WS 205-3: Women and Popular Culture

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Class held: Thursdays, 2:30-5:20pm; AQ 5030
Office Hour: Thursdays, 12:30-1:30, or by appt.
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Course Description:
This course will introduce students to some of the key concepts and debates within feminist cultural studies of popular culture. We will consider the different ways women are represented in popular culture by exploring various media forms from film and TV, to the Internet and print media (i.e., magazines). We will also look at the ways in which women have used these forms to create their own representations in resistant and pleasurable ways. Specifically, we will address the following:

- How popular culture constructs gendered, classed, and racial identities
- How feminist cultural studies scholars have intervened in debates about popular culture
- How women experience, negotiate, identify with, and make meaning of popular culture
- How images and messages in popular culture influence who we are and inform our ideas and actions
- How women have resisted and/or produced alternative images and forms that challenge mainstream representations

Students will be evaluated on their ability to use theoretical arguments, key concepts and terms, and to explain and analyze various aspects of popular culture. Students are encouraged to utilize their personal experiences to facilitate critical thought so as long as it is relevant to the course topic(s). Students should also be able to demonstrate an understanding of the various feminist perspectives and approaches to interpreting popular culture. Finally, as this course deals with current issues and topics of interest in feminism and popular culture, students are expected to familiarize themselves with relevant cultural forms and current events (i.e., TV shows, films), and to be able to draw on these examples to illustrate critical points.

Through taking this course, students will develop both an informed understanding of the academic study of popular culture as well as develop critical feminist frameworks through which to analyze the popular culture that they see in their everyday lives.

Course Texts and Courseware:
- Custom Courseware available for purchase at the SFU Bookstore
- A number of journal articles will also be available through the SFU Library

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Reading Responses x 5 (2 pages each) 25%
Take-home Midterm Exam (10 pages) 25%
Paper Proposal (2 pages including Bibliography) 5%
Term Paper (10-12 pages) 30%
Attendance and Participation (includes in-class group work and exercises) 15%

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)