

The University of Western Ontario (Western University)
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

GSWS 3153F – Bad Girls: Sexual Dissidence and Popular Culture

Instructor: Professor Cayen

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Class: Course runs online and includes asynchronous components like pre-recorded/pre-written lectures and asynchronous discussion posts.

Office Hours: See OWL, or by appointment

Zoom link for Office Hours:

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.

Course Description

This course will examine our recurring fascination with the figure of the “bad girl” and people with dissident sexualities of other genders 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 course will be a balance between the theoretical work which informs the relationship between popular culture and dissident sexuality, and work which looks more closely at how specific types of sexual dissidence, particularly related to adolescent and young adult sexuality, is created, controlled and contested in popular culture.

Prerequisite(s): Women's Studies 2253E or 2273E or 2220E 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 gender.

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 presentations, class discussion, peer feedback, and written reports and essays.

Required Reading

Course readings available without cost via library Course Reading service (link in OWL).

Streaming services required:

CBC Gem (free access, though you may need to sign up for a free account)

Netflix (paid account)

Student Evaluation

Participation - On-going	20%
Short Essay -	25%
Presentation Proposal -	10%
Peer Feedback -	5%
Final Paper -	40%

Description of Assignments

More detail for all assignments will be provided on OWL. See note on deadlines below.

Participation 20%

Due: deadlines included in each OWL lesson

This mark represents a series of smaller weekly activities, including the completion of activities or discussion prompts provided by the professor, and/or the submission of discussion posts.

Short Essay 25%

This paper will take the form of a short 4-5-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.

Presentation Proposal for Final Paper and Peer Feedback 10% + 5%

One-slide PP poster + max 5min pre-recorded audio presentation overviewing your proposed final paper topic and preliminary analysis. Share these with your classmates and provide feedback to each other.

Final Paper: Analyzing Representation

40%

Individually written 8-10-page academic analysis of social media comments/response to a selected public figure or event of the student's choosing. This assignment is designed to give students experience in online/digital research methodologies and the analysis of primary source material: Instagram, facebook, twitter, app reviews, news media, or other social media comments. Outside research is required.