

SOC 395: Gender, Race, and Popular Culture

3 credits

Spring 2022

T/R 11:00-12:15

SCI D217

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What is this course about?

Is popular culture mere fluff, or does it have a powerful and valuable relationship with the world out of which it emerges? Why do we like the things we do? Can you watch *The Real Housewives* and still call yourself a feminist? (Spoiler alert: I believe the answer is yes, because I do both of those things.) In this class, students will explore how popular culture shapes and reflects our understandings of gender and sexuality and their intersections with race and class. Using major theories and concepts of gender, media, and audience studies, students will analyze popular texts (e.g. movies, television shows, music, etc.) for their treatment of issues of gender, sexuality and race.

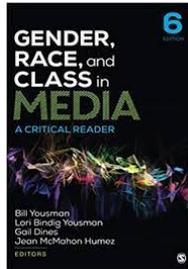
What am I going to learn to do this semester?

*outcomes in **bold** are GEP US Diversity Learning Outcomes (underlined language is added to make USD LOs specific to this course content)

Course Goals-- At the end of the course, successful students will:	Learning Outcomes--At the end of the course, I will know you have successfully met the course goals, because you will be able to show me through your work that you can:
understand that pop culture both reflects and influences cultural ideologies around gender, race, sexuality, class and other differences.	<p>1. Describe how <u>pop culture in the United States</u> has participated constructed diverse identities and cultures based on ability, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status, etc.</p> <p>2. Explain how individuals or groups in the United States have used <u>pop culture to respond to the experience of discrimination and inequality.</u></p>
find value in critiquing popular culture representation using feminist frameworks	<p>2. Explain how individuals or groups in the United States have used <u>pop culture to respond to the experience of discrimination and inequality.</u></p> <p>3. Propose alternative popular culture artifacts that challenge inequitable ideologies</p>
understand that identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, and class are socially constructed and used to structure and generate social inequity	<p>4. discuss race, gender, and sexuality using contemporary theoretical perspectives</p> <p>1. Describe how <u>pop culture in the United States</u> has constructed diverse identities and cultures based on ability, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status, etc.</p>
understand how one's identity shapes their perception and interpretation of pop culture artifacts	<p>5. name your own values and where/how they originated</p> <p>6. Demonstrate understanding of and empathetic insight about diverse cultural perspectives in the United States.</p>

What books do I have to get?

Gender, Race, and Class in Media. Eds. Youssman, Youssman, Bindig, Dines and Humes. **6th Edition** (2020)
Too Fat, Too Slutty, Too Loud: The Rise and Reign of the Unruly Woman, Anne Helen Petersen (2017)



All additional readings will be provided on Canvas

How am I going to be graded?

Before I answer that question, I want to let you know that all assignments are expected to reflect an understanding of critical scholarship. This does not mean that you are expected to agree with all of the arguments or ideas put forth in this class, but it does mean that you will be expected to demonstrate the ability to apply critical theories and methods in your work.

Assignment	Points/Percentage	Learning Outcomes (#)
Engagement Activities		
Participation	20%	4, 5, 6
Viewing Guides	10%	1, 2, 4
Reading Guides	20%	1, 2, 4
Analytical Writing		
Pop Culture Consumption Journals	20%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Final Reflection	15%	2, 4, 5
WWGS Media Production Project (OPTIONAL)		
Media Project	10%	1, 3, 6
Upfronts: Press kit & Press Conference	5%	1, 3, 6

Participation (20%)

This class is based on the educational premise that knowledge is constructed through an (inter)active process rather than absorbed passively. Therefore, the format for the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and activities, with an emphasis on dialogue and sharing of perspectives. All students are expected to engage in respectful intellectual dialogue in the classroom, thus you will need to be self-reflective about your own identities and how you may be responsible for reproducing privilege in your work and in relations with your

peers. **It is expected that you will be an active and informed participant in all class discussions and activities, and that you will have read assigned texts by the dates indicated on the syllabus.**

Presuming you attended class regularly, and thus are eligible for all 10 points (you can't technically participate when you're not in class, no?), the following point guidelines apply:

- In order to receive full credit for participation, you have participated in nearly every class this term. Your participation was thoughtful, engaged, respectful of other ideas and comments in the class, and demonstrated that you had completed the readings.
- If you do not participate in every class, but participate somewhat frequently throughout the term in a thoughtful manner (at least 1x/class on average), you will receive 8-9 points depending on the regularity and quality of your commentary or questions.
- If you rarely or hardly participate verbally in class at all (less than 1x/class), but still manage to demonstrate that you were actively (if silently) engaged in class discussion through your writing assignments (by referencing class discussion, for example), you will receive 5-7 points.
- If you rarely or never participate verbally in class and your written work demonstrates that you may not have been paying attention all the time in class, but you are at least awake, not being disruptive to other students, and not being disrespectful to me or your peers during class (i.e. by listening to Spotify, texting, watching TV on your tablet, shuffling pages of The Pointer, doing homework for another course), you will receive 3-4 points.
- It's really hard to show up every class period and to get 0-2 points unless your presence is actually detrimental to others' learning. This has never happened in any of my courses.

