

**CST 222 - Race and Gender in Film and the Media**

Elizabeth Ortiz, Assistant Professor of Communication

*Cedar Crest College, Fall Semester 2008*

Mon. 1-3:30pm, Miller 33

Office Hours: Hartzel Hall, 228, TBA & by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

As consumers and producers of media, it is important that communication majors and non-communication majors critically examine the role of media in forming our beliefs about race, ethnicity and gender in society. Media have the ability to shape, challenge and uphold our beliefs about others and ourselves. Through this course, students will explore through readings, discussion, and research the social construction of race and gender. Specifically, the class will focus on critically viewing race and gender in film, television and print media.

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing race and gender issues related to media ownership, media representations, and the media workforce. Since the mass media constitute only one social institution among many others, we will be drawing on research and theories from other disciplines-- history, Women's Studies, sociology, literary studies, and cultural studies--to discuss the impact of the media on our concept of race and gender identities.

Additionally, we will explore the connections among media representations of race and gender and other social constructions, which will include class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability.

Please note: Throughout this course we will discuss issues that may cause a myriad of emotions. It is important that we listen to our fellow classmates and although we may not always agree with other's opinions, we will respect their right to have them. The readings and discussions we have in class will challenge you to think beyond your comfort zone and I invite you to challenge those readings as well as voice your belief in them. This class is not about "right" or "wrong," and although we will discuss "facts" your opinion and interpretation of the materials is welcome and appreciated.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Benshoff, H.M. & Griffin, S. (2004). *America on film: Representing race, class, gender, and sexuality at the movies.*

Holtzman, L. (2000). *Media Messages: What film, television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender and sexual orientation.*

Additional Readings may be assigned in class. They will be available from the professor or put on reserve in the library. If you miss a class handout, additional copies will usually be available outside of my office.

**Course Objectives and Outcomes:**

Through active involvement in this course, students will:

1. Learn to critically examine media representations and their role in shaping, reinforcing, or challenging our concepts of race and gender.
2. Acquire analytical skills to explore race and gender issues in media organizations and understand diverse audiences' responses to media representations.
3. Learn about different theories and approaches to doing research on race, gender, and the mass media.
4. Develop the ability to speak and write honestly and sensitively about race and gender.

### Class Format

Classes will consist of lectures, small and large group discussions, and video presentations:

Lectures: Lectures for this course will not last the entire class period. Lectures will primarily be short oral presentations. The primary objectives of the lectures will be to clarify difficult concepts, to emphasize important ideas, to supplement assigned readings, and to answer students' questions.

Class Discussions will be a major part of the class. We will use class time to discuss readings both in small and large groups. It is important to complete the assigned readings so that you can be an active participant in class discussions.

Video presentations: For all the video presentations, I will have a list of questions on the video that will be provided in class. It is your responsibility to get the list of questions from me if you miss a video. Please check with me if you miss any of these taped in-class video presentations.

The following is the grading scale for this course:

A	= 1000-930	C	= 769-740
A-	= 929-900	C-	= 739-700
B+	= 899-870	D+	= 699-670
B	= 869-840	D	= 669-640
B-	= 839-800	D-	= 639-600
C+	= 799-770	F	= 599 and below

Assignment	Value	Points	Due
Group Paper	15%	150	Dec 8
Group Presentation	10%	100	Dec 8
Annotated Bibliography	10%	100	Oct 27
Quizzes (2)	20%	200	Sept 29 & Nov 24
Movie Analyses	20%	100	Oct 6 & Dec 1
In-class and at home assignments (reactions)	15%	150	Weekly
Participation/Attendance	10%	100	Weekly

### Participation/Attendance:

It is important that you are on time for class and miss no more than 2 classes. Participation is mandatory. Participation means taking an active role in class discussions and projects. In-class discussions are **central** to this course. Students will earn up to 100 points for participation. Obviously you can't participate if you do not attend class and since we meet 14 times this semester, one absence is 7% of your participation grade.

*There will be no make-ups for in-class assignments despite the reason for your absence. With this said, missing one in class assignment will not have a huge impact on your final grade. You should choose to miss class only when necessary to avoid your grade being influenced by absences and missed assignments.*

Assignment Details: **ALL assignments should be typed.**

Activities from "Media Messages": Throughout the semester, you will be asked to complete activities from your text. These assignments are usually brief, but some are longer and will take more time. The assignments are listed on the syllabus. If the assignment is complete, you will receive full credit.

Observation/Reaction Papers: I will assign *brief* observation and writing tasks throughout the semester. These assignments will be announced at the end of class. Some of these assignments are already listed on the syllabus. You will be expected to hand in these assignments and to discuss them in the following class period. Each of these brief assignments will carry **15** points each. Participation assignments cannot be made up if you were absent. I will not accept late assignments. Reaction papers should be 1 page in length – not less – not more (and avoid making your name and info half of the page).

