

Note: Previous Course Outline

Gender, Sexuality and Cultural Resistance: Making Culture Jam
WS 3305F – AH 3392F

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

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

Course Description

While popular culture operates to naturalize and distribute dominant discourses about gender and sexuality, it is also a fertile space through which resistance can be enacted. This course examines “common sense” representations of gender and sexuality within Western popular culture and the ways these representations have been confronted and contested-- a process which is increasingly known as “culture jamming.” Precisely because of the public and often commercial nature of popular culture, the course will consider some of the issues raised by the relationships circulating among popular culture, consumption and resistance, including, for example, the increased corporatization of visual, virtual and physical space. The course will provide theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding the fraught relationship between cultural production (understood very broadly) and cultural resistance. The ambivalent nature of this relationship will be explored across a range of texts and practices of resistance and will necessarily require students to be self-reflexive about their own relationship to the kinds of cultural production which reinforces normative ideas about gender and sexuality. This self-reflexivity will be facilitated through both interactive assignments and class discussions.

Learning Objectives

The course will enable students to:

- acquire a complex understanding of the relationship between popular culture, gender and sexuality
- describe the role of popular culture in reproducing societal norms associated with gender and sexuality
- become familiar with some of the historical, theoretical and conceptual issues related to the analysis of popular culture as a potential site of resistance in relation to gender, sexuality, race, class and ability
- investigate how the different technical, institutional and aesthetic elements present within popular culture operate to produce affective and intellectual responses
- explore the limitations and possibilities inherent in cultural production as a site of political and social resistance
- critically explore the relationship between cultural and political resistance

- identify and explore some specific historical and contemporary examples of cultural resistance and co-optation in relation to gender and sexuality, both locally and globally
- be self-reflexive about their own relationship to popular culture and cultural resistance in relation to gender and sexuality

The course will allow students to develop

- critical and analytical thinking skills
- an ability to analyze non-text based forms of cultural production
- oral and written communication skills
- research skills
- an ability to apply theoretical knowledge to assignments which are creative, self-reflexive and have practical applications

Required Reading

There is no textbook to purchase; all readings will be posted to the Course Readings portal: <https://ares.lib.uwo.ca/ares/>

In lieu of money for a course text, please set aside 5\$ for a possible class trip to Museum London.

Student Evaluation

15% Participation/Mini presentations

Our class will run in one of the new WALs (Western Active Learning Space)/pod classrooms, and so we will have many opportunities to share examples of culture jams, protests, memes, and other visual and cultural artifacts in small groups and with the whole class. Participation will be structured around and make use of course readings and concepts, but students are encouraged to follow their curiosity and bring in whatever sparks their interest.

25% Identizine: Popular Culture and Identity Exercise

Production of a magazine cover which speaks to your own issues, concerns, and/or identity and a brief written analysis (3-4 pages) in which you situate your magazine cover within a cultural and critical context.

60% Sites of Resistance Project*

- 20% Individual mark: your portion of a collaborative research dossier
- 15% Team mark: Culture Jam and Poster Presentation
- 25% Individual mark: Critical, situated reflection paper

In teams, you will plan and execute your own culture jam project, presented to the class as a research poster. Your team will first collaborate to produce a research dossier of specific representations within popular cultural production related to gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, ability, and/or nationality, etc, on a topic of your team's choosing. Following this analysis, you will develop potential interventions which begin to address some of the

misconceptions produced by these representations. The assignment ends with an individually-written reflection paper.

*Please don't be intimidated by how much of your mark this project captures – you have a lot of individual control, and we'll be setting aside plenty of class time for you to coordinate with your teams and get feedback on your ideas and plans from your peers and from me.