

**The University of Western Ontario (Western University)  
London Canada  
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research**

**WS 3153G – Bad Girls: Dissident Women and Popular Culture**

Lecture: Thursdays 1:30-4:30pm

Location: UCC-67

Office hours: Mon 2:00-3:00 and Thurs. 11:30-12:30

Instructor: Jacqueline Potvin

Office number: TBA

E-mail: [jpotvin2@uwo.ca](mailto:jpotvin2@uwo.ca)

**Course Description**

This course will examine our recurring fascination with the figure of the “bad girl” in various forms of popular cultural production. The course will explore the various ways that “bad girls” have been produced within cultural production and interrogate the often complex and ambiguous relationships we have with these images and tropes. The first part of the course will concentrate on the theoretical work which informs the relationship between popular culture and dissident sexuality, while the second part of the course will look more closely at how specific types of sexual dissidence, particularly related to adolescent and young adult female bodies, is created, controlled and contested in popular culture.

**Pre-Requisites: WS 2220E or WS 2253E or WS 2257E or WS 2273E, or permission of the Department.**

**Course Perspective, Organization, and Learning Objectives**

This course takes a feminist, critical, and interdisciplinary approach to understanding issues of popular culture and dissident sexuality related to young adult female bodies.

In particular, students will be able to:

- Orally and in writing, explain the production and contestation of the figure of the “bad girl” in various forms of popular culture
- Provide historical and contemporary examples to illustrate, apply, and develop their understanding of the “bad girl”, the “good girl”, and dissident sexuality
- Articulate feminist theoretical responses to the representation of young adult female sexuality in popular culture and develop their own perspectives on potential resistance
- Develop a critical awareness of the assumptions underlying young women’s involvement with and representation in popular culture and how these assumptions are influenced by broader social, cultural, and racialized understandings of gender.

In addition, students will be expected to develop:

- Written and oral communication skills
- Research skills including the ability to evaluate and incorporate appropriate materials and examples into their work, and
- The ability to work collaboratively and independently on projects through group assignments, presentations, class discussion, and written reports and essays.

### Required Reading

Required Readings are available by EZ-proxy link on OWL course site, or on reserve at Weldon Library.

### Student Evaluation

Reading Questions and Participation	15%
Short Essay	20%
Group Media Project	20%
Thesis Statement and Bibliography	10%
Final Paper	35%

### Description of Assignments

#### Reading Questions and Participation (15%, weeks as assigned and on-going)

Each student will prepare discussion questions based on readings for two assigned weeks over the course of the semester. Each question is due by 12 midnight the night before the class and will be submitted on OWL. Students will be called upon to present their discussion questions in class. All students should come to class with materials read and notes taken in order to be prepared to contribute to instructor- and student-led class discussion through questions, comments, and respectful attention.

#### Short Essay (20%, February 2, 2017)

This paper will take the form of a short, 1000 word/four- to six-page essay on the representation of bad girls within an approved film, television series, or novel. Students are expected to introduce their selected media piece and offer a critique or analysis of the representation of the “bad girl” using course readings. Additional research from outside course material can be used but is not required.

#### Group Media Project (20%, April 6, 2017)

This group media project will entail the creation of an online wiki which foregrounds the way media representations of young women’s sexual and social dissidence is produced in the media. The project will consist of a collaborative design and 8-10 areas of concentration that the class as a whole identifies as being important sites of intervention into the way young women are

positioned by the media and society in a class discussion during week five. Following this initial discussion/brainstorming, the class will be divided into groups of 2-3 to work on a specific area of concentration. The material produced by each group will be mounted on a wiki site by the start of the last day of class. Each group will present their part of the project in the final week of class – April 6th, 2017. Students are expected to be present and prepared for both the group project discussion and the project presentation. Failure to attend either day will result in a reduced overall grade unless there has been a prior arrangement with the instructor or a valid medical certificate is provided to Academic Counselling immediately upon the student's return to class. It is my hope that this wiki will eventually be publically accessible and hence become a resource for girls and young women, parents, counsellors and educators.

