Course description and goals

This course explores the constitutive and regulatory force of gender within media and the social order, and considers how that force can be creatively negotiated. Employing the concept of queer performativity as a basic tool, we will focus on the way gender is articulated in media and in everyday life—through the styling of the body, structures of perception, and common narratives found in advertising, film, and social networking. We will think of gender primarily as a category of identity that serves as

1. a way of defining and enacting a self; a category of knowing and becoming
2. a primary means of organizing social relations
3. a political force, and
4. a means of cultivating social, sexual, and aesthetic pleasure.

Because gender is so basic to our understanding of ourselves as well as our relations to each other, gender affects every aspect of culture. For the same reason, it is a weighty category: it carries a heavy burden of ‘responsibility’ for defining and maintaining social, political, and economic order, and it exerts profound influence on our personal lives. At the same time, there is no reason why we cannot change the way we think and do gender, or even—as critical queer theory shows us—challenge the stability and importance of the category itself.

In fact, we can and do change our understanding and performance of gender all the time, both as individuals and as societies, although most often we do this unconsciously—with little critical awareness or intention. Our goal this semester will be to hone a critical understanding and practice of gender, as a way of seeking more equitable, pleasurable, and creative uses of this category of knowing and becoming. We will consider several questions: What, exactly, is gender? How do media expressions shape how we understand and perform gender? what does the mediatized gendering of bodies do, in terms of our political, social, aesthetic, family lives? How do different kinds of people perform or identify their gender? How do we, as individuals, do gender, and for what reasons? to what ends? How might we try to change our understanding and performance of gender, and why?

We will address these questions through the perspective of critical citizenship, with the term understood as a way of participating, via communication in the public sphere, in collective democratic processes. The course will therefore maintain a broad political bent, expanding the parameters of ‘political’ as we explore texts from popular culture and our everyday experience.
Course organization
I. Introduction
II. Performing Gender: Social Contexts
III. Performing Gender: Visual Texts

Assignments & Assessment
- Participation/Attendance: 20%
- Artifacts Presentations: 20%
- Quiz 1: 10%
- Quiz 2: 10%
- Current Events: 20%
- Final Project: 20%

Attendance
Attendance means showing up on time, having completed the day’s assignment, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to discussion. Arriving and/or leaving more than 5 minutes after class had started and/or before it ends is reflected in your attendance grade: 2 late arrivals will equal 1 unexcused absence. More than 2 unexcused absences will affect your grade. An absence is considering excused if you are ill and provide a note from your doctor or the NYU Student Health Center.

Participation
In-class discussion is a major part of this course, and your participation grade depends on the quantity and quality of your contribution. Students are encouraged to come to class with opinions about the reading, to ask questions about the course material, to introduce outside material that relates to the course topics, and to respectfully debate ideas with other members of the class. participation rubric:
- 20 excellent
- 19 very good
- 18 good
- 17 okay
- 16 poor

Artifact Presentation
15-20 minutes
Present a photograph, advertisement, commercial, film or television clip—any brief text—as an ‘artifact’ to be read for its construction of gender. You can relate this text to current or previous class topics. In your presentation, you must:
1. identify the context in which this artifact appeared
2. describe its particular conceptualization of gender
3. present an argument about the text’s framing of gender.
4. use a citation from the assigned readings to support your argument. Cite or paraphrase, give page number, author, and title. If you cite, you must summarize the author’s thinking in your own words and show how this thinking relates to your own.
5. analyze the text in a way that supports your argument. Semiotic reading
encouraged.
6. facilitate discussion on a question concerning gender that this work raises for you
Presentations will be graded on completion of required tasks, clear and concise
presentation, and effective facilitation of class discussion. Make sure your
presentation fits into the time frame. Your grade depends on the presentation you
perform, not the one you organized but did not have time to perform.

If you are going to use electronic media, make sure equipment is functional before class.

