ENGL 91/FMST 45/GSST 20 Patricia White

Spring 2013 K111, 610-328-8148

T TH 9:55-11:20 Trotter 203 pwhite1@swarthmore.edu

Screening W 7-10 LPAC Cinema office hours M 1-3;

T Th 11:30-12:30 and by apt.

**Feminist Film and Media Studies**

In systems of representation from fine art to mainstream film to advertising, women have been constructed as “Woman”–“to-be-looked-at,” in critic Laura Mulvey’s oft-quoted phrase–or rendered altogether invisible through ideological assumptions about race, class, and body-image. What happens when female-identified artists, audiences, and theorists look back? This class will engage major questions that have shaped the vigorous field of feminist film theory over the past three decades while considering the works of women filmmakers. We will introduce narrative, art, experimental and documentary modes, and give some attention to TV, video and new media.

Mulvey’s analysis of gendered looking relations in classical Hollywood cinema, influenced by marxist critiques of ideology and psychoanalytic theories of sexual difference, has generated numerous analyses of the place of women as spectacle or passive object in films “cut to the measure of [male] desire.” Opening the seams in this system, feminist critics turned their attention to mainstream films and popular media addressed to female spectators and exposed the contradictions within and between such “women’s pictures” and the diversity of female experience. Historical accounts of leisure, consumer, and ethnic and national cultures followed. Critics showed how women attempt to take control of their positioning through viewing or using texts in their own ways, and, perhaps most importantly, by creating their own.

Throughout cinema’s more than one-hundred-year history, women have made movies. Early women filmmakers brought reform movements, adventures, and poetic visions to the silent screen; women wrote, produced, and directed “women’s pictures” in Hollywood, France, and Mexico in the 1940s; 1970s feminists documented “real women” and their struggles; actresses picked up cameras; Eastern and Western European cineastes trained in film schools and transformed film language; African and Latin American women helped define “Third Cinema”; women in China, Denmark, India, Iran, and elsewhere made national cinemas speak to their concerns. In the US, women made exploitation and genre films in “New Hollywood”; feminists bent the rules of mainstream film; and lesbians and women of color produced short films, videos, and computer-based art, changing the definition of what *can* be seen. Feminist criticism has looked at the implications of female film “authorship,” studied the contexts in which these women worked, isolated themes such as voice, mother/daughter relationships, sex and desire, nationalism and decolonization, and debated issues of aesthetics, address, and access. Feminist media criticism has looked at forms of mass culture including magazines and television and the ways consumers and fans have derived pleasure and agency from engaging them on their own terms, in the process making their voices part of the public sphere.

This course moves from the paradigm of narrative film analysis that Mulvey outlined in the 1970s through the contributions of feminist theorists that have enriched and challenged it to address a range of questions in feminist film studies. The final unit and student projects will focus on the history, institutions, highlights, and reception of independent filmmaking by women in the US.

I encourage students who lack previous background in gender and sexuality studies and/or film and media studies to contact me with questions. The course is large for the kind of discussion-based model I prefer; students are urged to visit office hours, post queries on the weekly discussion forum, or email me with questions or concerns. If you are feeling lost, chances are others are as well; don’t be afraid to ask me or others in the class student to slow down!

**Required Text Available at the Bookstore:**

Butler, Alison. *Women’s Cinema: The Contested Screen*. London: Wallflower, 2002.

**Additional Texts Available at the Bookstore:**

Columpar, Corinn and Sophie Meyer. *There She Goes: Feminist Filmmaking and Beyond*. Detroit: Wayne Statue, 2009.

Kaplan, E. Ann, ed. *Feminism and Film.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. (FF)

Marciniak, Katarzyna, Aniko Imre, and Aine O’Healy, eds., *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

All readings besides Alison Butler’s text are available on the course Moodle site. Please bring your readings to class.

Students who have not taken a previous film course may wish to consult:

Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White. *The Film Experience*. NY: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2012.