The wiki structure means that it will be possible to add and expand the site. In this way we can start to bridge the theory-praxis divide and, drawing on our collective expertise, offer young women alternatives which are not simply reiterating the dichotomous thinking that creates bad girls and vilifies dissident women.

#### Final Essay Thesis Statement and Annotated Bibliography (10%, February 16, 2017)

Students will develop their own topic and submit a thesis statement, short paragraph reflecting their theoretical and methodological approach and an annotated bibliography consisting of at least 7 sources. This thesis statement will be the basis for their final essay due at the end of the semester.

#### Final Essay (35%, March 23, 2017)

The final paper (2500 words/12-15 pages) will consist of an exploration of issues related to bad girls, dissident sexuality, and popular culture, on a topic of interest from within or outside of class material. Students will draw on their thesis statement and annotated bibliography assignment to develop their arguments. Credit will be given to students with a clearly articulated and original thesis argument, appropriate referencing and documentation, and expression of the student's own voice and argument in addition to synthesis, analysis and critique of source material and examples relevant to their topic. More direction for expectations related to the research paper will be given in class or through appointment with the instructor during office hours.

### **Policies and Procedures**

#### **Email**

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail with any and all questions and concerns about the course. I will endeavor to reply promptly, but if you have not heard from me within 48 hours please send your e-mail again. E-mail is best suited for quick questions or clarifications; any student wishing to have a more substantive discussion about the course, assignments, or readings should make an appointment to meet in person or come during office hours. Assignments will not be accepted by e-mail. Students must use their @uwo e-mail account for correspondence.

**Electronic Devices**

Laptops are permitted in class, but should be used to support your learning. Any activity, including laptop use (and especially cell phone use), which distracts from your engagement and attention in class can affect your participation mark. Please be respectful of your peers.

**Late/Missed Assignments**

It is the expectation that students will submit assignments by, and sit tests and/or examinations on, the assigned dates; in the event that this expectation cannot be met, students are advised that the policies and practices of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Social Science will be followed.

Late assignments will only be accepted without penalty if a prior agreement with the Instructor has been made, or if a valid medical certificate is provided through Academic Counselling. If you are seeking academic accommodation, you must make this request through Academic Counselling within 28 days of the missed assignment.

Students who submit assignments late without making a prior agreement with the Instructor, or without approved academic accommodation through Academic Counselling, will be penalized 2% for every 24-hour period past the assignment deadline.

**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. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg117.html> and <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

**Attendance**

This course does not have a final exam; persistent absenteeism may be rendered grounds for failure in the course, in accordance with the policy of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research.

**Course Prerequisites**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Turnitin.com**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com

## Academic Offenses

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/>

As it concerns plagiarism, students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Students may not submit the same assignment for credit in more than one course or program of study in the University or elsewhere. Please see the instructor if you have any questions about academic offenses; not knowing policies related to academic offenses will not be acceptable excuses for engaging in academic dishonesty.

## Note for Students with Disabilities

Please contact [ws-ugrad@uwo.ca](mailto:ws-ugrad@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 for you.

## Drop-Box Policy

Assignments not submitted in class should be deposited in the essay drop box, located beside the Main Office doors of Women's Studies and Feminist Research, Lawson Hall 3260. Papers received between:

**8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday** will be stamped with the current day's date;

**4:00 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. Monday to Friday** will be stamped with the previous day's date;

**3:30 p.m. Friday and 8:30 a.m. Monday** will be stamped with Friday's date.

No essays will be stamped with the previous day's date after 8:30 a.m.

## Class Schedule and Readings

### Week 1 – Introduction: Being Bad – Jan 5

#### Recommended Reading

Waddell, Terrie (2003). "Scrubbers: 'The Great Unwashed' of Australian Cinema." In Lisa French (Ed), *Womenvision: Women and the Moving Image in Australia* (pp. 183-195). Melbourne: Damned Publishing.

### Week 2 – Good Girls and Bad Feminists – Jan 12

Harris, Anita (2004). "The 'Can-Do' Girl Versus the 'At Risk' Girl". In *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 13-36). New York: Routledge.

