

# Women & Popular Culture: Garbo to Gaga



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*Women's Studies & Feminist Research*  
*WS2161B - Winter 2016*  
*Mon 4:30-7:30 AHB 1R40*

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## Course Outline

How are women represented in popular culture? What messages do we receive about women in Hip Hop music videos? Disney films? Reality TV? YA fiction? And how do understandings of what it means to be feminine become wrapped up in the way women are represented within popular culture? What kind of impact might these messages have on us, as consumers? What impact might they have on young women, who perhaps have a less critical lens with which to view and understand the world?

This course explores a number of these key themes, and in particular, how they relate to ideas, representations, and experiences of women in popular culture. It will also focus on the specific intersections of class, race and sexuality – these recurring themes will help to show how differences in identity may shift the way women are represented and even valued within popular culture (and the broader social world!). While we explore historical *and* contemporary figures (for instance, Greta Garbo to Lady Gaga), the majority of the course will focus on contemporary themes like Beyoncé and celebrity feminism, the emergence of transgender characters of popular TV shows, the role of the romance narrative in teen/chick flicks, the female rebel in dystopian YA fiction – oh, the list goes on!

This course is also designed so that it becomes clear how various technologies (magazines, the internet, music videos, literature, reality TV, etc.) can play a direct role in how women are represented in popular culture and how we, as consumers, experience them through these technologies. As a result, this course hopes to gauge your interest when you are consuming pop culture inside as well as outside the classroom, where you perhaps become aware of some of the themes we've discussed when you're Netflixing at home on a Saturday night.



## Assessments

### Participation in On-line Discussions (20%)

You will be expected to post comments or questions about the readings ten times during the course. You may feel free to continue posting after you have completed the minimum! Please put some thought and consideration into your contributions to these on-line discussions. Your posts must engage respectfully and intelligently – for instance, if there is a post you disagree with, please respond to the idea and not the person who wrote it. A grading rubric is provided on OWL.

### In-Class Tests (20% each)

On Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup> you will write an in-class test lasting 1 ¼ hr in length. There will be a short break, followed by a 1 ¼ lecture. The format of the test may include T/F, multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blank, and short essay questions.

### Final Examination (40%)

This will be scheduled during the official exam period and will last 2 ½ hours in length. The format will be similar to in-class tests, but will also include a longer essay question. A number of potential essay questions will be given out two weeks before the end of term – two of these questions will appear on the exam and you must answer one.



## Course Requirements

This course involves reading, listening to lectures, watching films and other media, and participating in both in-class discussion (ungraded) and online discussion (graded). The lectures, films, and readings are intended to complement each other; they do not necessarily cover the same material nor do they cover it from the same perspective. There are a number of guest lecturers throughout the semester and we will all expect you to **read and listen critically, be prepared to question certain conventions, and examine different points of view**. Sometimes lecturers may choose a reading because we disagree with all or parts of it and because that disagreement helps to expose you to different aspects of, and perspectives on, the topic. **Don't assume that a reading is the ultimate authority on an issue – by all means, disagree with authors and ideas!** Being a good thinker does not mean holding steadfast to initial opinions and theories, but rather, can be used as stepping stones to further and expand knowledge. If you want to learn from this (or any) course you will need to put in some consistent effort. **Learning is not a spectator sport.**

**Attendance and participation:** Because of the class size, attendance is **not** taken in this course. However, please note that students who participate regularly tend to have significantly higher grades at the end of the course. If you do attend, we expect you to be **actively present**, not disengaged and “multi-tasking.” Not being engaged with the material not only limits the extent to which you can learn, it is also disrespectful and rude, both to the instructor(s) and your fellow students. **If you need to be in constant, uninterrupted contact with your friends, social media, and so on, there are better places for that than this class.** We also ask that you not leave before the lecture ends; it, too, is disrespectful and can be very distracting for the lecturer. Repeated infractions of these policies may result in a **course-wide laptop ban**.

Use of mobile phones is **not permitted** under any circumstances; if you have a family or pet emergency, please speak to me or the guest lecturer before the class starts.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

- ✚ Co-ordinator: Dr. Nichole Edwards
- ✚ Email: [nedwar7@uwo.ca](mailto:nedwar7@uwo.ca)
- ✚ Office Hours: Monday 2-4pm, Lawson Hall 3249

### **Teaching Assistants:**

- ✚ Stuart Cheyne – [scheyne2@uwo.ca](mailto:scheyne2@uwo.ca)
- ✚ Miranda Niitynen – [mniittyn@uwo.ca](mailto:mniittyn@uwo.ca)
- ✚ Philip Spurrell – [pspurrel@uwo.ca](mailto:pspurrel@uwo.ca)
- ✚ Mary McLevey – [mmclevey@uwo.ca](mailto:mmclevey@uwo.ca)

## **The Important Stuff...**

**Scholastic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>

Simply put: **do not cheat**. It is unfair to other students who work hard to do assignments on their own and you will almost certainly be caught at some point.

**Electronic devices in tests and exams:** No electronic devices will be permitted during the in-class tests or the final exam. If you wish to check the time during a test or exam, please wear a watch.

