

WGS 200: Women in Popular Culture

Spring 2014 Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:35-3:50 Buttrick 201

Popular culture is a “valuable index to what people commonly know, value, fear, remember, and believe.” –Jane Caputi

“People inscribe their histories, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and dreams in the images they make.” –Robert Hughes

Course Description

As the Vanderbilt Women’s and Gender Studies Program website indicates, WGS is “an interdisciplinary program that that examines gender and sexuality as social constructs and as historically variable components of culture.” Since gender is a universal but varied experience and because it “cuts across most disciplines, students in Women’s and Gender Studies can achieve a deeper understanding of the complexity and wholeness of human experience by using various methodologies.”

WGS 200, in the haiku-esque convention of Vanderbilt’s course descriptions, is about

Gender differentiation in popular culture & consumer products. Portrayal of women in movies, print, music, and the Internet. The sources and effects of these portrayals. Women as both consumers and consumed.

Through primary and secondary materials, we’ll examine popular portrayals of women (created by women and men), their sources and impacts, and what they tell us about women’s roles and other gendered themes, tensions, and anxieties played out in popular culture. Our investigation of the content of popular culture, because of its ubiquity, is far from comprehensive.

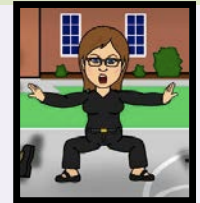
Instead, we’ll focus on developing a range of critical skills, questions, and frameworks through which we’ll be able to analyze the messages of popular culture surrounding us everyday.



As the Vanderbilt Women’s and

Dr. Nancy Chick

nancy.chick@vanderbilt.edu
Center for Teaching, Office 306
{1114 19th Ave S, corner of 19th & Edgehill}
322-7290
Office Hours T, R 3:50-5:00 & by appt



Learning Goals

Courses in Vanderbilt University’s Women & Gender Studies Program aim to

- transform traditional ways of knowing—in and out of the classroom—by reaching across epistemological and methodological divisions to foster interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives on social life.

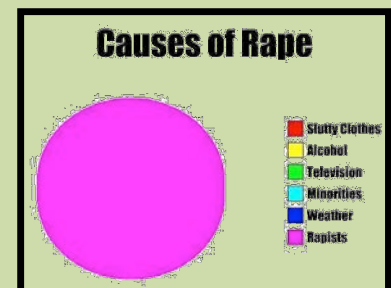


WGS course facilitate this goal as students learn to

- re-examine traditional beliefs, and
- recognize that gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and nationality are crucial aspects of identity and can be understood primarily in their intersections.

In WGS 200, these goals are supported in students’ work to

- understand how popular culture is written, talked about, and experienced,
- analyze multiple forms and media of popular culture and assess its impact and significance,
- identify how women are represented and how they represent themselves in popular culture,
- examine the roles of race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and ability in popular culture, and
- join scholarly and theoretical conversations about women and their positions in popular culture.



Learning Environment

Our learning environment—the interactions in and out of class between any members of the course—is based on principles of feminist pedagogy, including the following:

- the recognition that complex, integrative knowledge is constructed collectively, which leads to
- the valuing of community, collaboration, and individual experiences within that community, which requires
- an awareness of and attention to the power dynamics of the classroom.

I ask for your courtesy, respect, and cooperation and for



your full attention, an inquisitive mind, and your best work in your interactions with each other and in your demonstrations of learning in this course, as I promise you the same.

Preparation for a good class session requires reading and annotating all assigned texts (“texts” in the broadest sense), completing any assignments for each period, and connecting current course materials with previous ones. It also requires an intentional frame of mind. At times, you may be uncomfortable as you consider issues you’ve never thought about, in ways you’ve never thought about them, and in contexts that may challenge your comfort zones. Controversy can provide wonderful learning moments, while courtesy helps us examine controversies without hostilities. Anecdotal reports (personal examples) are useful because they connect us to the subjects we’re studying, and they remind us that we’re not merely participating in an intellectual exercise; however, keep in mind that one example neither proves nor disproves anything. Whether anecdotal evidence is about others or yourself, no one is wholly

Required Materials

There is no textbook for you to purchase; instead, assigned readings are available in OAK. Please download, print, and annotate them, and keep them in a binder that you bring to every class meeting; others will be links to online materials.