Gay, Roxane (2014). "Feminism (n.): Plural"; "Bad Feminist: Take One"; and "Bad Feminist: Take Two". In *Bad Feminist* (pp. ix-xiv, 303-313, 314-318). New York: Harper Perennial.

### **Week 3 – Subversion and Looking: Seeing Queerly, or Not – Jan 19**

Burke, Eliza (2006). Feminine Visions: Anorexia and Contagion in Pop Discourse. *Feminist Media Studies*, 6(3), 315-330.

Lewis, Reina and Rolley, Katrina (1996). “Ad(dressing) the Dyke: Lesbian Looks and Lesbian Looking”. In Peter Horne and Reina Lewis (Eds), *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures* (pp. 178- 190). New York: Routledge.

Rundle, Lisa (2004). “Cinematic Superbabes Are Breakin’ My Heart: It’s Hard to Go All the Way with the New Breed of Lady Killers When They Just Won’t Let Go of that Man”. In Emily Pohl-Weary (Ed), *Girls Who Bite Back: Witches, Mutants, Slayers and Freaks* (pp. 305-310). Toronto: Sumach Press.

### **Week 4 – Cultural Sexualization: Subjectivity and Popular Culture – Jan 26**

Levy, Ariel (2005). “Raunch Culture.” In *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (pp. 7-45). New York: Free Press.

Attwood, Feona (2007). Sluts and Riot Grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(3), 233-247.

Nguyen, Tram (2013). From SlutWalks to SuicideGirls: Feminist Resistance in the Third Wave and Postfeminist Era. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 41(3-4), 157-172.

### **Week 5 – Junior Femme Fatale: Agency and Objectification – Feb 2**

Short Essay Due; Discussion of Group Media Project

Lamb, Sharon (2001). “Feminine Ideals: Make-up, Midriffs, and the Pleasures of Being Objectified”. In *The Secret Lives of Girls* (pp. 39-47). New York: The Free Press.

Ringrose, Jessica, Harvey, Laura, Gill, Rosalind, and Livingstone, Sonia (2013). “Teen girls, sexual double standards and ‘sexting’: Gendered value in digital image exchange”. *Feminist Theory*, 14(3), 305-323.

Allen, Louisa (2013). Boys as Sexy Bodies: Picturing Young Men’s Sexual Embodiment at School. *Men and Masculinities*, 16(3), 347-365.

## **Week 6 – Playing Bad Girls: Access to Play as Resistance – Feb 9**

Lamb, Sharon (2001). “Just Practicing: It’s in Her Kiss” and “Naked Barbies”. In *The Secret Lives of Girls* (pp. 27-38, 48- 53). New York: The Free Press.

Robin Bernstein (2011). “Introduction: Playing Innocent: Childhood, Race, Performance” and “Scriptive Things”. In *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (pp. 1-8, 69-91). New York: New York University Press.

## **Week 7 – Producing Dissident Desire: Delinquency, Deviance, and Pleasure– Feb 16**

Thesis Statement and Bibliography Due

Tolman, Deborah and Higgins, Tracy (1996). “How Being a Good Girl Can Be Bad For Girls”. In Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (Eds), *“Bad Girls”/“Good Girls”: Women, Sex and Power in the Nineties* (pp. 205-225). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Zavella, Patricia (2003). Talkin’ Sex: Chicanas and Mexicanas theorize about silences and sexual pleasures. In Gabriela Arredondo (Ed), *Chicana Feminisms: A critical reader* (pp. 228-253). London: Duke University Press.

Springer, Kimberly (2008). “Queering Black Female Heterosexuality”. In Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti (Eds), *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (pp. 77-91). California: Seal Press.

## **Reading Break — Feb 23**

No class

## **Week 8 - Reproductive and Sexual (Ir)responsibility – Mar 2**

Friedman, May. (2013). “100% Preventable”: Teen Motherhood, Morality, and the Myth of Choice. In Guglielmo, Letizia (Eds.) *MTV and Teen Pregnancy: Critical Essays on 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press. 67-78.

Tyler, Imogen. “Chav Mum, Chav Scum” Class disgust in Contemporary Britain. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(1), 17-34.

