WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SPRING 1989
EVENING

W.S. 301-3
WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

In this course we will examine the role of women both as consumers and as producers of the media. Our primary emphasis will be on print: women's magazines and feminist alternatives to them. But we will also spend some time analyzing a "cousin" of the women's magazine; the television soap opera.

We'll begin by tracing the history of women's magazines, from the Ladies Mercury published in London in the 1690's through to recent issues of Cosmopolitan. We will focus on what this history can tell us about women's culture, about ideologies of femininity, and about the development of a multi-million dollar industry. We'll try out various strategies for "reading" women's magazines and soaps and for analyzing the particular combination of "survival skills and day dreams" which they offer.

In the second half of the course, we'll look at challenges and alternatives to the mainstream media, in particular women's efforts to establish media of their own. This will take us from a review of the lively nineteenth century suffrage press to an exploration of the contemporary feminist publishing network. Through discussion of the issues which have engaged women involved in this network we will consider both the possibilities and the problems of alternative media.

Our sources for the course as a whole will be primarily British and North American, but international material and references will be included whenever possible, especially in the last section.

REQUIRED READING


Selected readings will be on reserve, and the instructor's collection of feminist periodicals will be available to students.

ASSIGNMENTS (Collaborative work will be welcome)

25% Short paper (7-10 pages)
15% a presentation and 3 page summary
50% a final project or essay (15-20 pages)
10% class participation

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours

This course may be applied as upper division credit in communication for students who obtain permission for this from CHHS.