Course Meetings and Screenings

Tuesday’s class will be devoted to participatory lectures and discussion of readings. Thursday’s meetings will feature discussion of the film and assigned readings facilitated by a group of students. Clips on syllabus will be shown in class. Please turn off all electronic devices, with the exception of laptops and tablets used for note-taking only.

Weekly screenings are mandatory and you will be expected to take notes. Please: no texting or illuminated screens during projection. Screenings are open to the college community. There will be some additional viewing required. Most films shown for class will be on reserve at McCabe library. You may check them out overnight for your research, but I will have them the week they are being used in class. Check with me if you wish to borrow a disc because you need to miss a screening.

Accommodations

If you need to arrange for accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 130; e-mail lhempli1@swarthmore.edu) to set up an appointment to request an Accommodation Authorization Letter. For details about the Student Disabilities Service and the accommodations process, visit http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-life/academic-advising-and-support/student-disability-services.xml.

**Requirements:**

**Regular attendance and active, respectful participation**; more than three absences, including from evening screenings, will affect your grade. 10%

**Blog posts.** Please post your substantive comments and questions on readings and films to the weekly course blog as frequently as you wish and at least six times during the semester (three times before break, please number your comments). 10%

**Journals**. 1-2 page informal writing assignments, due week 2 and week 9, with possible additional assignments. Evaluated with blog posts.

**Discussion Facilitation:** Each Thursday a small group of students will facilitate our discussion of the film, linking it with one or more assigned readings, for 20 minutes. The group should select a few passages, write a few substantive questions, and select a clip to show in class. Two weeks later, facilitators will post a 4-page individual or 6-page joint paper on the week’s topic (these due dates will be adjusted if other assignments fall due on those dates). 15%

**Documentary dossier:** Students in earlier offerings of this class each contributed one entry to a guide to women’s films in the McCabe Library collection. These entries include synopsis, production and exhibition information, information on the filmmaker, critical bibliography, and a still from the film. Students this year will expand this resource, selecting documentaries in the collection or researching new documentaries we should acquire. Due week 10. 10%

**Presentation** to be done in groups in the last third of class on a film related to the week’s topic. Outline and resources to be posted on Moodle; work can be incorporated into final paper. 10%

**6-page** paper, due week 5, will use formal evidence to address an aspect of female authorship or agency in a film screened or discussed in class or the readings, incorporating themes addressed in class. 20%

**8-10-page** paper, due May 9 at 5pm on Moodle, will require research and approval of your topic. It will address some aspect of women directors and independent cinema. 25%

**Writing guidelines:** Please make sure your paper is in twelve-point type, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and numbered pages. Please proofread your work and staple your paper. Use MLA citation style unless you have mastered a different format. Italicize titles of films and books; article titles should be in quotation marks. Include the director and year in parenthesis after the first mention of a film, and, in a sustained analysis, the actor’s name after his/her character.

A course guide for researching women and film and media is available on Tripod and linked to the course Moodle site. You can also consult your readings or me for additional bibliography. Credits and filmographies are available on the Internet Movie Database.

**The syllabus is subject to change. Consult Moodle and contact me with any questions.**

Spring 2013 Prof. Patricia White

**Feminist Film and Media Studies**

Week 1: Image/Politics

1/22 Introduction and organization

*The Body Beautiful*  (Ngozi Onwurah, 23 min. 1991)

1/23 *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren, 1943, 14 min.)

*Tiny Furniture* (Lena Dunham, 2010, 98 min.)

1/24 Alison Butler, *Women’s Cinema*, Introduction

Patricia White, “Feminism and Film” (X)

Carrie Rickey, “Female Directors Gain Ground, Slowly”

Manohla Dargis, “How Oscar Found Ms. Right”

Sundance Film Festival coverage

**Week 2: Gaze and Voice**

1/29 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (FF)

Claire Johnston, “Women’s Cinema as Counter Cinema” (FF)

Clips from: *Morocco* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930, 92 min.)

*Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, 112 min.)

*The Notorious Bettie Page* (Mary Harron, 2007, 91 min.)

1/30 *Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1982, 34 min.)

*Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946, 110 min.)

1/31 Alison Butler, chapter 1

Lizzie Francke, from *Script Girls*

bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze”

1-2 page journal on gaze and image in one of the films screened to date

**Week 3: Desire in Narrative**

2/5 Judith Mayne, “Lesbian Looks” (FF)

Mary Ann Doane, “Femininity and the Masquerade”

Teresa de Lauretis, “Desire in Narrative” part 1

Clip from: *Dance, Girl, Dance* (Dorothy Arzner, 1940, 90 min.)

2/6 *Thriller* (Sally Potter, 1979, 34 min.)

*Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1992, 93 min.)

2/7 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (excerpts)

Teresa de Lauretis, “Desire in Narrative,” part 2

Monique Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman”

Walter Donahue, “ ‘Against Creeping Realism:’ Sally Potter on *Orlando*”

2/8 optional *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012); 8pm LPAC Cinema

Week 4: Feminist Aesthetics

2/12 Germaine du Lac, “The Avant-garde Film”

Clip from: *The Smiling Mme Beudet* (Germaine Dulac, France, 1922, 23 min.)

Alison Butler, ch. 2, 77-85

B. Ruby Rich, “In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism” (FF)

Janet Bergstrom, “Jeanne Dielman”

2/13 *Jeanne Dielman, 2300 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, Belgium, 1975, 201 min.)

2/14 Clip from: *Born in Flames* (Lizzie Borden, 1983, 80 min.)

Angela Martin dossier on Chantal Akerman

Teresa de Lauretis, “Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women’s Cinema”

**Week 5: Decolonizing Cinema**

2/19 Butler, chapter 3

Lucia Nagib, “Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema”

Ella Shohat, “Post Third-Worldist Culture”

Clips from: *Silences of the Palace* (Moufida Tlatli, 1986, 128 min.)

*Silent Waters* (Sabiha Sumar, Pakistan, 2003, 99 min.)

2/20 *Measures of Distance* (Mona Hatoum, 1988, Canada/UK, 15 min., video)

*Where Do We Go Now?* (Nadine Labaki, 2011, Lebanon, 110 min.)

2/21 Priya Jaikumar, “Translating Silences”

Patricia White, Introduction to *Women’s Cinema/World Cinema*, “Global Flows of Women’s Cinema: Nadine Labaki and Female Authorship”

5-6 page paper due in class and on Moodle

Week 6: Colonial Imaginaries

Watch on your own: *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, France, 1988, 105 min.)

2/26 Judith Mayne from *Claire Denis*

Steven Neale, “Art Cinema as Institution”

Clip from: *Cleo from 5 to 7* (Agnés Varda, France, 1962, 90 min.)

2/27 *White Material* (Clarie Denis, France, 2009, 106 min.)

2/28 Martine Beugnet, from *Claire Denis*

Amy Taubin, “Out of Africa”

Clip from: *The Night of the Truth* (Fanta Nacro, Burkina Faso, 2004, 100 min.)

**Week 7: Reclaiming Popular Culture**

3/5 Annette Kuhn, “Women’s Genres”

Charlotte Brunsdon, introduction to *Screen Tastes*

Francesca Coppa, “An Editing Room of One’s Own,” “How to Suppress Women’s Remix”

3/6 Francesca Coppa, “Transmedia and Fan Media,” LPAC Cinema 7pm

3/7 Angela McRobbie from *The Aftermath of Feminism*

Kristina Busse, “Introduction” to In Focus: Feminism and Fandom

Francesco Coppa, “A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness”

Julie Levin Russo, “User-Penetrated Content”

Spring break

3/14 Agnes Varda at International House, Philadelphia as part of Chris Marker conference

**Week 8: Haptic Media**

3/19 Alison Butler, ch. 2, 57-77

Laura Marks, “Video Haptics and Erotics”

*It Wasn’t Love* (Sadie Benning, 1992, 20 min., video)

3/20 *Fuses* (Carolee Schneeman, 1967, 22 min.)

*Dyketactics* (Barbara Hammer, 1979, 4 min.)

