GSWS 412-5: Women & Films: Films and Theories

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Lecture: Tuesdays 10:30 -15:20 Harbour Centre
Office Hours: TBD
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Course Description:
Feminist film theory and practices mirror debates that have engaged the feminist movement as a whole. As critic Laura Mulvey points out, film has been "the crucial terrain" on which feminism's debates over culture, identity and representation have been fought. Questions such as 'Are positive images enough?' "Is Freudian theory useful?" Is there a 'feminine vision,' "feminine pleasures'? What role do other identities such as class, race, ethnicity and sexuality play in women’s cinema? Do we still need to promote a separate women’s filmmaking?" and "Is sexual display always inimical to feminism?" continue to be addressed by feminist theorists and filmmakers. In class discussions, group presentations, blogs and papers, we will explore these questions and engage in the debates. The particularity of film as a medium to address these questions will form the perspective of our study. Screenings of films by women – both classic and contemporary – will focus the seminar discussions.

Course Texts and Courseware:
- A selection of readings available online.

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

Course Evaluation and Assignments:

20% Short Paper:
A response to the issues raised in the readings and in discussions in first five weeks of class.

25% Group Presentation:
An oral group research presentation based on the week’s readings and/or topics of discussion. The subject will be chosen in conjunction with the instructor and normally completed by two or three students per topic (15-20 min. in length + discussion). An outline of the presentation and a bibliography of the works consulted must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of the class on the day of the presentation. Student feedback will contribute to assessing the grade for this assignment.

30% Term Paper:
A critical paper, 8-10 pages in length, relating the work of a woman director viewed in and outside of class and the concepts discussed in the readings. The choice of topic is up to the student, but the topic must be developed in a submission approved by the instructor.

25% Attendance and Seminar Participation:
Includes regular class attendance, doing the required readings and coming to class prepared to join actively in discussions, and contributions to the class blog.

Prerequisite: 45 units including six units in GSWS or WS courses

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.