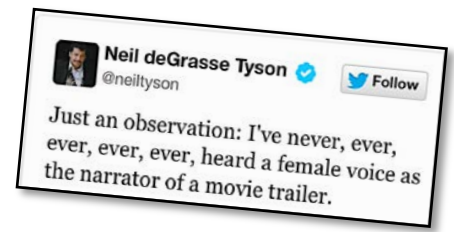
Assessment & Related Policies

25% Class Preparation & In-Class Activities (quizzes, smaller activities & projects, group activities, etc)

15% Class Participation
15% Research Project
5% Blog Analysis
5% Internet Buffet Assignment

20% Course Project
10% Final Essay
5% Final Synthesizing Fishbowl

representative of a group, and basing beliefs about an entire group of people and their experiences on our own experiences is like trying to be a meteorologist by looking out a window.



Please approach these moments with reflection and consideration: what does it mean for our world, for your world if it’s true? What can you learn from it, even if you don’t agree with it completely? Ultimately, just because something isn’t true for you doesn’t mean it isn’t true for others. Again, in the spirit of learning, ask yourself, “What does it mean for our world, for my world, if it’s true for at least some?” On page 4 (and with links on our research guide), you’ll find a variety of campus resources that can help with varied stresses and discomforts that may arise in this class.

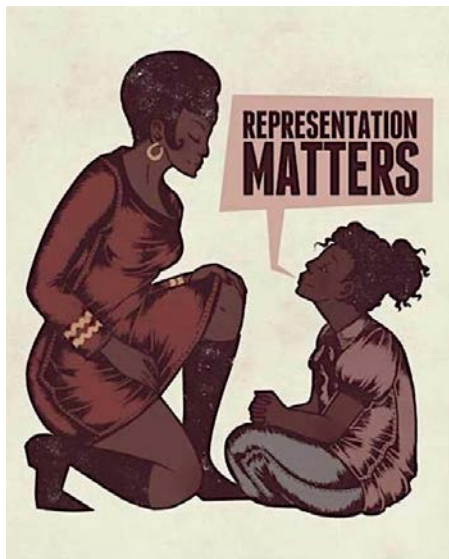
Your presence in this class announces that you are here to learn, to read, to view, to listen, to interpret, to empathize, to try to understand, to consider, to reflect upon, to discuss, and to contribute—regardless of how you ultimately feel about the issues under consideration. Dismissing course texts, concepts, or activities without reflecting upon them or antagonizing discussions to prevent full consideration of them is contrary to the spirit of learning and inhibits not only your own learning but also the learning of your classmates. I am committed to a safe classroom and a safe campus. Our shared goal in this course is an open exploration of course content, so be prepared for an interesting, provocative, challenging, and, yes, perhaps even fun semester that you’ll remember for a long time.



A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94-100	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	60-69	0-59

You are responsible for all assignments whether you attend class or not. If you miss a class or part of a class, please get missed assignments, notes, announcements, and handouts from your study partner *before you return to class*. Our activities, exercises, and discussions are cumulative learning moments that build on each other. By the end of each, you will have added some ideas, skills, and/or ways of thinking to your repertoire. If you miss an activity, exercise, or discussion, make sure your study partner fills you in, *and* do the exercise on your own, with me, or with the writing tutors in The Writing Studio.

Deadlines: Class Preparation and In-Class Activities are time-sensitive, so late work will earn a zero. Deadlines for submitting all other assignments are firm as well, but sometimes life interferes, so late submissions of these weightier



"Well, when I was nine years old, Star Trek came on, I looked at it and I went screaming through the house, 'Come here, mum, everybody, come quick, come quick, there's a black lady on television and she ain't no maid!' I knew right then and there I could be anything I wanted to be."

— Whoopi Goldberg

assignments (those listed in separate lines under “Assessment” on page 2) will be accepted—with a penalty. Namely, in the spirit of fairness to the rest of the class, the purpose of deadlines, and the high expectations of Vanderbilt University, your assignment grade will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade per day, with the first 1/3 deducted at the end of class on the due date and the second starting at 4pm on the following calendar day.

“Watch These 4 Girls Destroy The Female Stereotype Like The Monsters They Are”



Academic Integrity: The Vanderbilt Honor Code governs all work in this course. Please familiarize yourself with Vanderbilt’s undergraduate honor policy: studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/information-for-students/. Although I encourage

collaboration and conversation with your peers when discussing our course ideas (from informal conversations to brainstorming project topics to course study groups), all of the work you present (except for group projects) or write should be your own, and others’ ideas and words should be properly cited. Please be careful not to plagiarize. The library has helpful information on plagiarism and policies

(researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/plagiarism), and the Writing Studio has a great set of resources on “Incorporating Sources” (vanderbilt.edu/writing/resources/handouts/).

