Course title: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Popular Culture
Course number: GEND 3001 CIEE
Language of instruction: English
U.S. Semester Credits: 3
Contact Hours: 45
Term: Summer 2020

Course Description

“Popular culture is the stage where we rehearse our identities.”
-- José Esteban Muñoz

Through this course, students will apply a critical lens to the representation of gender, race, and sexuality in popular cultural media including German TV, film, radio, the Internet, music, magazines, and literature. Comparisons will be made with similar representations in other European countries and the United States. Course materials pay special attention to questions of other identity markers such as ethnicity, economic status, disability, and the body. The course combines key concepts and theoretical frameworks in critical theory and cultural studies with analyses of media and popular cultural sites. This course will include online lectures and virtual explorations of museums and websites for community groups and NGOs promoting awareness of gender, race, and sexuality in the community.

Learning Objectives

When students have reached the end of this course, they are expected to:

- Be familiar with the history and dominant forms of popular culture, particularly in Germany;
- Be able to address the mechanisms by which popular cultures serve as the dominant site of representations of identity;
- Have a basic understanding of the formal and institutional parameters of popular culture in Germany, including the production, delivery and trade of visual and written media, as well as the rapidly changing practices of consuming popular culture in the internet age;
- Process, engage with, and interrogate theories of popular culture, specifically as they pertain to questions of identity formation;
- Show a deep understanding of the creation, maintenance and pop-cultural representation of the interconnected social categories of gender, race, and sexuality;
- Apply theories of popular culture and identity to pop-cultural artifacts, both orally and in writing;
- Understand and comment on the complex relationship between the creators, distributors, critics, and consumers of popular culture, and the key role played by media conglomerates therein;
- Identify and be sensitive to the power relationships that undergird the representation of gender, race, and sexuality in American and German popular culture -- and society at large;
- Have become more discerning and critical consumers of film and television.
Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Popular Culture – except for an interest in popular culture and its representation of gender, race, and sexuality.

Methods of Instruction

This course runs for four weeks, and will be divided into four corresponding units: (1) key themes in the study of popular culture; (2) theorizing gender, race, and sexuality; (3) representations of gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture and (4) connecting the dots: case studies in gender, race, and sexuality in Dutch, European and American popular culture.

The course will be taught using online lectures, seminars, case study discussions, presentations or recordings as well as film screenings and assigned readings. Online activities will involve group work and critical discussion groups considering and arguing on key debates around gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture.

Since this class is dedicated to understanding how the representation of gender, race, and sexuality inflects notions of identity, students will be expected to either watch, read or listen -- and take extensive notes on -- a number of films, television shows, books, and songs.

Assessment and Final Grade

Students’ final grade will be based on the following:

1. Individual Presentation  15%
2. Reading Guide  10%
3. Reflective Essays  20%
4. Final Creative Project  20%
5. Critical Self-Analysis  15%
6. Participation:   20%

Class Requirements

1. Individual Presentation

Students will prepare and record a presentation of approximately 10-15 minutes based on one of the theoretical texts we read in class. Students will be given the opportunity to select a text of their choice within the first 48 hours of the start of the course; otherwise, a text will be assigned to each student.

The presentation will introduce relevant background information about the author(s) of the text, clarify new terminology and concepts, and summarize and critique the text’s argument. Remember that to critique a text is not the same as to criticize a text! Students should evaluate the positives and negatives that are inherent in every argument – what new doors does it open up and what new questions does it pose, but also what are the blind spots that it overlooks and what are the limitations of its applicability?

Students will also formulate a discussion question that connects the text to a concrete example of popular culture and moderate student responses with the help of the instructor.
The first session of class will provide an example of this assignment for students to use as a model.

Time on task = 10 Hours

2. Reading Guide

As a supplement to the recorded presentation and the theoretical text, students will also prepare a reading guide for the class. The reading guide should be two pages in length and should include the following elements:

- Proper bibliographical information according to either MLA, Chicago or APA style - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html
- Necessary background information about the author(s) and/or the intellectual context
- Summary of the main arguments
- Most important, controversial or intriguing quotes from the text (with page numbers)

The first session of class will provide an example of this assignment for students to use as a model.

Time on task = 8 Hours

3. Reflective Essays

In some of our sessions, part of students’ tasks will be to explore the collection of a museum virtually or to engage with the website of an NGO or community organization in Berlin that is active around the topics of gender, race and/or sexuality. Of these “co-curricular excursions,” students are required to write a reflective essay on one excursion from the first two weeks of class and one from the second two weeks of class.

Reflective essays should not merely be a list of items in a museum’s collection or the textual equivalent of a site map for a website but rather should give a meaningful summary of the structure and content of the website along with its connection to our topics. Reflective essays should be approximately 750 words and reference at least one text from our course.

