what they say or not.
3. Avoid purely negative critique in your comments. Our goal in discussion is to understand the texts we read and how they might be useful to us -- in addition to sharpening and honing our skills in critique.
4. Wait your turn – do not interrupt others.
5. You do not have to express your own opinion on a subject; if you do, expect that others may want to disagree with you. You are also free to change your mind on any topic at any time. Change and respectful contestation are encouraged.
6. You each bring interesting experiences to the classroom, and you may wish to bring up your experience when it is relevant to class discussion (and when you feel comfortable doing so). Everyone’s personal experience deserves respect. But if you bring up your own experience in class, please recognize that it becomes a public topic for discussion. Others may interpret your experience differently than you do, and they are free to

respectfully disagree with your interpretation. Please recognize that experience and anecdotes are not the same thing as evidence.

Grading: As a student at McGill (or any other university in Quebec), you have the right to turn in work that is written in French. If you plan on writing in French over the semester, please notify me with enough advanced warning that I can locate a translator, because my French is very rusty. All lectures, seminar discussions, presentations and demonstrations will be conducted in English.

Your final grade for the semester will be based on the quality and clarity of your performance in presentations, demonstrations, and your written work. If you turn in work late, you may not receive written comments from me and your grade could be reduced. If I deem your work unsatisfactory, I may ask you to do it again. Taking an incomplete or “K” grade for this course is greatly discouraged, unless you have a truly exceptional reason that can be supported by documentation.

How to Interpret Graduate-Level Grades:

A:	Good work
A-:	Satisfactory
B+:	There is a problem with what you submitted
B:	There is a substantial problem with what you submitted
B-:	Lowest possible passing grade in a graduate course; indicates a major problem but not a failure
C+ or lower:	Officially considered a “fail” by the Graduate Studies Office.

Auditors: If you would like to audit this class, and I agree to let you audit, I will hold you to the following conditions: that you will follow all the policies and etiquette explained here, that you actively participate in class discussion and attend as many class sessions as you can.

Statement on Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Semester Schedule of Readings

What Is Feminist Media Studies?

Monday January 8, 2007: Introduction to Feminist Media Studies

Kathryn Cirksena and Lisa Cuklanz (1992). “Male is to Female as ___ is to ___: A Guided Tour of Five Feminist Frameworks for Communication Studies” In *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication*. New York: Routledge, 18-44.

Andrea Press (2000). “Recent Developments in Feminist Communication Theory: Difference, Public Sphere, Body and Technology” In James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (eds.). *Mass Media and Society* (3rd ed.). London: Arnold, p. numbers.

Lynn Spigel (2004). “Theorizing the Bachelorette: ‘Waves’ of Feminist Media Studies” *Signs* 30(1): 1209-1221.

Elsbeth Probyn (2001) “Teaching in the Field: Gender and Feminist Media Studies” *Feminist Media Studies* 1(1): 35-39.

Recommended Reading:

- Suzanna Danuta Walters (1995). *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory*. Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press.
- Bonnie Dow (2005). "Review Essay: Reading the Second Wave" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91(1): 89-107.

Monday January 15, 2007: Histories of Feminist Media Studies and Cultural Studies

- Keya Ganguly (1992) "Accounting for Others: Feminism and Representation" In *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication*. New York: Routledge, 60-82.
- H. Leslie Steeves (1987) "Feminist Theories and Media Studies" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4(2): 95-135.
- Fred Fejes et. al. (1989). "Review and Criticism: Gender Studies and Communication," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6: 195-223 (with essays by Andrea Press, Cindy Schwichtenberg, Lana Rakow and Fred Fejes).
- Charlotte Brunson (1986/1996). "A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS" In David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.). *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 276-286.
- Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey (1991). "Feminism and Cultural Studies: Pasts, Presents, Futures" *Media, Culture & Society* 13: 171-192.

Recommended:

- John Nguyet Erni (2001). "Media Studies and Cultural Studies: A Symbiotic Convergence" In Toby Miller (ed.). *A Companion to Cultural Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 187-214.

Is That all There Is?
"Post-Feminism," Sexual Subjectivity and Gendered Embodiment

Monday January 22, 2007: Post-feminism and Pop Culture

- Charlotte Brunson (1997). "Pedagogies of the Feminine" in *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*. New York: Routledge, 172-188.
- Angela McRobbie (2004). "Notes on Post-Feminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime". In Anita Harris (ed.). *All About the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity*. London: Routledge, 3-14.
- Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (2005). "In Focus: Post-feminism and Popular Culture" *Cinema Journal* 44(2): 107-132 (includes short readings by Tasker and Negra, Charlotte Brunson, Chris Holmlund, Linda Mizjewski, and Justine Ashby).

Monday, January 29, 2007: Sexual Subjectivity and the Languages of Choice and Self-Esteem

- Elsbeth Probyn (1993). "Choosing Choice: Images of Sexuality and 'Choiceoisie' in Popular Culture" In Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis (eds.). *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 278-294.
- Barbara Cruikshank "Revolutions Within: Self-Government and Self-Esteem" in Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose (eds.). *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 231-252.

Rosalind Gill (2003). "From Sexual Objectification to Sexual Subjectification: The Resexualization of Women's Bodies in the Media" *Feminist Media Studies* 3(1), 100-106.

Linda Duits and Liesbet van Zoonen (2006). "Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the Multicultural Society" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(2): 103-117.

Recommended:

Ellen Riordan (July 2001). "Commodified Agents and Empowered Girls: Consuming and Producing Feminism" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 25:3, 279-297.

Monday February 5, 2007: Sexual Difference and the Body

Elsbeth Probyn (1992). "Theorizing through the Body" In *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication*. Ed. Lana Rakow. New York: Routledge, 83-99.

