CIEE Global Institute - Madrid

Course name: Media, Gender and Identity
Course number: (GI) COMM 3009 MASP
Programs offering course: 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 European 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 participating in this course, you 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.

Methods of Instruction

The course follows largely a Cultural Studies approach to studying popular culture. Students will learn 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 representations in the future. Students will be encouraged to challenge pre-existing assumptions about gender, sexual and racial norms as they are represented in popular media. Through class discussions and debates, critical readings of key primary and secondary texts, and students’ written reactions, the students will enhance their ability to “read” popular media culturally and sociologically. Engaged student participation is crucial, and productive controversy will be encouraged.

Assessment and Final Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical response to popular cultural forms (x2)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Course Requirements

**Critical response to popular culture forms**
Each student is required to write two critical engagements:

1. A 500 word response to the 2015 publicity campaign of the cleaning products brand “Asevi” (links will be made available ahead of time).
2. A 500 word response to Manu Chao’s song “Clandestino”, and one song of the student’s choice with a similar topic (a link and a translation of the lyrics will be provided in due course). Each critical response needs to address the following 3 questions:

Q1): How are gender, sexuality, and/or ethnicity being represented? [ie. What are the characteristics, or features, of representation? Are certain devices, or strategies used? Such as irony, humor, stereotypes, gender transgression, shock tactics etc.]
Q2): What is the role of this popular cultural form?
Q3): Who is the intended audience? Students will be graded according to how successfully they support their analyses of their chosen popular cultural forms.

Group Presentation
Each group of students will present on the relationship between two Spanish popular cultural forms and the course themes, including television, film, radio, internet memes and blogs, photography, music, magazines, theatre, literature, etc. Students can choose any two popular cultural forms but their presentation must link to at least two of the course themes: historical evolution of gypsies on screen, feminist vs. male chauvinist journalism in Spain, Spanish drama, popular music, etc., the 'low' status of popular culture as central to how it is simultaneously produced and consumed, and the role of the audience in popular culture.

Participation
Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, 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 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.

Midterm and Final Essays
Each of the two essays (1,500 words each) will analyze the role of Spanish popular culture. Suggested essay titles are provided but students are allowed to design their own titles. But if students decide to write their own titles, they must get their titles approved with the instructor before they submit the final copy.

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:

<table>
<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 classes, or up to 2 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; <strong>written warning</strong></td>
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Weekly Schedule

**Week 1**

**Introduction**
This week 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. We also discuss how the emergence of Cultural Studies in the UK during the late 1960s challenged prevailing ideas of popular culture as an inherently ‘low’ cultural form because Cultural Studies as a theory and practice, through people like Stuart Hall, questioned the simplistic opposition between ‘high’ literary culture versus ‘low’ popular culture. Thus Cultural Studies legitimized popular culture as an academic topic. We will also discuss how Spanish Cultural Studies emerged and has evolved in response to popular culture.

Core readings:
- Hall – The work of representation (1997)
- Graham & Labanyi – Culture and Modernity: The Case of Spain (1996)

**Week 2**

**Popular Culture and Issues of Class and National Identity.**
This week, we elaborate on the main analytical concepts underpinning the course, namely articulation and hegemony. Using these concepts, we discuss the question: What is the ‘British’ in British popular culture, or the ‘Spanish’ in Spanish popular culture? Starting with the issue of class, which has been the focus of Cultural Studies since its early days, we analyze representations of class and its links to ‘national character’ or ‘mentality’ in popular culture.

Core readings:
- Hall – Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’

Secondary readings:
- Fiske – Popular Discrimination
- Lull – Hegemony
Week 3  **Dismantling Patriarchy**

This week we discuss various approaches to studying representations of gender in popular culture, including the reception of Gender Theory in Spain as well as debates revolving around gender. 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. Not only will we focus on feminist criticism about the historical representation of gender—including gender violence—, but we will also study the representations of men and masculinity—as well as notions like macho and chauvinism— in class. Our analyses will be situated within larger social and historical trends in the Western world. We will also question whether representations of gender are intertwined with other themes and discuss the limitations of focusing solely on issues of gender. Core readings:

Antón – Gendered images: constructions of masculinity and femininity in television advertising (Barry & Morgan-Tamosunas Ch. 18)

Secondary readings: Andres & Brooksbank – Re-registering Spanish feminism (Barry & Morgan-Tamosunas Ch. 21)

❖ Midterm essay due

Week 4  **From Otherness to Normalization**

This week expands on the previous week’s discussions and complicates these discussions with issues of sexuality as intertwined with representations of gender norms. Through a reading of Queer Theory, we will analyze the shift from marginalization of sexual minority groups to the current state of affairs, discussing if normalization has been fully achieved or if it is a mere mirage, especially after the pass of egalitarian marriage in several counties. By applying these ideas to case studies in popular media, we will consider how heterosexuality and sexual minority identities have been performed diachronically, and look at how the performances may differ according to the performer and the potential audience in a concrete moment. We will question underlying assumptions about how the sexuality of performers affects their representations of sexuality.

Core readings:

Butler – Gender performance: An interview with Judith Butler;
Butler – Imitation and gender insubordination Secondary reading: 6
Yep – The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies

Week 5  
**A racial melting pot?**
Together with theories of gender and sexuality emerging from feminist studies, attention on racial representations expanded the focus of Cultural Studies beyond class issues. This week we discuss representations of ethnic minorities in European popular cultures, with an emphasis in two major Spanish examples of racial otherness: the gypsies and the migratory movements since the 1990s. In a vein similar to that of previous weeks, we challenge race as an essential category and critically analyze the representations of the gypsies and immigrants – 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.

Core readings: Corkill – Race, immigration and multiculturalism in Spain (Barry & Morgan-Tamosunas Ch. 4)

Week 6  
**Final Remarks and Conclusions**
In this final week, we will have a special ‘farewell’ experiential activity (in the form of a guest speaker, an outing, a screening, etc. TBD), which will be related to some of the main issues we have looked at in the course, namely class, gender, sexuality and race, in 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 as integral to everyday life.

Readings:
Gutiérrez San Miguel et al. – Gender roles and the Spanish media, a three-decades-long comparative study

❖ Final essay due

**Readings**
Most week’s core readings will come from the course’s main textbook and one or two other articles that will be available online, or on Canvas. These core readings are compulsory and the reading, understanding and analysis of them constitute a major part of the course’s assessment. There will also be a list of supplementary readings for students to use on their coursework (essays and presentations).
**Course textbook**


**Other core readings**


**Supplementary readings**