Potvin, Jacqueline. (2016). Pernicious Pregnancy and Redemptive Motherhood: Narratives of Reproductive Choice in Joss Whedon’s *Angel*. *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies*, 14(1).

Lang, Ariane. (2016). The Year Abortion was Destigmatized on TV. *Buzzfeed Entertainment*.  
[https://www.buzzfeed.com/arianelange/abortions-on-tv-2016?utm\\_term=.fjNpQ5RrZq#.sm4w92gB4o](https://www.buzzfeed.com/arianelange/abortions-on-tv-2016?utm_term=.fjNpQ5RrZq#.sm4w92gB4o)

## **Week 9 – Making Bad Girls Sick (and Sick Girls Bad) – Mar 9**

Vasquez, Carmen (1998). “The Good and the Bad.” In Nancy L. Roth and Katie Hogan (Eds), *Gendered Epidemic: Representations of Women in the Age of AIDS* (pp. 73-82). New York: Routledge.

Braun, Virginia and Gavey, Nicola (1999). ‘Bad Girls’ and ‘Good Girls’: Sexuality and Cervical Cancer. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 22(2), 203-213.

Polzer, Jessica and Knabe, Susan (2009). Good Girls Do...Get Vaccinated: HPV, mass marketing and moral dilemmas for sexually active young women. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 63(11), 869-870.

Cayen, Laura, Polzer, Jessica and Knabe, Susan. (2016). “Tween Girls, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and the Deployment of Female Sexuality in English Canadian Magazines.” In Jessica Polzer and Elaine Power (Eds), *Neoliberal Governance and Health* (pp. 82-107).

## **Week 10 – Bullying and Girl Gangs – Mar 16**

Currie, Dawn and Kelly, Deirdre (2006). “‘I’m Going to Crush You Like a Bug’: Understanding Girls’ Agency and Empowerment”. In Yasmin Jiwani, Candis Steenberg and Claudia Mitchell (Eds), *Girlhood: Redefining the Limits* (pp. 155-172). Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Tafler, Sid (1998). “The Lonely Death of Reena Virk”. *The Reading Room*.  
<http://www.islandnet.com/pwacvic/tafler05.html>

Jiwani, Yasmin (1999). Erasing race: the story of Reena Virk. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 19(3), 178-84.

Chesney-Lind, Meda and Irwin, Katherine (2008). “Pathologizing Girls?: Relational Aggression and Violence Prevention”. In *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence and Hype* (pp. 107-128). New York: Routledge.

## **Week 11 – When Bad Girls Go Bad: Criminality, Representation, and Belonging - Mar 23**

Final Essay Due

Cossman, Brenda (2010). Sexing Citizenship, Privatizing Sex. *Citizenship Studies*, 6(4), 483-506.

Chesney-Lind, Meda and Eliason, Michele (2006). From Invisible to Incurable: The Demonization of Marginalized Women and Girls. *Crime Media Culture*, 2(1), 29-47.

Herman, Didi (2003). Bad Girls changed my life: Homonormativity in a Women’s Prison Drama. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20(2), 141-159.



**Week 12 – Bad Girls: Revenge, Survival, Response – Mar 30**

Schaffner, Laurie (1998). “Do Bad Girls Get a Bum Rap? Sexual Solutions and State Interventions”. In Sherrie A. Inness (Ed), *Millennium Girls: Today’s Girls Around the World* (pp. 269- 295). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Leblanc, Lauraine (1999). “‘I Bet a Steel Capped Boot Could Shut You Up’: Resistance to Public Sexual Harassment”. In *Pretty in Punk: Girls’ Gender Resistance in a Boys’ Subculture* (pp. 196- 217). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Hess, Amanda (Aug. 8 2014). The Rise of the Ironic Man-Hater. *Slate*.  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx\\_factor/2014/08/08/ironic\\_misandry\\_why\\_feminists\\_joke\\_about\\_drinking\\_male\\_tears\\_and\\_banning.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/08/08/ironic_misandry_why_feminists_joke_about_drinking_male_tears_and_banning.html)

**Week 13: Media Project Presentations and Course Wrap-Up – April 6th**

