WS 205 – Women and Popular Cultural:
Showgirls: Performance, Embodiment and Sexuality

Mary Shearman
mshearma@sfu.ca
Phone: 778-782-4742
Lecture: Mondays 14:30 – 17:20 AQ 5025
Office hours: AQ 5093 TBD

Course Description:
Are erotic dancers shrewd workers or exploited by a patriarchal society? If femininity is a performance and not a ‘natural’ disposition, why is it still employed by so may people even though its history is sometimes conceived as synonymous with being oppressed? Can a feminist go-go dancer subversively use her performance to challenge the objectification of her body?

This course is designed to aid students in developing analytical skills by investigating and critiquing the formal and mundane performance of femininity. This will be achieved through gaining exposure to, and comprehension of performance studies and feminist theories that address the potential of the sexualized female performer. We will look at examples from venues such as burlesque dancing, performance art, punk music, and drag culture. By the end of this course, students will be able to identify ways in which people who seek to subvert gendered power relations can utilize the prescription of femininity.

Course Texts and Courseware:
Custom Courseware available at the SFU bookstore.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Participation in class and on-line: 35%
Mid-Term Examination: 15%
Final Essay: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

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

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department. In addition, the Department will follow policy T10.02 with respect to “Intellectual Honesty,” and “Academic Discipline” (WWW.SFU.CA/POLICIES/TEACHING)