Television provides an important window onto the positioning of women within the culture at large. But television is also seen differently by different people: source of oppressive imagery, site of pleasurable negotiation, manufacturer of consent. From *I Love Lucy* to *Roseanne*, this course will survey debates surrounding the ways we look at the receive representations of women in television, from the 50’s to the present day.

The course will begin by looking at various models of media and pop culture analysis, evaluating the uses and problems of each approach. These models will then be applied to various historical and contemporary moments in female representation and spectatorship vis-a-vis television. Looking at early sitcoms like *The Honeymooners* and *I Love Lucy*, we will examine social and industrial forces that gave birth to the 50’s sitcom housewife. Transgressive female characters in the 60’s will be surveyed in the context of the Women’s Liberation Movement. Soap operas and talk shows will be sampled along with readings from the vast body of critical writing on these genres. A special class on Disney will analyze gender and race representation. The current plethora of sitcoms featuring single mothers and outspoken career-women, as well as queer subtexts and texts in 90’s TV will be critically examined. Particular questions will provide a continuous thread of inquiry: Are ‘positive’ images effective? Is censorship useful or problematic? What role do industrial forces play in television’s construction of feminist and lesbian characters? How do multiple readings occur - how are female audiences heterogeneously constituted? What are the different ways in which mass media appropriate or absorb feminist and anti-racist discourses? How do audiences read between the scan lines, decoding subtext, subverting the screen?

Readings and lectures will draw from areas of feminist spectatorship, queer theory, reception theory, and cultural studies. These will be supplemented by clips from TV shows and music videos, some sample websites, independent video and film, and some examples of mainstream cinema paralleling developments on television.

**Required Text**
Custom Courseware: An interdisciplinary selection of readings on feminist spectatorship and cultural/media studies, including such writers as Julia Creet, Jill Dolan, Susan Douglas, bell hooks, Christine Gledhill, Tania Modleski, Patricia White and others. Available in the bookstore, September 1997.

**Evaluation**
Assignments will highlight oral and written skills. Some in-class journal writing time will be provided after screenings. Term project topics will be determined in consultation with the instructor, and a list of suggested topics will be provided.

- Attendance and participation: 15%
- Media Journal (submitted 4x, minimum 3 pages each time): 20%
- Midterm exam (take-home, 6-8 pages) 30%
- Term Project (8-10 page research paper with oral presentation) 35%