Time on task = 12 Hours

4. Final Creative Project

Because we will be working with artifacts of popular culture as the primary subject matter of this class, students will create their own contributions to popular culture as their final project, addressing the interconnectedness of gender, race, and sexuality. There are no limits to the form – a bus stop ad, a fictionalized interview in People magazine, a pop song, a series of social media contributions, trailer for a new TV show or movie, a short story, a line of clothing, make-up tutorials, etc.

Time on task = 12 Hours

5. Critical Self-Analysis

As a companion to the creative project, students will also write a critical self-analysis of their
project. This essay should be approximately 1000 words and explore your inspiration and creative process, the connection to theoretical concepts and examples of popular culture from our class, and your own assessment of its significance (i.e. how it advances discussions about the representation of gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture). The essay should also include proper citations and a bibliography (in MLA, Chicago or APA style) that references at least three works from our class.

Time on task = 16 Hours

6. Participation

Participation is defined as meaningful contribution in the digital classroom, using the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to prepare in advance of each recorded session and regularly engage with the resources, discussions, reflective assignments, and all other online learning activities. Students are required to demonstrate engagement with course materials, for example, through insightful, constructive comments and by using subject-appropriate terminology in: online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after viewing the presentations of others), interaction with guest speakers, where available, and submissions related to other outside-of-class activities. Students should ensure that submitted commentary balances opinions, general impressions, and specific and thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Grades are based on the content, depth, and quality of the aforementioned types of meaningful contributions as measured per the Participation grading rubric in Canvas. Students are also expected to use the Canvas inbox for communicating any clarifying questions they may want to ask about assessments or other course requirements.

Technology Requirements

Participation requires access to a computer with microphone (a headset and microphone are preferred over built-in sound devices) and webcam; a stable and strong internet connection; and a quiet and well-lit environment.

Attendance Expectations: In an asynchronous online learning format, attendance takes the form of active student engagement:

- in instructional activities, course content, course tools
- with the course instructor, other students, and
- by timely completion of all assessments.

“Attendance” is more than just logging into the course on Canvas. Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities in order to comply with this requirement. Academically related activities include, but are not limited to:

- submitting an academic assignment;
- taking an exam or quiz;
- attending a study group that is assigned by the instructor;
- participating in an online discussion about academic matters, designed by the instructor; or
- initiating contact in Canvas with the instructor to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

Academically related activities do NOT include activities where a student may be present, but not academically engaged, such as:

- logging into an online class without active participation
- contributing to or engaging in the CIEE Orientation or Community Course(s)

First Week of Class: Online courses officially commence on the first day of the term. Students must
demonstrate engagement in class by no later than day 5 of the term, or risk being administratively dropped from the course with no opportunity to re-enroll. Students administratively dropped from the course for failure to engage will be considered withdrawn from the program and subject to CIEE financial withdrawal policies and fees.

**Duration of Course:** Continued, regular class engagement is required throughout the scheduled duration of the course, and disengagement will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for completing courses online, consistent failure to engage in the course on a weekly basis (defined as failing to engage for two or more weeks of online learning) will result in a formal written warning from the CIEE Center Director.

CIEE instructors / staff will monitor student engagement on a weekly basis.

The weekly schedule below outlines due dates for asynchronous learning activities for this course.

*N.B. Please note the class schedule is subject to change if opportunities arise to enhance the curriculum.*

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Class 1.1** *Introduction to Course and Popular Culture*
We will explore what motivated everyone to sign up for this course and what we can expect from this course. We will also start to consider what exactly we mean when we talk about popular culture and what it means to you.

**Readings:**

*Time on Task = 2.5 Hours*

**Class 1.2** *Introduction to Gender and Sexuality*
This session will introduce students to some core concepts when theorizing notions of gender and sexuality as well as their connections to popular culture.

**Readings:**

*Time on Task = 6 Hours*

**Class 1.3** *Introduction to Race and Ethnicity*
This session will introduce students to core concepts in race and ethnicity studies by looking at the construction of hero and villain roles, the invention of race, and the process of stereotyping.
Readings:


Week 2

Class 2.1 First Wave Feminism
In this session, we will look at early feminist movements from the 19th and into the first half of the 20th century – both ones that explicitly called themselves so and ones that took on that function by default.

Readings:


Time on Task = 6 Hours

Class 2.2 Third Wave Feminism
Students will engage with contemporary theories and examples of what feminism, femininity and female identity look like in the later part of the 20th and first decades of the 21st century.

Readings:

- Online Excursion #1: *Frauenzentrum Schokofabrik* (Women’s Center “Chocolate Factory”)

Time on Task = 5 Hours

Class 2.3 Masculinities
In this session, students will interrogate what it means to be a “man” and how various forms of masculinity have been constructed according to the standards of the period and the culture.

Readings:
Class 2.4 Beyond Dichotomies
In this session, we will question the need for dichotomous thinking when it comes to gender and explore theoretical suggestions for another way forward as well as examine German and American instances of deconstructing gender.

