CIEE Global Institute – Cape Town

Course name: Media, Gender and Identity
Course number: (GI) COMM 3009 CTSA
Programs offering course: Cape Town Open Campus
Open Campus Track: Communications, Journalism, and New Media Track
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description

In this course, students will apply a critical lens to representations of gender and identity in contemporary media. Taking gender and sexuality as a critical starting point, we will examine the construction of identities under the simultaneous influence of race, class, and nationality. By focusing on popular representations in both the US and the country where the course is taking place, we will gain a deeper understanding of identities as both culturally specific and influenced by global media. Instead of suggesting that contemporary identities are determined by what we see on TV screens, computers, and in local movie theaters, the course seeks to describe the complex interactions between national audiences and concrete media productions, and analyzes how different audiences reproduce or challenge traditional concepts and stereotypes of gender, race, sexuality, and class. By combining the study of theoretical texts with examples from the advertisement industry, television, the movies, and other forms of contemporary cultural expression, it offers a comprehensive and thorough introduction to contemporary studies of the media and identity.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

● Understand how gender is central to sexuality, class, and race operating in the wider socio-cultural context since the 19th century

● Develop and acquire knowledge of theories of articulation and hegemony, and apply to representations of gender and identity in popular culture
• Examine popular culture as a site of struggle and contestations, seeing representations, for example, as attempts to stabilize social meanings and subject to socio-historical change.

• Critically analyze classical theories and approaches to studying gender, sexuality and race, and apply them to case studies.

• Contextualize the links between popular culture and debates about “identity”

• Evaluate how subjective understandings of gender, race and sexuality affect experiences of popular culture

Course Prerequisites

None. An introductory-level communications or gender studies course is helpful but not required.

Methods of Instruction

The course follows largely a Cultural Studies approach to studying popular culture. Through interactive lectures, students will learn about the different theoretical ideas underlying the study of representations of gender, sexuality, race, and class identity, and apply these concepts to case studies. The course hopes to equip students with the theoretical tools to conduct their own analysis of popular culture. Through class discussions and debates, and close readings of key primary and secondary texts, students will enhance their ability to “read” popular media culturally and sociologically. Engaged student participation is crucial, and productive controversy will be encouraged. Since popular culture and social media is so intertwined, each session will begin with a ‘spotlight’ on something went viral the day before. Students will take turns in identifying and contributing these ‘spotlights’ so that the warm-up activity of each session (except when going on excursions) comprises a basic media literacy and critical analysis exercise. High participation and engagement on Canvas Discussion and Collaboration forums will be expected in order to cover as wide a variety of media as possible. Finally, this class will largely depend on a ‘flipped classroom,’ meaning that students are expected to view footage prior to class in order to maximize the discussion time in class.
**Assessment and Final Grade**

1. Response Papers (x 3): 20%
2. Group Presentation: 20%
3. Photo Essay: 15%
4. Final Essay: 25%
5. Class participation: 20%

TOTAL: 100%

**Course Requirements**

3 Critical Response Papers

The response papers should be 750 words minimum. In each paper, the student is asked to practice media literacy and analysis in response to a specific prompt, provided by instructor one week before the due date. All prompts will stem from current, freshly released material on social media, TV, film, animation, comics, radio, internet sites, photography, music, magazines, newspapers, theatre, literature or news sources.

Each Critical Engagement needs to address the following 3 questions:

Q1): How are gender, sexuality and ethnicity being represented? [ie. What are the characteristics, or features, of representation? Are certain devices, or strategies used? Such as irony, humour, stereotypes, gender transgression, shock tactics etc.]

Q2): What is the role of this popular cultural form? [NB: There can be more than one role]

Q3): Who is the intended audience? [NB: There can be more than one audience. For example, public service announcements can be pitched to more than one audience] Students will be graded according to how successfully they support their analyses of their chosen popular cultural forms.
**Group Presentation**

During Session 1:1, students will be paired into teams of 2. Each team will be responsible for a warm-up activity for the Week 2, 3, 4, and 5 sessions. Each team needs to select a current (not older than 5 days) example from social media and present it at the beginning of class. The team should then offer a preliminary analysis of the selection and facilitate a brief group discussion to accomplish a deeper analysis of how subjective understandings of gender, race and sexuality affect our diverse experiences of the chosen media sample. All combined, this should take no more than 15 minutes. Students will be evaluated according to quality of analysis and ability to prompt/facilitate discussion.

**Popular Culture Photo Essay**

The photo essay should consist of a minimum of 10, but no more than 12, photographs. Each photograph needs to be accompanied by 100 words minimum. The task is to select 10-12 photographs that exemplify how framing theory can be applied to popular culture. This may occur within one photograph or in a sequence of photographs. Basically, framing theory helps us analyze how media focuses our attention on events or concepts by placing them within a field of meaning. Students are welcome to explore topics outside of the recommended list, but the subject choice must relate to gender in some way or other. Recommended topics: who/what are feminists; promoting Cape Town as tourist destination; US/SA elections 2019/2020; who are the millennials; gun control debate; prison reform debate; abortion/pro-life debate; what is gentrification; (il)legal immigration debates; consumer culture; post-modern (identity) crisis; gender non-conforming practices; politics of protest.

**Final Essay OR Podcast, 1500 words minimum**

For the final project, students have the option of either writing a 1500-word research essay or producing a podcast, of which the script corresponds to the same word count. The final essay/podcast should feature a research question as its title (or as tagline to the title). Each student must identify a research topic of personal interest by the end of
week 3. Upon approval, students begin their individual research projects. A minimum of three academic articles/publications should substantiate this research in addition to at least 2 media sources. By the end of week 4, students are required to submit a rudimentary outline or a first draft via email. At the beginning of Week 5, each student is required to meet for a 20-minute feedback session, after which students have approximately ten days to complete the essay/podcast. Criteria for evaluation will be explained in detail during Week 3, but include (a) word choice and language use, (b) reflexivity and positioning, (c) accurate and relevant referencing, (d) quality of analysis and media literacy.

