Feminist analysis of the media has recently undergone a change, moving away from a focus on media texts and popular culture products and toward a more audience-based set of perspectives. Instead of asking "what do mass media say about and do to women?", these new approaches ask, "what do WOMEN do with the media products they consume?" While these new models share an interest in audiences, they are otherwise very different from each other. Each has its own origin focus, and implications for the project of feminism. Some of these new approaches — such as those inspired by postcolonial and queer theory and political practice are extremely promising insofar as they suggest an active and empowered audience capable of political struggle over meaning and behaviour. Some, however, such as certain strains of feminist postmodernism, seem either overly fatalistic or overly optimistic about the power of female audiences to resist or derive pleasure from media products.

The first half of this course charts this shift in focus and critically examines the competing models of feminist media studies. We attend particularly here to the practical, political implications for feminism in each of these models. In the second half of the course we turn to a direct examination of television and film in order to test the theories we have considered, and to develop our own feminist perspectives on the media. NOTE: During the course of the semester, students will be asked to watch several specified television programs and to see at least two films, to be announced early in the semester.

REQUIRED READINGS:


RECOMMENDED READING:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In class, mid-term examination 30%
Tutorial participation and presentation 20%
Media journal and critical summary 50%

DESIGNATED CREDIT:

Students may apply to the Communication Department to obtain 3 upper division credits toward Communication requirements.

Students may apply to the Liberal Arts Certificate Program to obtain 3 upper division credits toward a Certificate in Liberal Arts.