**Medical Policy:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Requests for accommodation must be made **within 28 calendar days** of the missed assignment. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>.

**Appeals:** Discussions about graded assignments may **not** take place within 24 hours after the grade is posted or the assignment returned. Questions about grades will be entertained for the following three weeks.

**Note for students with disabilities:** Please contact [wsg@uwo.ca](mailto:wsg@uwo.ca) if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

## **Help & Resources**

*If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed...*

### **1. Make an appointment with me or with one of the TAs**

*You are welcome to email me, or to make an appointment to meet during office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way. The TAs also keep regular office hours (see the course OWL) and are available by email (see contact info).*

### **2. Use online resources**

*Check the OWL site for links to some useful online resources.*

### **3. Get to know the Reference Desk**

*Our library staff is eager to help guide your research and to orient you to paper and online resources. Women's Studies also has its own research librarian, Marg Sloan, who keeps office hours in WSFR once a week and is also available by email at [sloan@uwo.ca](mailto:sloan@uwo.ca).*

### **4. Use the Writing Support Centre**

*This is a free resource that offers workshops, seminars, individual help, and an online writing lab. You can visit them at Western Student Services Building, Suite 4100, 519-661-3655.*

### **5. Use Learning Skills Services**

*Learning Skills Services offers help with note-taking, exam writing, time management, etc. Help is available both in person and online. To schedule a **confidential individual appointment** call 519-661-2183 or go to the Student Development Centre in Room 4100, Student Services Building.*

### **6. Accommodations**

*If you have a disability (learning or otherwise), and you need accommodation in this course, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities either by phone at (519) 661-2147 or by email at [ssd@uwo.ca](mailto:ssd@uwo.ca).*

### **7. Support Services**

*Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>*

# Textbooks

Course reader, available from UWO Bookstore. Additional material and online links will be provided on OWL throughout the semester.

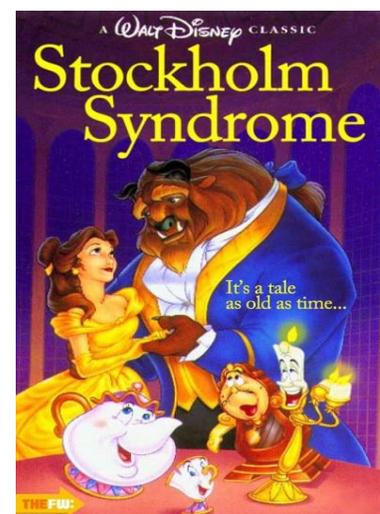
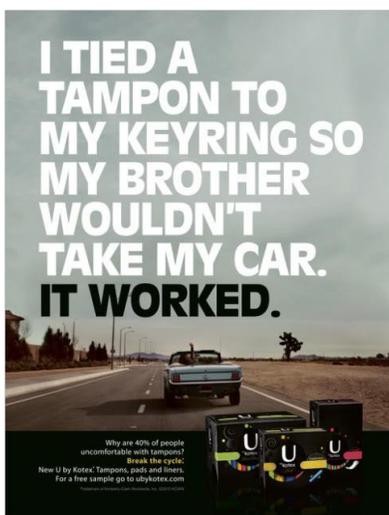
# Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Offer critical reflections of mainstream films and TV shows in a way that speaks to ongoing debates about gender, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality
- Identify how intersections of race, class and sexuality impact the way women are represented in popular culture, and as a result, the broader social world
- Construct an argument around the negative and positive ways women are represented in popular culture, including the development of stereotypes and the ways women can resist them
- Recognize the importance of changing technologies and how this has impacted understandings and representations of women in popular culture throughout history
- Become critical consumers of popular culture

Students will also develop their oral, written and critical thinking skills through the following means:

- By contributing to weekly on-line discussions, students will develop a coherent sense of how to respectfully and intelligently engage in discussions/debates with peers
- By participating in unassessed in-class discussions (in both large and small groups), students will become more confident speakers and develop some spontaneity
- Students will learn how to polish their study skills through the format of in-class tests, which promote the consolidation of course material and readings over a number of weeks



## Winter 2016 Schedule

Date	Lecturer	Topic
Jan. 4	N. Edwards	Introduction & Course Logistics Why Women? Why Popular culture?
Jan. 11	N. Edwards	Film: <i>Queen Christina</i> 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Celebrity Culture
Jan. 18	N. Edwards	Film: <i>TBA</i> Problematizing the Disney Princess
Jan. 25	N. Edwards A. Allen	Class, Gender, Sex, and Hip Hop Culture Rihanna and Chris Brown: A Case Study
Feb. 1	N. Edwards	<b>**IN-CLASS TEST**</b> Trans is the New Black: Emerging Transgender Identities on TV
Feb. 8	L. Cayan	Film: <i>Killing Us Softly</i> Advertising and Magazine Culture
<b>Feb. 15-19</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
Feb. 22	N. Edwards	All hail Queen B: Beyoncé & Celebrity Feminism
Feb. 29	M. Green-Bartteet N. Edwards	Teenage Heroes and YA Fiction Feminine Hygiene: Shaming, Periods and Girls – oh my!
Mar. 7	N. Edwards	<b>**IN-CLASS TEST**</b> Reality TV, Class and Femininity
Mar. 14	N. Edwards	Film: <i>Tough Guise</i> 'Lad' Magazines, Rape Culture and Hyper Masculinity
Mar. 21	N. Edwards	Teen Flicks, 'Chick Lit' and the Heterosexual Romance Narrative
Mar. 28	W. Pearson	Women and Sport
Apr. 4	N. Edwards	The Sexualization Debate

**You will find a more detailed schedule, including each weeks corresponding reading(s) on the following pages...**



## Detailed Schedule and Readings

### Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards - Why Women? Why Popular Culture?

