WS 200 – B-Girls, Dragon Ladies and White Chicks: Race, Gender and Popular Culture in the United States

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Lecture: Mondays 14:30 – 17:20 AQ 5039
Office hours: AQ 5094 TBD

Course Description:
Despite the election of Barack Obama and triumphal pronouncements of a “post-racial” America, race remains a fraught topic in the United States. This class will look at the politics of race and representation in American popular culture and examine how questions of gender are intimately related to these debates. Using a variety of contemporary examples – everything from misogyny in Hip Hop, to the exotification of Asian women, to the politics of Michelle Obama’s arms – the course will critically address race and gender as discursive categories that are shaped by, reflected in, and contested through media images. Through class lectures, readings, screenings, and discussion, students will be introduced to the historical context for contemporary popular culture and become familiar with a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the questions of race, gender and representation. We will pay special attention to the ways in which media images, their production and reception provide a venue for people of colour to express, negotiate and resist dominant discourses of race and gender in the United States.

Course Texts and Courseware:
Joseph Clark, Custom Courseware Packet, SFU WS200-3

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Participation – 10%
Blog entries – 10%
Short paper 1 (5-7 pages) – 20%
Short paper 2 (5-7 pages) – 20%
Midterm exam – 20%
Final exam – 20%

Prerequisites: WS 101 or 102 (may be taken concurrently).