This course explores a variety of issues of lesbian life and representation. Although I don’t expect that we’ll find definitive answers, we will examine a variety of debates in and around lesbian communities (including whether or not it’s even legitimate to speak of lesbian communities!). Some of these debates concern questions of whether there is or should be a lesbian aesthetic, or a lesbian culture. We will also consider the tricky question of lesbian identity/identities and the debates surrounding the usefulness of identity politics. Some have argued that a lesbian feminist theory and politics, because they are concerned with dual forms of oppression (sex and sexuality), tend to also most recognize multiple forms of oppression (racism, ageism, ableism, etc). Others think that organizing around a specific identity cannot help but be exclusive.

We will also look at the history of lesbian self-representation and the ways in which mainstream popular culture “handles” lesbian representation. What is the price of our visibility? Again there is debate about the “mainstreamization” of lesbian images, with some holding that our increasing representation helps to diminish homophobia, while others argue that the price of our visibility is high.

Required Reading:


Course Requirements:

- Class Participation: 15%
- Mid-term Exam (in-class): 20%
- Class Presentation (oral and written): 15%
- Term Paper (15-20 pages): 50%