The Writing Studio: Getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. For any assignments that involve writing, I encourage you to take advantage of the services at the Writing Studio. Their consultants can offer a fresh perspective on writing projects. For more information and to schedule an appointment, visit vanderbilt.edu/writing.

Other Needs: If you need disability-related accommodations for this course, have emergency medical information to share with me, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to speak with me, as well as the Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services (EAD) Office (322-4705, vanderbilt.edu/ead) as soon as possible.



Our Research Guide

researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/WGS200

This guide is a collection of links and materials to support your research and other inquiries related to this course, including traditional library research, relevant websites, campus resources of all types, and our OAK site.

Library » Research Guides » Heard Library » WGS 200 - Women in Popular Culture - Chick

WGS 200 - Women in Popular Culture - Chick

Tags: course

Last Updated: Dec 26, 2013 | URL: <http://researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/WGS200> | [Print Guide](#) | [Email Alerts](#)

[Home](#) | [Starting Your Search](#) | [Working with Sources](#) | [WiPC via Library](#) | [WiPC on WWW](#) | [WiPC @ VU](#) | [Our OAK Site](#)



Campus Resources

Vanderbilt offers a variety of resources that may be useful to you this semester. Clickable links are available in our research guide (researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/WGS200).

Campus Organizations & Programs

- **The Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center**
leads co-curricular campus initiatives related to women's and gender issues, creating innovative opportunities to make the Vanderbilt community safer, more inclusive and equitable; partners with many departments, programs, and individuals across campus to raise awareness about the ways in which gender shapes and is shaped by our lived experiences.
- **VU PETA**
Vanderbilt University's Personal Empowerment Through Self Awareness module features videos that deal frankly with power-based personal violence (intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, identity-based targeting, and bullying).
- **Vanderbilt Feminists (Vandy Fems)**
Open to all students of any gender concerned about women's issues on campus and promoting equality between genders.
- **The Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Life**
a cultural center and a place of affirmation for individuals of all identities, and a resource for information and support about gender and sexuality.
- **International Lens Film Series @ Sarratt Cinema**
a film series with a global perspective using film screenings as a forum to promote conversation among Vanderbilt's diverse community of students, faculty, and staff.
- **Culture Café lunch series for international students**
Culture Cafe is sponsored by the International Student & Scholar Services and the PCC. Come join the conversation each week about adjusting to your new environment. Open to domestic and international students. No appointment is necessary; just come on by. Lunch will be served.
- **Black Cultural Center**
It is a gathering place: a home away from home for students who study in the BCC; gather there for meetings, and learn about African and African American culture through its programs.
- **Office of Intercultural Affairs & Advocacy**
The mission of IA&A is to support students in their personal and intellectual development to prepare them to become culturally and civically proficient leaders in an increasingly diverse world. IA&A provides resources, advocacy, and programming that enable students at Vanderbilt to develop skills to effect purposeful change in their surrounding communities.
- **Psychological & Counseling Center (PCC)**
Reading and study skills support, learning disabilities/ADHD services, therapy and psychiatric services, alcohol and other drug service (See drop-down menu for "Student Services" in left column.)
- **The Writing Studio**
Open to all members of Vanderbilt's scholarly community, the Studio provides opportunities to receive constructive feedback from trained consultants and to develop strategies for all stages of the writing process.



From a catalog for the British department store
Debenhams



Schedule*

* Because this is a course on popular culture, some materials will be added during the semester—as what’s currently “popular” emerges. These “JITM” (just-in-time materials) will be announced in class and on OAK.