Movie Analyses: Because our time in class is limited, you will be asked to complete 2 movie analyses on your own time that we will discuss in class. Each analysis will be worth 10% of your final grade. Details about the analyses will be distributed in class. You will be asked to write a written discussion on how race, gender, class, and/or sexuality is portrayed in the film. We will talk about this assignment in further detail

in class, but please start thinking of your movie choices now. A few ideas for movie analyses could be: Working Girl (gender and class), Boys in the Hood (race and class) or Thunderheart (race). You may pick a movie of your choice, but please get the professor's approval prior to starting the analysis. (The analysis should include the plot of the movie as well as a thoughtful analysis and should be at least 4 pages but no more than 6.) [America on Film](#) lists hundreds of films that are perfect for analysis. These analyses will be graded on depth of analysis, application of class content and quality of the writing.

**Group Paper/Presentation:** After approximately a month of classes, you will be asked to form groups of 4-5 students. With this group, you will write a research paper about one of the many areas we cover in class or a topic that is pre-approved by the professor. Your paper should draw on theories and concepts discussed in class. During the first month of class, listen carefully to discussions and your classmate's ideas and opinions – use these comments to get an idea of who you will work well with. Your group will be asked to present a 20-minute presentation the last day of class. This presentation should include all of the group members' participation and example media when applicable. You will also be expected to hand in an outline of your presentation. Additional details will be discussed in class.

**Annotated Bibliography:** Each member of your group will be asked to review three sources for your final paper. An annotated bibliography includes both the citation of the reference material that you are using as well as a brief (150-200 word) description of the findings and/or summary of the material. In addition you should add a few sentences that indicate how you plan to use this source in direction relation to your research. You should plan to use APA format. Please visit [http://128.84.158.88/t/help/res\\_strategy/citing/annotated.html](http://128.84.158.88/t/help/res_strategy/citing/annotated.html) to view Cornell University's quick help page on annotated bibliographies.

### **Learning Disabilities:**

Students with documented disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with their professors during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should contact the Advising Center.

### **Plagiarism:**

Deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious academic and professional offense and a violation of the spirit of the Cedar Crest Honor Code philosophy. Depending on the severity of the offense, penalties for plagiarism will range from the assignment of an "F" for the article or work, to the assignment of an "F" for the course. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to Provost. Under certain circumstances, acts of plagiarism may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

### **Faculty statement on disruptive behavior (C. Cameron, author – edited from original version):**

Generally, disruptive behavior in the classroom is any behavior that interferes with the process of learning. At Cedar Crest College, it is the right of every student and faculty member to engage in a classroom experience free from disruptive behavior.

What is disruptive to one person might not be disruptive to another, so the final authority on disruptive behavior is the faculty member. Faculty members have the authority to address disruptive behavior in the manner they see fit under the guidelines set forth in the College Catalog.

Disruptive behavior may be viewed on a continuum ranging from the isolated incidents of mildly annoying or irritating behavior to more clearly disruptive, dangerous, and/or violent behavior.

Examples of disruptive behavior may include the following:

- Persistent speaking without permission
- Use of electronic devices, cell phones, or pagers during class
- Threats or harassment of any kind
- Working on homework for other classes
- Inappropriate personal disclosures during class (sharing too much information)
- Sleeping in class
- Entering class late or leaving early (without permission)
- Eating/drinking in class without permission

- Arguing with faculty and other students

Additionally, classroom participants should note that basic human courtesy is an expectation when interacting with faculty members, staff, and other students.

### **Verbal Communication**

Faculty members are not part of your social circle or peer group and should not be addressed as such. On the first day of class, faculty members will introduce themselves and express how you should address them. Addressing a faculty member by his or her first name is not acceptable unless the faculty member invites you to do so.

When addressing a faculty member in person, use a positive, respectful approach. Ideally, you should meet with faculty members during their scheduled office hours and not at the beginning or end of class unless the interaction will be brief.

When using the telephone, be sure to identify yourself at the beginning of the conversation. Be brief and concise, particularly when leaving a voice mail message.

### **Written Communication**

When sending email, remember that your writing conveys an image of you and demonstrates respect for the recipient. Treat email as you would any other written correspondence: Begin with the appropriate greeting (“Dear Professor Ortiz”), use complete sentences with good grammar and spelling, use a friendly and polite tone, and expect that faculty members will return your correspondence when they are able. Expecting an “instant response” is not realistic.

## **Schedule Of Readings and Assignments**

*(Professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus.)*

All readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due. Please read assignments carefully. You may not turn in assignments after the start of class.

MM = Media Messages    AF = America on Film

### **August 25- What is “the media” and why does it matter?**

Course Introduction and Expectations  
Complete Media Survey & Race quiz in class

For next class:

Readings: MM, Chapter 1: “The Connections: Life Knowledge, and Media”  
AF, Chapter 1: “Introduction to the study of film form and representation”  
AF, pp. 49-52 & 203-206  
Assignment: Complete Personal Inventory 1.1 pp. 10-11 and 1.2 pg 13 (MM)

### **September 1 – No classes – Labor Day**

### **September 8- Race, Sex and Gender: Nature, Nurture, and Social Construction**

What is Race?