- No readings for this week

### Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Celebrity Culture

- Erkkila, B. 1985. "Greta Garbo: Sailing Beyond the Frame." *Critical Inquiry*. 11(4), pp. 595-619.

### Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – Problematizing the Disney Princess

- Gillam, K. and Wooden, S. 2008. "Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. 36(1), pp. 2-8.
- Pershing, L. and Gablehouse, L. 2010. "Disney's *Enchanted*: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in Fairy Tale Film." In: Greenhill, P., Matrix, S. (eds) *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity*. Utah State University Press. Available from: <<http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=289696>> Pp. 137-156.

Note:  
Same  
Date

### Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – Class, Gender, Sex and Hip Hop Culture

- Hunter, S. 2011. "Shake it, Baby, Shake it: Consumption and the New Gender Relation in Hip Hop." *Sociological Perspectives*. 54(1), pp. 15-36.

### Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> – A. Allen – Chris Brown and Rihanna: A Case Study

- TBA

### Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> – N. Edwards – Emerging Transgender Identities on TV

IN-CLASS TEST DURING FIRST HALF!

- TBA – will be made available online through OWL

### Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> – L. Cayen – Advertising and Magazine Culture

- Gill, R. 2007. "Advertising and Postfeminism." *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 73-112.

### Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> – READING WEEK

## **Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> – N. Edwards – All Hail Queen B: Beyoncé and Celebrity Feminism**

- Winfrey Harris, Tamara. 2013. "All Hail the Queen?" *Bitch: A Feminist Response to Pop Culture*. Issue 59 (Summer): *Micro/Macro*. Available online at: <http://bitchmagazine.org/article/all-hail-the-queen-beyonce-feminism>
- Keller, J. and Ringrose, J. 2015. "'But then feminism goes out the window!': Exploring teenage girls' critical response to celebrity feminism." *Celebrity Studies*, pp. 1-4.

## **Feb. 29<sup>th</sup> – M. Green-Barteet – Teenage Heroes and YA Fiction**

- Couzelis, M. 2013. "The Future is Pale: Race in Contemporary Young Adult Dystopian Novels." In: Basu, B., Road, K. and Kintz, C (eds.) *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers*. New York: Routledge, pp. 131-144.
- Day, S., Green-Barteet, M. and Montz, A. 2014. "From 'New Woman' to 'Future Girl': The Roots and the Rise of the Female Protagonist in Contemporary Young Adult Dystopias." In: *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing. Pp. 1-16.

## **Feb 29<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – Feminine Hygiene: Shaming, Periods and Girls – Oh my!**

- Merskin, D. 1999. "Adolescence, Advertising and the Ideology of Menstruation." *Sex Roles*. 40(11/12), pp. 941-957.

## **Mar. 7<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – Reality TV, Class and Femininity**

IN-CLASS TEST DURING FIRST HALF!

- Ringrose, J. and Walkerdine, V. 2008. "Regulating the Abject: The TV Make-over as a Site of Neo-liberal Reinvention Toward Bourgeois Femininity." *Feminist Media Studies*. 8(3), pp. 227-246.

## **Mar. 14<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – 'Lad' Magazines, Rape Culture, and Hyper Masculinity**

**\*Trigger Warning\*** - This reading deals with rape culture, sexual violence and uses language such as 'predator/prey'

- Serano, J. 2008. "Why Nice Guys Finish Last." In: Friedman, J. and Valenti, J. (eds.) *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power & a World Without Rape*. Berkeley: Seal Press. Pp. 227-240.

## **Mar. 21<sup>st</sup> – N. Edwards – Teen Flicks, 'Chick Lit' and the Romance Narrative**

- TBA

## **Mar. 28<sup>th</sup> – W. Pearson – Women and Sport**

- Caudwell, J. 2011. "Gender, feminism and football studies." *Soccer & Society*. 12(3), pp. 330-344.

Note:  
Same  
Date

- Cahn, S. 1993. "From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in US Women's Sport." *Feminist Studies*. 19(2), pp. 343-368.

#### **Apr. 4<sup>th</sup> – N. Edwards – The Sexualization Debate**

- Walters, N. 2010. "Babes" In: *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*. London: Virago. Pp.19-38.
- Valenti, J. 2010. "The Cult of Virginity." In: *The Purity Myth: How American's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women*. Berkeley: Seal Press: Pp. 17-40.