**Participation**

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom and utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate that they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

**Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.
For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>1 content class, or up to 2 language classes</td>
<td>no warning or grade penalty, but participation may be impacted depending on the lesson format.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes</td>
<td>warning letter must be sent, and the student gradebook is marked down by 3%. Participation may have an additional grade impact depending on the lesson formats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>3 content classes, or 5 language classes</td>
<td>student fails course and is notified in writing</td>
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Weekly Schedule

**Week 1**  
**Orientation Week**

Class 1:1  
Introduction

This session introduces the key terms and concepts that we will utilize throughout the course, such as practices of representation, popular culture and hegemony. Our main point of discussion is that representations of gender, race and sexuality connect meaning and language to culture and that there are numerous theoretical approaches to analyzing representations in popular culture.

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Reading**


*Due: Response Paper 1*

**Week 2**  
**The Politics of Representation**

Class 2:1  
Understanding Representation

The lecture component of this session will lay out some foundational theory around the politics of representation, and what this has meant in the United States vs South Africa. We then dive into specific case studies by examining the phenomenon of moral panics around gender and sexuality. We will focus on the ways in which colonial authorities cast 'African' bodies as pathological and inherently sexualized. We will read Desirée Lewis' important piece on the ways in which African bodies were represented (and the ways
these stereotypes still influence ideas around gender and sexuality today) and John Pape's work on 'black peril' scares in colonial Zimbabwe.

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Reading**

Spivak, Gayatri. 1986 essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

**Required Viewing**

Miss Representation, 2011 documentary by Jennifer Siebel Newsom

**Class 2:2 Popular Culture**

During the first part of this lecture, we will look at the category of ‘popular culture’ and discuss the way in which Cultural Studies has sought to undermine the historical distinction between ‘high art’ and ‘popular culture’. We will look at the historical precedents for this divide within Western discourse and also discuss its implications on cultural contexts outside of the West. The second part of this session examines how the U.S culture wars have been transported to the African continent and the dire impact this has had for sexual and gender minorities. We will consider the ways in which moral panics against gender and sexuality serve as a useful distraction for the State, thus enabling it to scape-goat social ills onto demonized groups, rather than taking responsibility for socio-economic failings themselves. Sylvia Tamale dubs this as the "politics of distraction."

**Required Reading**
In this class we discuss various approaches to studying representations of gender in popular culture, including treating representations as reflective of dominant social ideologies and as manifestations of underlying psychoanalytical tendencies. Implicated in these are different ways of imagining the subject and audiences. By applying these theories to case studies, we critically assess their value and limitations. While feminist critics largely spearheaded analyses of representations of gender, we will also study the representations of men and masculinity in the class.

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Reading**

Class 3:2 Culture Clashes

Required Reading


*Due: Response Paper 3*

Week 4 Problems of Discourse

Class 4:1 Gender and Sexuality – Discursive Analysis

This class expands on the previous week’s discussions and complicates these discussions with issues of sexuality as intertwined with representations of gender norms. Through a critical reading of Butler’s theories on gender and sexuality, we will question the underlying problems of essentialism in mainstream gender discourse and consider how these are used to marginalize sexual minority groups.

Required Reading


Class 4:2 Issues of Class and National Identity

We discuss the question: What is the ‘South African’ in the ‘South African’ nation? Starting with the issue of culture and the notion of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ we will analyze representations of culture and its links to ‘national character’ or ‘mentality’ in popular culture, unpacking the question of the difference between African and South African identity in the context of South Africa.
Required Reading


Required Viewing

Miki Redelinghuys’ narrative documentary ‘This Land’ available at: https://afridocs.net/watch-now/this-land/ and excerpts from “I am Woman Leap of Faith” series

Class 4:3 Gender as performance

In this class we will attempt to rethink gender and sexuality as performance. By applying these ideas to case studies in popular media, we will consider how heterosexuality and sexual minority identities are performed, and look at how the performances may differ according to the performer and ideas about audiences. We will question underlying assumptions about how the sexuality of performers affects their representations of sexuality.

*Due: Photo Essay*

Week 5 Let’s talk about Race

Class 5:1 Race in South Africa, Race in the USA

Class 5:2 Intersectionalities

In this class we discuss representations of different ethnicities in popular cultures. In a vein similar to that of previous weeks, we challenge race as an essential category and critically analyze the representations of the different races – or the lack of it – in popular
culture. Ultimately, we consider how representations of race, gender, sexuality and class are intimately linked and cannot be analyzed separately.

**Required Reading**

**Suggested Reading**


**Class 5:3** Representations and Deconstructions of Race

**Required Reading**

**Suggested Reading**

**Week 6** Queer Theory

**Class 6:1** Queer Theory

In this class we will consider the course topics from the millennial’s perspective drawing on Queer theory and the concept of fluidity in terms of gender, sexuality, and cultural and ethnic identities. Adding to and informing the discussion will be the context of generation and age. We will also consider how the role of popular culture has changed since the rise of the Internet and mobile technology and as these have become more integral to everyday life.

**Required Reading**

Class 6:2       Discussion and Summary

We will use this final class to discuss the course and the way in which it has influenced us personally. We will attempt to summarize the main learning of the course and its readings.

Due: Final essay

Required Readings


Suggested Reading (consider for Final Essay)