View and Discuss: Race: The power of an illusion (part 1)  
Dozier, W.L. “Race: Anthropologists say divisions were made by man” (handout)  
(We will return to the discussion of race in detail in a few weeks)

What is Gender?

"Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." -John Berger

For next class:

Readings: MM, Chapter 2: “Gender: In Pink and Blue and Vivid Color”  
AF: Chapter 11: Exploring the Visual Parameters of women in film  
Assignment: Typed reaction to “Race: the power of an illusion”  
Complete Media Activity 2.1 p. 74 (3 programs that you watch now, not childhood programs)

**Sept. 15 - Sex, Gender, and Gender Identity in the Media**

View and Discuss: KILLING US SOFTLY 3

(Please bring a typed reaction to the movie to class next week)

Discussion of “Killing Us Softly” and “The Coors Light Twins”

For next class:

Readings: AF: Chapter 12: Masculinity in classical Hollywood filmmaking

Assignment: Reflection on Killing us Softly 3

Complete Media Activity 2.5 pg. 90-91

**Sept. 22 - Sex, Gender, and Gender Identity cont.**

Gender in Popular Music

View and discuss: Dreamworlds 3

View and discuss: TOUGH GUISE

(Please bring a typed reaction to one or both films to class next week)

For next class:

Readings: AF: Ch. 13: Gender in American Film since the 1960’s

Assignment: Reflection on Tough Guise/Dreamworlds 3

Explore [www.womenssportsfoundation.org](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org)

Specifically: <http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/issues/media/index.html>

**Sept. 29 – Women in Sports and Serials**

**QUIZ**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Denise O’Neill

Women on the Sports Pages

Readings: Title IX (handout)

View: Playing Unfair: The media image of the female athlete

(Please bring a typed reaction to the movie to class next week)

Primetime Television

Explore: Women in Prime Time: Now Foundation at

<http://www.nowfoundation.org/issues/communications/watchout3/reportA.pdf>

For next week:

Reading: MM: Ch. 4: Racing in America: Fact of fiction?

Assignment: Complete personal inventory 4.1

Movie Analysis 1 due (on gender)

**Oct. 6 - Race in America**

Present Movie Analysis 1 (on gender)

View & Discuss: Matters of Race: Part 1 (& Exploration of the PBS website)

(Please bring a typed reaction to the movie to class next week)

Handout annotated Bibliography instructions and pick groups and topics

For next week:

Readings: AF: Chapter 3: The Concept of Whiteness and American film.

Complete personal inventory 4.3

**Oct. 13 – No classes – Fall Break**

**Oct. 20 - Discussions of Race in the media**

View and discuss: “Ethnic Notions”

(Please bring a typed reaction to the movie to class next week)

Small Group Discussions Re: Personal Inventory 4.3 (Autobiography on Race and Ethnicity)

Some time for group projects

For next class:

Annotated bibliography due  
Readings: MM: Ch. 5: Stories of race in popular culture  
AF: Chapter 4: African Americans and American film

**Oct. 27 - People of color in today's media**

Annotated Bibliography due  
View and discuss: Matters of Race: Race Is/Race Isn't (part 2)  
(Please bring a typed reaction to the movie to class next week)

Magazine Project  
Discussion of MM Chapter 5

**Nov 3- Advertising, News, and People of Color**

Race in Reporting: Accurate descriptors or confining stereotypes  
Readings: Woods, K.M. "The Language of Race" from the Poynter Institute  
Handouts on race and reporting (Race in Reporting, Newscasts employ scare tactics, When race is suspect)  
View: KRON series on race and news

For next week:  
Readings: AF: Chapter 5, 6, & 7

**Nov. 10 - Not just Black and White: An exploration of "other minorities"**

View and discuss: Matters of Race: part 3 – We're still here  
View and discuss: Reel Bad Arabs  
Handout: American Indians see media's bias

For next class:  
Personal inventory 3.2  
Readings: MM: Ch. 3 – Is the US a classless society?  
AF: pp. 157-160

**Nov. 17 - Class and Society – The American Dream**

In-class assignment: Media Activity 3.1  
View and discuss: People like us and/or Class Dismissed

For next class:  
Readings: MM: Ch. 6: Sexual orientation and the fabrication of "normal"  
AF: Chapters 14 & 15

**Nov. 24 - GLBTQ in the Media**

**QUIZ**

View & Discuss: The Celluloid Closet and/or Further off the Straight and Narrow

**Dec. 1 - The intersection of race, gender, class and sexuality in the media**

Final discussion  
Movie analysis 2 due (on race)/brief presentations  
Prepare for class presentations.

**Dec. 8 – LAST CLASS**

Final Paper Presentations  
Class evaluations