Readings:
- Excerpts from RuPaul’s Drag Race. World of Wonders Productions, 2009-Present.
- Online Excursion #2: House of Presents online drag show (optional live stream or recordings). Monster Ronson’s Ichiban Kareoke (Berlin-Friedrichshain).

Time on Task = 6 Hours

Week 3
Class 3.1 Magnus Hirschfeld and Weimar Culture
This session will explore what was arguably the invention of “sexology” by a gay German-Jewish man, Magnus Hirschfeld, and take a closer look at representations of sexuality between the two World Wars in Germany.

Readings:
- Anders als die Anderen (Different from the Others). Directed by Richard Oswald, performance by Conrad Veidt, Richard-Oswald-Film GmbH, 1919.

Time on Task = 4 Hours

Latest Submission Date for 1st Reflective Essay

Class 3.2 (Homo)Sexuality in Divided Germany
Through a series of films and academic articles, students will engage with the forms and representations of sexuality in divided Germany – the capitalist, democratic West under the careful eye of the US and the communist, socialist East under the watchful gaze of the Soviet Union.

Readings:
• *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist perserv, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt.* (It is Not the Homosexual Who is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives). Directed by Rosa von Praunheim, Bavaria Atelier, 1971.
• *Coming Out.* Directed by Heiner Carow, performances by Matthias Freihof and Dagmar Manzel, DEFA, 1989.

Time on Task = 6 Hours

**Class 3.3 Contemporary Berlin Scene**
Students will have the opportunity to engage in a guided, independent survey of the Berlin Institute for Queer Theory and its manifold connections to grassroots projects and cultural productions in the city.

**Readings:**
• Online Excursion #3: Institute for Queer Theory.

Time on Task = 4 Hours

**Class 3.4 Sexuality in Globalized Pop Culture**
For this session, we will analyze excerpts of the TV show *Sense8* to consider representations of sexuality and identity in various cultural contexts around the world and also interrogate expressions of sexuality and identity through fan-fiction adaptations of movies, TV shows, video games, pop music and other popular media.

**Readings:**
• Excerpts from [https://archiveofourown.org/](https://archiveofourown.org/)

Time on Task = 5 Hours

**Week 4**

**Class 4.1 Germany’s Colonial Past**
The lectures, readings and guided online exploration of the German Historical Museum’s online collection will help students examine the cultural history of racial difference and othering in the German context. From cultural artifacts to testimonies of Afro-German women, this session will take a varied approach in pursuing the roots of German attitudes about race.

**Readings:**
• Artifacts, advertisements and posters from the Lebendiges Museum Online (online collection of the German History Museum): dhm.de/lemo
Class 4.2  Race and Racism under National Socialism
Besides learning about definitions and constructions of race and racial difference under the National Socialist regime – both on the basis of skin color and religions, students will also engage with the direct effects on popular culture, namely Germany’s first “boy band” – The Comedian Harmonists.

Readings:

Class 4.3  Race and Racism in Divided Germany
In this session, the materials and lecture will introduce students to a range of perspectives on race and racism in West and East Germany. Students will critically analyze testimonials from visible minorities in the West, a filmic representation of an interracial and intergenerational relationships in the West, and the exotification of Otherness in the East.

Readings:
- *Angst essen Seelen auf*. Directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, performances by Brigitte Mira and El Hedi ben Salem, Tango Film, 1974.

Class 4.4  Race and Racism in Contemporary Berlin
Our final session will wrap up our nuanced examination of race and racism in Germany with a critical look at the present-day situation in Germany. Against the backdrop of the refugee crisis and the rise of political right, student will interpret the film *We are Young. We are Strong* – a 2014 film by a German-Afghan director based on xenophobic attacks in 1992. They will however also consider positive developments in the form of city initiatives to combat discrimination. Finally, students will be challenged to formulate short analyses of various advertisements, political campaign posters and other print material to raise questions about the representation of race, gender and sexuality in contemporary German media.

Readings:
- *We are Young. We are Strong*. Directed by Burhan Qurbani, teamWorx Television & Film GmbH, 2014.
Online Excursion #4: Berlin State Office for Equal Treatment and Against Discrimination

Time on Task = 8 Hours

Latest Submission Date for 2nd Reflective Essay
Latest Submission Date for Final Creative Project
Latest Submission Date for Critical Self-Analysis

Course Materials


Anders als die Anderen (Different from the Others). Directed by Richard Oswald, performance by Conrad Veidt, Richard-Oswald-Film GmbH, 1919.


Der blaue Engel (The Blue Angel). Directed by Josef von Sternberg, performances by Marlene Dietrich and Emil Jannings, UFA, 1930.


*Nicht der Homosexuelle ist perserv, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt.* (It is Not the Homosexual Who is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives). Directed by Rosa von Praunheim, Bavaria Atelier, 1971.


*We are Young. We are Strong*. Directed by Burhan Qurbani, teamWorx Television & Film GmbH, 2014.