

NB: This syllabus is provisional and subject to change. Finalized syllabus will be provided by the first day of class

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

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

Lecture: Weds 4:30-7:30pm

Location:

Office hours:

Instructor: Professor Cayen

Office number: TBA

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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.

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 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 through course website or on reserve at Weldon Library. If a text is required for purchase this will be announced shortly (but will also be available on reserve at Weldon).

Student Evaluation

In-Class Media Analysis and Participation	15%
Short Essay	20%
Group Media Project	20%
Paper Proposal	10%
Final Paper	35%

Description of Assignments

In-Class Media Analysis and Participation (15%, on-going)

Throughout the semester, we will view film clips, TV episodes, a sub-set of advertising images, or other media artifacts as companions to the week’s theme. Following the viewing, you will conduct a theoretical analysis of the media piece in groups, with guiding questions generated through class discussion or provided by the instructor based on the week’s reading. All students should come to class with materials read and notes taken in order to be prepared to contribute to this analysis. Each group will summarize their analysis for a class discussion and wrap-up.

Short Essay (20%, Due Oct 17)

This paper will take the form of a short 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%, Due Nov 21)

This group media project will entail the creation of a media resource (collaborative website, ‘zine, advertising/public service announcement campaign, short video, etc) which foregrounds the way 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 on Oct 3. Following this initial

discussion/brainstorming, the class will be divided into small groups (3-5) 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 class on Nov 21. Each group will present their part of the project in the final week of class. Students are expected to be present and prepared for both the group project discussion on Oct 3 and the project presentation on Nov 21. 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. This project is meant to 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.

Paper Proposal (10%, Due Nov 7)

Each student will prepare an introduction to their final paper topic, including a tentative argument or thesis statement, an outline of your theoretical and methodological approach, and a description and justification of any primary source materials included for analysis. Students will situate their proposed topic within the course and draw connections to themes of bad girls and social or sexual dissidence; however, students are not limited to the topics covered within the course. You should cite this work and identify sources and research that will be useful to you, but you do not need to provide annotations for your sources. We will workshop these paper ideas on Oct 31 and failure to attend and participate will result in a reduced grade.

Final Essay (35%, Due Dec 5)

The final paper (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.