*The Color of Love* (Peggy Ahwesh, 1994, 10 min.)

*You and Me and Everyone We Know* (Miranda July, 2005, 90 min.)

3/21 Julia Bryson-Wilson, “Some Kind of Grace: An Interview with Miranda July”

Holly Willis, “Brain Girls and Flesh Monsters: New Boundaries”

Holly Willis lecture as part of Visualizing Future Media, 3/22 3:30 SC 101

**Week 9: Queer/Trans Media**

Watch on your own: *Southern Comfort* (Kate Davis, 2001, 90 min.); *Two or Three Things But Nothing for Sure* (Tina DiFeliciantonio and Jane Wagner, 1996, 12 min.)

3/26 J. Halberstam, “The Transgender Gaze”

Karen Tongson, “Relocating Queer Critique: Lynne Chan’s JJ Chinois”

Dean Spade, “Trans Law and Politics on a Neoliberal Landscape”

Clip: *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke, 1967, 105 min.)

3/28 No class, attend QTC event journal due on 4/1

**Week 10: Documentary/Politics**

4/2 Julia Lesage, “The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary”

Bill Nichols, “The Voice of Documentary”

Clips from: *Healthcaring* (Jane Warrenbrand & Denise Bostrom, 1976),

*Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1980); *Daughter Rite* (Michelle Citron)

4/3 *Maquilapolis* (Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre, 2006, 70 min.)

4/4 Rosalinda Fregoso, from *MeXicana Encounters* and “*Maquilapolis*: An Interview with Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre”

Presentation group 1: *Señorita Extraviada* (Lourdes Portillo, 2001, 74 min.)

**Week 11: Diasporan Documentary**

4/9 Butler, Afterword

Hamid Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema”

4/10 *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989, US, 108 min.)

4/11 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “Esthetics of Resistance” (X)

Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Who Is Speaking? ” (X)

Presentation group 2: *History and Memory* (Rea Tajiri, 1991, US, 32 min., video)

**Week 12: New Queer Cinema and Beyond**

4/16 B. Ruby Rich, from *New Queer Cinema: The Director’s Cut*

Clips from: *Go Fish* (Rose Troche, 1994, 83 min.)

*Boys Don’t Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, 2005, 118 min.)

Christine Vachon from *A Killer Life* and *Shooting to Kill*

Presentation group 3

Final paper topic due

4/17 *The Kids Are All Right* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010, US, 106 min.)

4/18 Jasbir Puar and Karen Tongson, “The Ugly Truth About Why the Kids Are

All Right”

Jodi Brooks, “*The Kids are All Right*, the Pursuits of Happiness, and the Spaces Between”

**Week 13: African American Women’s Independent Film Networks**

4/23 Jacqueline Bobo, “Black Women’s Films: Genesis of a Tradition”

Clip from *Sisters in Cinema* (Yvonne Welbon, 2003)

Presentation group 4

4/24 *Middle of Nowhere* (Ava DuVernay, 2012, 97 min.)

4/25 Interviews with and blog posts about Ava DuVernay

Zeinabu irene Davis, “The Future of Black Cinema: The Debate Continues”

Clyde Taylor, “The Future of Black Cinema: The Debate Continues”

**Week 14: American Independent Women’s Filmmaking and World Cinema**

4/30 A. O. Scott, “Neo-neorealism”

Dan Kios “Eating Your Cultural Vegetables”

Patricia White, “Watching Women’s Films”

Michael Newman, “Home Is Where the Art Is: Indie Film Institutions”

Clips from: *Wendy and Lucy* (Kelly Reichart, 2008, 80 min.)

*Treeless Mountain* (So Yong Kim, 2008, 89 min.)

Presentation group 5

Screening TBA: *Circumstance* (Maryam Keshavarz, 2011, 107 min.)

5/1 Tri-Co Student Film Festival, Bryn Mawr Film Institute

5/2 Wrap up!

Revised documentary entry due

**Final 8-10-page** **paper, due May 9 at 5pm on Moodle**