What do Buffy, Carrie Bradshaw, and Oprah Winfrey have to do with feminism? What does it mean when women on television talk about their decision to have cosmetic surgery as “empowering”? What does Britney’s meltdown tell us about expectations of femininity? The term “postfeminism” can help us approach these questions in a meaningful way.

Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra point out that the starting point for postfeminist debates is an “acknowledgement of feminism as a feature of the cultural milieu” (107). Postfeminism is a contentious term, used by both feminists and their detractors, to describe the period after second wave feminism (considered to have emerged in the early 1980s). The term is alternately used to describe a period of women’s equality, where second wave feminism has been a success, or to describe feminism’s failures and slow descent towards death. Studying the presence of postfeminist ideas in popular culture, and the implications for representations of women and feminism, has become an important component of the work done by feminist media scholars. This course will examine the phenomenon of postfeminism as it appears in North American popular culture, particularly its presence in television. We will interrogate the assumptions at the heart of postfeminism, especially as they intersect with ideologies of power, agency, (hetero)sexuality, consumption, class, and race. Using a feminist cultural studies approach, students will be asked to think critically about television, viewing practices, and representation.

**Course Requirements**

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Mid-term Test: 20%
- Essay Assignment: 30%
- Final Exam: 30%

**Course Texts**

All required readings will be included in a Courseware package for purchase at the SFU bookstore, unless otherwise noted. Articles by authors including: Angela McRobbie, Jane Shattuc, Sarah Banet-Weiser, Joke Hermes, Diane Negra, Elspeth Probyn, Amanda Lotz, Lynn Spigel. Required readings marked with an * are available through the SFU library electronic journals database.

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