Popular culture provides an important window onto the positioning of women within the culture at large. Popular culture is seen differently by different schools of thought: source of oppressive imagery, site of pleasurable negotiation, manufacturer of consent. This course will survey debates surrounding the ways in which we look at and receive representation of women in popular culture. As industry, institution, entertainment and source of cultural capital, how does popular culture appropriate and/or reconfigure feminist thought? How can feminist thought incorporate popular culture? Does popular culture oppress women? Can we as feminist scholars access tools to resist its gaze?

This course will begin with an overview of basic theories of spectatorship (Berger, Mulvey, Hall, et al). We will then apply these theories to some of popular culture’s most feminized genres: the fairy tale, the women’s magazine, the Hollywood melodrama, the TV talk show, the situation comedy, and the internet chat group, asking how the construction of normalcy and gender identity operates via these genres, and how if audiences may subvert these constructions. As much as possible, we will examine these genres from a cross-cultural perspective, asking, for example, how melodrama operates in Latin American culture, how the fairytale is differently gendered in East European culture. Students will research and do presentations upon particular pop cultural genres, making use of cultural studies’ tool of analysis. We will also examine examples of feminist art and film/video that have drawn upon and reworked pop cultural imagery.

**Required readings:**
2. Other required readings are on reserve in the Belzberg Library. They are available on 4-hour loan. You are advised to photocopy them, read them, and have them with you on the day the reading is being discussed. Recommended readings are optional, and are provided to give you further insight into the issue at hand, or to help you with your research assignments and midterm.

**Course requirements and Grading Structure:**
1. Presentations: A sign-up sheet will be passed around on the first day of class, and students can choose at which class they want to present. For details see weekly guidelines. **25% of final grade**
2. Midterm (takehome) exam: Exam questions will be based entirely on required readings assigned up until the midterm. **30% of final grade**
3. Term project (10-12 pages): You may choose the topic of your final project in consultation with the instructor. Please see appended guidelines. It is due no later than the last day of class. **30% of final grade**
4. Participation/attendance: You are required to attend all classes, and to participate in tutorial discussions. **15% of final grade**

**Prerequisites:**
WS 101 or WS 102 – may be taken concurrently

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOODWRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.