Class Preparations	Date	In-Class Activities
Complete your Popular Culture Log	○ T, 1/7	Introduction to the course and your classmates
Read Kirk & Okazawa-Rey “Feminisms”	○ R, 1/9	Discuss and apply PC logs & reading What’s trending? Construct class participation expectations
Read Johnson “Where Are We?,” McIntosh “Invisible Knapsack,” Cataldi “Reflections on Male Bashing,” & Launius & Hassel “Intersectionality”	○ T, 1/14	Discuss and apply readings Set up Group Ignite! Talks
Work on Group Ignite! Talk	○ R, 1/16	Work on Group Ignite! Talk
Complete Group Ignite! Talk	○ T, 1/21	Presentations of Group Ignite! Talks
Read Zeisler “Women Under the Influence: Popular Culture 2000 and Beyond” & Pozner “How to Reclaim, Reframe, & Reform the Media: A Feminist Advocacy Guide”	○ R, 1/23	Discuss and apply readings
Read Owens Patton “Hey Girl, Am I More Than My Hair?” & Mills “Envy, a Love Story: Queering Female Jealousy”	○ T, 1/28	Discuss and apply readings
Bring advertisement, as assigned in previous class period. How would you analyze it applying the lenses of our readings thus far?	○ R, 1/30	Ad analysis activity
Read Ferris & Young “Chick Flicks and Chick Culture,” Greco Larson “Racial Politics in Fictional Media: Films & Television,” & Freeland “A Proposed Feminist Framework for Reading Horror Films”; Watch Sarkeesian’s vlogs “Smurfette Principle,” “The Bechdel Test for Women in Movies,” & “The Oscars & The Bechdel Test”	○ T, 2/4	Discuss and apply readings & vlogs
Read Hassel “The ‘Babe Scientist’ Phenomenon: The Illusion of Inclusion in 1990s American Action Films,” Oler “Bloodletting,” & Henderson “Simple Pleasures: Lesbian Community & Go Fish”	○ R, 2/6	Discuss and apply readings
TBA	○ T, 2/11	View <i>Miss Representation</i> , and take notes
Read Emad “Reading Wonder Woman’s Body” Review notes of <i>Miss Representation</i>	○ R, 2/13	Discuss and apply <i>Miss Representation</i> and readings
Read Jeffers “Bella and the Choice Made in Eden” and Lem & Hassel “‘Killer’ Katniss and ‘Lover Boy’ Peeta: Suzanne Collins’s Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading”	○ T, 2/18	Discuss and apply readings
Read LaMay & Armstrong “The Navel, the Corporate, the Contradictory: Pop Sirens at the 21 st Century,” & Rose “Bad Sistas: Black Women Rappers & Sexual Politics in Rap Music”	○ R, 2/20	Discuss and apply readings

Please attend the Kitchen Table talk, below, in lieu of our regularly scheduled class.			
	o	T, 2/25	Begin Blog Analysis
Kitchen Table Series "Being Trans-Identified at VU" (Sarratt 325-327)			
	o	T, 2/25, 5-6	
Work on Blog Analysis	o	R, 2/27	Synthesis activity: mapping the conversations Course Project assigned
Spring Break			
Finish Blog Analysis	o	T, 3/11	Report results of Blog Analysis
What's trending?	o	R, 3/13	Research Project assigned & meet Pam Morgan
Kitchen Table Series "Women in the Music Industry" (Sarratt 325/327)			
	o	3/17, 5-6	
Work on Research Project	o	T, 3/18	Workshopping your Research Project ideas (Meet in Central Library 418A)
Preparations for Speak-Out Panel	o	R, 3/20	Speak-Out Panel: LGBTQI in Pop Culture
Work on Projects			
Work on Projects	o	T, 3/25	Course Project planning
			No class meeting, bank time for 3/17 lecture
Work on Projects	o	R, 3/27	No class meeting, bank time for 4/17 extended period
Finish Research Project	o	T, 4/1	Share Research Projects
Begin readings for next time			Begin Internet Buffet assignment
Read Katz "Call of Duty & a Generation of Joystick Warriors," Chick "Speaking the Unspoken Truth about Gender Inequality in Videogames," & Ciscell "Race & Gender & Angry Birds"	o	R, 4/3	Discuss and apply readings
Work on Internet Buffet assignment			
Work on Internet Buffet assignment	o	T, 4/8	Share Internet Buffet results
Begin readings for next time	o	R, 4/10	Work on Course Project
Work on Course Project			
Read Thomas & Seely Brown "Knowing, Making, & Playing" + "Hanging Out, Messing Around, & Geeking Out," Hayes "Girls Gaming and the Trajectory of IT Expertise," & Shaw "Do You Identify as a Gamer? Gender, Race, Sexuality, & Gamer Identity"	o	T, 4/15	Discuss and apply readings
Complete Course Project	o	R, 4/17	Extended class period (2:35-5:00): Course Project Presentations & Pizza & Final Essay Assigned
Put this event on your calendar, more info later.			
	o	M, 4/21, 3-6pm	VU's Celebration of Learning
	o	W, 4/30, 3-5pm	Final Exam Session Essay due + Synthesizing Fishbowl