W.S. 312-5  Women and Film

What makes a "positive image" of women in film? Are "positive images" enough? Using these questions as a starting point, this course considers the development of feminist film criticism over the last twenty years, and offers an overview of key issues that have informed it. Some of these issues, which will be considered in class, include the theorization of female spectatorship; the representation of female relationships; and the treatment of differences within/among women.

The first half of the course uses examples from Hollywood cinema to illustrate concerns prevailing in feminist writing on women in film. Considering these concerns sets the stage for the second half, which explores the work of women filmmakers who have attempted to re-define women for the screen. Both sections allow for cross-comparison and discussion of a variety of feminist concerns including work, motherhood, identity, "herstory", and political struggle.

Generally, the course intends to screen films that students may not be familiar with or have the opportunity to view, and to provide critical tools for thinking about representations of women in a variety of cinemas. The weekly readings (50 pages per week) provide a critical framework in which to engage with the films.

Required Reading:


Plus a selection of readings on reserve.

Course Requirements:

- Seminar presentation 15%
- Participation 15%
- Take-home midterm (6-8 pages) 20%
- Take-home final (8-10 pages) 20%
- Essay Outline (1-2 pages) 5%
- Essay (10-12 pages) 25%

* Students may apply to the School for Contemporary Arts to have this course designated as credit toward their film major.