Current Events Postings on Blackboard
This assignment has two parts: an original posting and a response posting. At the
beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned a period within which to do each
posting,
1. Original post: find 1 current news story that relates to gender issues discussed in
class and post a link to the article, along with your response, to the Discussion
Board. These postings should
   a. summarize the article
   b. pose a question that the article raises for you and describe
      your thinking on that question
   c. cite 1 reading from the syllabus to support your thinking.
   Current Event postings should be 3 paragraphs long.
2. Response post: you are also required to respond thoughtfully to one Current Event
   posting during the period you are not submitting an original posting. These
   responses should be at least 1 paragraph in length, should go well beyond
   statements of agreement or disagreement, and employ a civil tone.
Postings and responses will be graded on completion of required tasks, depth of thinking,
clarity and eloquence, spelling and grammar. Although these are online submissions, they
will be graded by the same standards as written paper assignments.
Grading: 14 points for original posting; 6 points for response posting total= 20 points

We will create a schedule for presentations and current event postings in January. Once
the schedule is set, you are responsible for remembering your due dates.

Final Paper – due December 15
Write a short paper (5-6 pages) analyzing an aspect of gender as it appears in one of the
semester’s assigned films or a film of your choice. Your paper should pose a question or
thesis (clearly stated in your introduction), explore that question using 2 of the required
readings and 1 other source, take a position on this question, and support your thinking
with clear argumentation, evidence, and analysis. Make sure your paper does not
replicate the thinking of your presentation.

Paper Format
Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and stapled, with 12 pt font, standard margins and
numbered pages.
Double-sided printing is OK, but not required
You are free to use your preferred citation style, but please use it consistently throughout
your writing. Any paper turned in after the beginning of class meeting on the due date
will be considered late. Late papers will be accepted with a deduction of 1/2 letter grade per day. If, for some reason, you anticipate needing an extension, you must ask me before the date the assignment is due.

_E-mailed papers will not be accepted except under special circumstances._

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**
Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. Please check NYU policy if you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism.

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**Course Schedule**

1. **Introduction**

    Please note that reading assignments are subject to change.

    **Jan 23** Intro to course

    **Jan 25** Discussion: What is gender?

    **Jan 30** film viewing

    **Feb 1** film viewing

    **Feb 6** read: excerpts from Butler, Sedgewick, and Munoz (bring copies to class)

    **Feb 8** **Quiz 1**

        sample artifact presentation

2. **Performing Gender: Social Contexts**

    **Feb 13** Guest Lecture: Anya Kandel “Gender and Globalization”

    **Feb 15** reading TBA

    **Feb 16** **online response to guest lecture due by Midnight, Feb 16**

    **Feb 20** no class

        read: Kimmel, “Inequality and Difference: Social Construction/Gender”

        **respond to question posted online due by midnight**

        Suggested reading: West and Zimmerman – Doing Gender

    **Feb 22** viewing: *Miss Representation*

        **online response to film due by Midnight, Feb 23**
Feb 27  read: Banet-Weiser, “Girls Rule”
    Suggested reading: Radaway – Interpretive Communities
Feb 29  artifact presentations
Mar  5  read: Pascoe, “Dude, You’re a Fag”
Mar  7  artifact presentations
Mar 12-15 Spring Break
Mar 19  read: Kane, “No Way my Boys” - bring Munoz “Queer gesture” to class
Mar 21  artifact presentations
*Last day for posting/responding online for Part 1*

3. Performing Gender: Visual Texts

Mar 26  read: Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema
Mar 28  artifact presentations
Apr  2  watch: Vertigo
Apr  4  artifact presentations
Discussion: the gaze and gender, race and sexuality
Apr  9  read Diawara: Black Spectatorship hooks: Oppositional Gaze
Apr 11  view: Love and Basketball

Apr 16  watch: The Crying Game AND Boys Don’t Cry
Apr 18  read: Halberstam, The Transgender Gaze
    Suggested reading: Duggan – Crossing the Line
Apr 23  review: the gaze film TBD
Apr 25  artifact presentations
    Quiz: the Gaze
*Last day for posting/responding online for Part 2*
Apr 30  view Happy Together
May  2  read: Eng, excerpt from Structures of Kinship
May  2  Artifact presentations
May  7  *All final papers due in class*