GSWS 823-5: Graduate Seminar in Feminist Art/Literary Criticism

Professor: Dr. Jacqueline Levitin
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Lecture: Thursdays 12:30 – 17:20; Harbour Centre 1415

Course Description:
“Women & Films: Films and Theories” explores films by women and feminist film theory’s understanding of representations of women in the cinema and how films by women differ from the mainstream in style and content. Films by women constitute what Alison Butler calls a ‘minor’ cinema, a notion that describes film practices ‘of a minority or marginalised group’ written in the ‘major’ language. In the first part of the class, we will proceed chronologically from cinema’s beginnings to contemporary times, exploring women’s interventions as directors, producers, writers, and actresses in a variety of film forms from avant-garde to mainstream, and Hollywood to non-Western cinemas. We will closely examine performance, aesthetics and narrative to understand how these films by women take a ‘minor’ position in relation to the mainstreams of the times. In a final section of the class we will look at women filmmakers’ approaches to the romance film genre. Students will be taught the basic tools for film analysis; no prior film study background is necessary.

Because this is a seminar and discussion course, students must come to class having read the assigned texts and prepared to participate in class discussions. Films will be screened weekly.

Course Texts and Courseware:
- Online readings.

Note: Readings will average from 40 to 50 pages per class.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
- 25% Short Paper: Personal reflections on the films and ideas raised in readings and discussions in the first five weeks of class.
- 25% Group Presentation: An oral group (two or three grad students) research presentation in the form of additional information on the week’s topic of discussion/or leading the class in discussion of the week’s film. Student feedback will contribute to assessing the grade for this assignment.
- 30% Term Paper: A critical paper, 15-20 pages in length, relating a film viewed in class to a film (or, with permission, other media) seen outside of class to a concept examined in the readings or raised in class discussions. The choice of topic is up to the student and will be developed in a presentation to the other graduate students. (Presentation is worth 20% of the term paper grade.)
- 20% Attendance and Seminar Participation: Includes regular class attendance, doing the required readings, coming to class/group meetings prepared to join actively in discussions, and contributions to the class blog. Graduate students will meet as a group with the instructor approximately 5 times during the semester at a time convenient to all.

NOTE: All work must be submitted on time; late papers will be penalized. Three or more unexcused absences could result in failure of the course.

THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.

IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT WILL FOLLOW POLICY T10.02 WITH RESPECT TO “INTELLECTUAL HONESTY,” AND “ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE” (WWW.SFU.CA/POLICIES/TEACHING)