Irene Costera Meijer and Baukje Prins (1998). "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler" *Signs* 23(2): 275-286.

Robyn Wiegman (1995). "Sexing the Difference" In *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 43-80.

Diana Saco (1992). "Masculinity as Signs: Poststructuralist Feminist Approaches to the Study of Gender" In Steve Craig (ed.). *Men, Masculinity and the Media*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 23-39.

Monday February 12, 2007: Feminists Theorize Disabled Bodies

Susan Wendell (1989). "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability" *Hypatia* 4:2, 104-124.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomas (2002). "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory" *NWSA Journal* 14:3, 1-32.

Abigail Bray (1996). "The Anorexic Body: Reading Disorders" *Cultural Studies* 10:3, 413-429.

Vivian Sobchak (1998) "Beating the Meat, Surviving the Text, or How to Get out of this Century Alive" In Paula Treichler, Lisa Cartwright, and Constance Penley (eds.). *Visible Woman*. New York University Press, 310-320.

Monday February 19, 2007: STUDY WEEK, NO SEMINAR

Monday February 26: Representing Breast Cancer: Philanthropy and the Politics of the Female Body

Samantha King (2006). *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

****Special Guest Speaker: Prof. Samantha King, Queen's University**

In lieu of a presentation, for today's seminar each of you are responsible for submitting a 1-2 page response to the listserv by Sunday February 25 at 6pm. The purpose of the response paper will be to stimulate discussion of King's book by generating a series of questions and critical commentaries we can refer to during seminar time. Everyone should come to seminar having read your colleagues responses.

Commodity Culture and Feminist Political Economy

Monday March 5, 2005: Sexing, Gendering and Queering Global Commodity Culture

**** Midterm paper proposal due****

- Inderpal Grewal (2005). "Traveling Barbie: Indian Transnationalities and the Global Consumer" in *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 80-120.
- Elana Levine (2002). "Having a Female Body Doesn't Make you Feminine': Feminine Hygiene Advertising and 1970s Television" *The Velvet Light Trap* 50 (fall): 36-47.
- Danae Clark (1991) "Commodity Lesbianism." *Camera Obscura* 25-26: 181-201.
- Angie Record (2001). "Born to Shop: Teenage Women and the Marketplace in the Postwar United States" in *Sex & Money*, 181-195.

Monday March 12, 2005: Feminist Political Economy in Communications

- Eileen Meehan (2001). "Gendering the Commodity Audience: Critical Media Research, Feminism and Political Economy" in Eileen Meehan and Ellen Riordan (eds.). *Sex & Money*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 209-222.
- H. Leslie Steeves and Janet Wasko (2001), "Feminist Theory and Political Economy: Toward a Friendly Alliance" in *Sex & Money*, 16-29.
- Lisa McLaughlin (1999) "Beyond 'Separate Spheres': Feminism and the Cultural Studies/Political Economy Debate" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 23:4, 327-354.
- Eileen Meehan (2001). "Culture: Text or Artifact or Action?" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 25(3): 208-217.

Monday, March 19, 2007: Feminist Anti-Capitalist Imaginations

- J.K Gibson-Graham (2006). *A Post-Capitalist Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Recommended:

- J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996). *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Feminist Publics

Monday March 26, 2005: Feminist Publics and their Print Cultures

- Lisa McLaughlin (2004) "Feminism and the Political Economy of Transnational Public Space" *The Sociological Review*, 156-175.
- Melissa Deem (2003). "Disrupting the Nuptials at the Town Hall Debate: Feminism and the Politics of Cultural Memory in the USA" *Cultural Studies* 17:5, 615-647.
- Janet Lyon (1999). "A Second Wave Problematic: How to be a Radical" In *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 168-202.

Recommended:

- Michael Warner (2002). "Publics and Counterpublics" *Public Culture* 14(1), 49-90.
- Lisa McLaughlin (1993) "Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media and Democracy" *Media, Culture & Society* 15, 599-620.
- Lynn Spigel (1995) "From the Dark Ages to the Golden Age: Women's Memories and Television Reruns" *Screen* 36:1, 16-33.

Monday April 2, 2007: Circulation, Technologies: the Conditions for Publicity?

- Dilip Gaonkar and Elizabeth Povinelli (2003). "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition" *Public Culture* 15(3): 385-397.
- Susan Gal (2003). "Movements of Feminism: The Circulation of Discourses about Women" In Barbara Hobson (ed.). *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 93-118.
- Ednie Kaeh Garrison (2000). "U.S. Feminism Grrrl Style! Youth (Sub)cultures and the Technologies of the Third Wave" *Feminist Studies* 26:1, 141-170.
- Sarah Projansky (2001). "Talking Back to Postfeminism? Rape Prevention and Education Films and Videos" In *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*. New York University Press, 196-230.
- Sara Ahmed (2004). "Feminist Attachments" In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 168-190.

Monday April 9, 2007: EASTER MONDAY, NO SEMINAR**Wednesday April 11, 2007 (official Easter make-up day): Feminisms, Spaces, Media**

- J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996). "How Do We Get Out of This Capitalist Place?" In *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 72-91.
- Raka Shome (2003). "Space Matters: The Power and Practice of Space" *Communication Theory* 13(1): 39-56.
- Ann Cvetokovich (2003). "In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings" *Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 239-272.

Recommended:

- Caren Kaplan (1994). "The Politics of Location" In Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (eds.). *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 137-152.
- Vincent Mosco (1996). "Spatialization" In *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*.

Friday April 20, 2005: SEMINAR PAPERS DUE, in my mailbox, Department of Art History and Communication Studies, 3rd Floor West Arts Building