WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SPRING 1990
HARBOUR CENTRE/DAYTIME

JACQUELINE LEVITIN
Lec. Tue. 13:30-15:20
Tut. Tue. 15:30-16:20

W.S. 205-3
WOMEN AND POPULAR CULTURE:
WOMEN AND COMEDY

What can we learn about women from sitcoms? What are the women
standup comedians saying about themselves and us? What do women find
funny? What are they poking fun at?

Women and Comedy is a course that analyses film and the various media
to find out how women use and are used by comedy. The perspective is
partly historical: We will trace the careers of early women comic
actors, the partners and "straight women" of Chaplin and Keaton and
others, follow the burlesque to screen career of Mae West, study the
early women radio comedians and the first TV comics and the
development of the contemporary sitcom. In part as well the course is
issue-oriented: Perspectives from feminist film and social theory,
and comic theory itself will be used to investigate such questions as
the meaning of cross-dressing in comedy, the role of comedy in
communicating any radical message such as feminism, and the
possibility of communicating that message in today's media.

The course will include a number of film, video and audio
presentations.

REQUIRED READING

Martin, L. & Segrave, K., Women in Comedy

Note: Readings will average from 20 to 30 pages per week.

RECOMMENDED READING (on reserve in the Library)

Allen, Robert C. Channels of Discourse
Haskell, Molly, From Reverence to Rape
Kuhn, Annette, Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema
Mast, Gerald, The Comic Mind
Rosen, Marjorie, Popcorn Venus
Walsh, Andrea S., Women's Film and Female Experience
Borns, Betsy, Comic Lives

Additional readings may be placed on reserve.

ASSIGNMENTS

* 40% Oral/Written Presentation
** 45% Term Paper
***15% Lecture/Tutorial Participation

(continued)
* An oral (30-40 minute), or occasionally written, research presentation based on the week's topics of discussion to be chosen in conjunction with the instructor and completed by two or three students per topic.

** A 10-15 page analytical or research paper inspired by the issues raised in class, emphasizing aesthetic, ideological, or historical aspects. For this assignment, students may further research or develop their oral/written presentation. Because the question of Women and Comedy is still a new area of studies, the student will often be conducting original research for these assignments.

*** The grade for this aspect will be based on attendance in class and on the quality of the student's contributions to class discussions.

NOTE: A detailed course plan will be distributed to all students in the first week of classes.

THIS COURSE MAY BE APPLIED TO THE CERTIFICATE IN LIBERAL ARTS