CIEE London, England

Course title: Media, Gender and Identity
Course code: (GI) COMM 3009 LNEN
Programs offering course: London Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: Communications, Journalism, and New Media
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring Block III 2021

Course Description
In this course, students will apply a critical lens to representations of gender and identity in contemporary media. Taking gender and sexuality as a critical starting point, we will examine the construction of identities under the simultaneous influence of race, class, and nationality. By focusing on popular representations in both the US and the country where the course is taking place, we will gain a deeper understanding of identities as both culturally specific and influenced by global media. Instead of suggesting that contemporary identities are determined by what we see on TV screens, computers, and in local movie theaters, the course seeks to describe the complex interactions between national audiences and concrete media productions. It will analyze how different audiences reproduce or challenge traditional concepts and stereotypes of gender, race, sexuality, and class. By combining the study of theoretical texts with examples from the advertisement industry, television, movies, and other forms of contemporary cultural expression, it offers a comprehensive and thorough introduction to contemporary studies of the media and identity.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will:

- Understand how gender is central to sexuality, class, and race operating in the wider socio-cultural context since the 19th century
- Develop and apply theories of articulation and hegemony, and apply to representations of gender and identity in popular culture
- Examine popular culture as a site of political and ideological struggle.
- Critically analyze classical theories and approaches to studying gender, sexuality and race, and apply them to case studies.
- Contextualize the links between popular culture and debates about “identity”.
- Evaluate how subjective understandings of gender, race and sexuality affect experiences of popular culture.

Course Prerequisites
An introductory-level communications or gender studies course is helpful but not required.

Methods of Instruction
The course follows largely a cultural studies approach to studying popular culture. Students will learn the different theoretical ideas underlying the study of representations of gender, sexuality, race, and class identity, and apply these concepts to case studies. The course hopes to equip students with the theoretical tools to conduct their own analysis of popular culture representations in the future.

Students will be encouraged to challenge pre-existing assumptions about gender, sexual and racial norms as they are represented in popular media. Through class discussions and debates, critical readings of key primary and secondary texts, and students’ written reactions, the students will enhance their ability to “read” popular media culturally and sociologically. Engaged student participation is crucial, and productive controversy will be encouraged.

Attendance
Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.
Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; 3% grade penalty &amp; written warning</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion</td>
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N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Class: 1.0 Introduction**

This week introduces the key terms and concepts that we will utilize throughout the course, such as practices of representation, popular culture and hegemony. The first session will also include a tour through the history of feminist movements in the host country and related debates about gender, race and sexuality from the 19th century up to the 21st century. This introduction will give you a background for understanding how different the approaches have been at different times. We will also introduce the course assessments.

Readings:


In this session we will direct our attention to the myriad of messages we receive, in fact cannot help receiving, from popular culture just by keeping our eyes open. By decoding selected examples, the group will enter into the theory and reflections of gender, race, class and sexuality. How the local host country society and culture attempts to approach equality – and how it relates to a US context will be debated. An introduction to host country feminist movements and public debates on gender, race and sexuality from 19th century to the 21st century will be part of the discussion.

Readings:


**Due Date for Submission of the Photography Presentation #1**

**Week 2**

**Class: 3.0 Journalism and Bodies in the Political Arena**

This week we discuss various approaches to the study of representations of bodies in the political arena of journalism in the host country and the US, and the impact on democracy.

Readings:


**Class: 4.0 Representations of Female Political Power in TV series**

We will use this session to analyze and interpret representations of female politicians by looking at a selection of episodes from two popular television series. We will then look at a real-world example of a female politician treated by the media, namely Hillary Clinton as the Democratic candidate in the 2016 US presidential election. The day ends with a site visit to a prominent political women’s organization.

Readings:


**Date Due for Submission of the Critical Review # 1**

**Week 3**

**Class: 5.0 Gender Theories – From Ideology to Psychoanalys**

This week we discuss various approaches to studying representations of gender in popular culture, including treating cultural representations as reflective of dominant social ideologies and as manifestations of underlying psychoanalytical tendencies. Implicated in these are different ways of constructing the subject and audiences. By applying these theories to case studies, we critically assess their value and limitations.

Readings:


**Class: 6.0 Men Versus Women in Representation**

While feminist critics largely spearheaded analyses of representations of gender, we will also study
the representations of men and masculinity in movies. We will also question whether representations of gender are intertwined with other themes and discuss the limitations of focusing solely on issues of gender.

Readings:


**Due Date for Submission of the Critical Review # 2**

**Week 4**

Class: 7.0 Marginality and Sexuality – Problems of Essentialism

This week expands upon and completes the previous week’s discussions by exploring issues of sexuality as intertwined with representations of gender norms through a critical reading of Butler’s theory on gender and sexuality. We will first discuss Butler’s critique of essentialism in mainstream gender discourse and her point that this kind of thinking marginalizes sexual minority groups. Secondly, we will attempt to do a cost-and-benefit analysis of Butler’s own approach and consider its wider cultural impacts.

Readings:


Class: 8.0 Performing Gender

We will attempt to rethink gender and sexuality as performance. By applying these ideas to case studies in popular media, we will consider how heterosexuality and sexual minority identities are performed, and look at how the performances may differ according to the performer and ideas about audiences. We will question underlying assumptions about how the sexuality of performers affects their representations of sexuality.

Readings:


**Due Date for the Submission of the Cultural Frames Assessment**

**Week 5**

Class: 9.0 Race – discussions in context (Part 1)

Together with theories of gender and sexuality emerging from feminist studies, attention on racial representations expanded the focus of Cultural Studies beyond class issues. This week we discuss representations of different ethnicities and race in popular cultures. In a vein similar to that of previous weeks, we challenge race and ethnicity as an essential category and critically analyze the representations of the different races – or the lack of it – in popular culture.

Readings:


Class: 10.0 Race – discussion in context (Part 2)

Beyond representations of race and ethnicity in Australia, we will also look at how other minority communities are portrayed. This involves both how mainstream media portray ethnic minorities as the ‘other’ and how minority groups represent themselves. Ultimately, we consider how representations of race, gender, sexuality and class are intimately linked and cannot be analysed separately.

Readings:


Due Date for the Submission of the Comparative Analysis Assessment

Week 6

Class: 11.0 Moving Forward – Challenges, Summary, and Discussion

In this final week, we will consider the course topics from the millennium perspective, drawing on Queer theory and the concept of fluidity in terms of gender, sexuality, and cultural and ethnic identities. Adding to and informing the discussion will be the context of generation and age. We will also consider how the role of popular culture has changed since the rise of the Internet and mobile technology and as these have become more integral to everyday life.

Readings:


Class: 12.0 Shared Knowledge

The group will present their digital albums and also discuss their immersive experiences and reflections between each presentation.

Due Date for the Submission of the Photography Presentation #2

Course Materials

Readings


Recommended Readings