5 Viewing Guides (in-class) (10%)

When we watch longer media clips in class, you will be asked to complete a viewing guide to focus your critical attention. As long as you complete 5 of them thoughtfully and turn them in to me, you will receive full credit. There will be 6 opportunities to complete these, so don't worry if you miss one.

10 Reading Guides (20%)

I will provide a reading guide for each reading or set of readings that you are assigned. You are responsible for completing the reading guides before class and bringing them to class as a basis for in-class discussion. These reading guides are meant as just that--*guides*. They are structured in a way that should help you to take notes on the readings. As long you complete 10 of them thoughtfully and turn them into me, you will receive full credit.

3 Pop Culture Consumption Journals (20%)

For 3 of the 15 weeks of the semester, you are expected to submit a "Pop Culture Consumption Journal" in which you reflect on the pop culture you experienced in the previous week. Your reflection must engage ideas from the course in some way, though I encourage you to be creative and candid. Think of these as a low-stakes dialogue with me. There are many ways to structure these journal entries. I offer the following possibilities, though you are free to create your own:

- Reflect on the overall pattern of things you watched/listened to during the week in light of what we've been talking about in class. For example, consider the following: What ideologies of gender, sexuality, race, etc. are relevant to a thing you consumed? What do other critics say about it? Do you think it changed the world for better or for worse or not at all? If some of the aspects are problematic, what suggestions would you make for change?
- Read/Listen to a critical essay about some pop culture that you know well (such as Slate's Culture Gabfest Podcast, Vulture, Pitchfork, Rolling Stone, Television without Pity, The New Yorker, etc.--if you

need help finding something, let me know!) and respond to the analysis and critiques based on your own interpretations and what we've discussed in class.

- Watch/listen/read something with a friend. Compare your reaction/interpretation/critique to theirs, reflecting on why you think your reactions were dis/similar, and what that has to do with course content.

Each entry should be roughly 300-500 words, or 1-2 double-spaced typed pages. There is no penalty for going over this length! You may turn in a copy on Canvas, a hard copy, an email copy, or you may keep a blog online. If you choose to blog, you are responsible for notifying me when you have posted new content. Your work will be assessed based on how well you engage with the types of analysis we use in class in reflecting on your own experiences. You must submit 3 journals throughout the term. You may choose whichever weeks you want, but you cannot turn in more than one journal entry per week. The week starts over at 12:01am Monday. That said, if you haven't started submitting these by week 13, you're not going to get full credit.

Final Reflection (15%)

Due date - Fri., Thurs., May 19: 2-3 pp. Look back on your experience in class and your Pop Culture Consumption Journals, and reflect on what you've learned this semester. Some guiding questions (you do not have to answer all of these; they are just to get you started). What did you learn that was valuable? What was troubling? How have your pop culture consumption habits or perspectives changed? Why? If you could change anything about the pop culture landscape, what would it be? What do you think you'll remember about this course five years from now?

WWGS Media Production (15%)-OPTIONAL

(only required if you want an A; a solid B is easily achievable by completing the rest of the work for the class)

WWGS is the name of our made multimedia channel looking to add into the vast pop culture landscape a new and powerful set of voices: those of the students in this class. The mission of WWGS is to create more equitable representations on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, class, etc. in hopes of creating a more just, inclusive, and smarter world for all.

For this final project, you will create a new piece of pop culture and pitch it to your peers who help run this cooperative network to see if you can win a contract.

You may propose anything, such as: a new television show, a remake/rewrite of an already existing television show, movie, or book; a podcast, an app, a new social media platform a magazine, a music video, etc. Be creative!

The major assignment for the term will have 3 parts. You will receive more information and a copy of the grading rubric for this project that will explain how points are divided across different categories. You may work alone or in pairs. With permission, you may work in larger groups if the project is of significant complexity (e.g. you actually shoot a television pilot). You are welcome and encouraged to use your other assignments (listening journals and shorter papers) to serve as research for and to build up to this final assignment.

1. Media Proposal - Due Thurs., Mar. 17

You will be asked to propose a title and type for your final project before spring break so that you can tailor your other pop culture journals to this project, if you wish. In this proposal, you are asked to identify the thing you will propose for WWGS and provide a one-paragraph description of what you would like to do with it, including what it has to do with gender, sexuality, race, class, etc. You should also let me know if you intend to work in a pair or small group.

2. Actual Product + Explanation/Annotations (10%) - Due Friday, May 8

This is your time to really show off! In addition the product itself, you must either provide annotations that explain your choices are they are relevant to course content, or submit a 500 word explanation of how you came up with your concept and why you designed it the way you did.

3. Upfronts: Press Conference (in-class presentation) (5%) - Due on assigned day in last weeks of class

You will have 20 minutes to pitch your production to your peers. You should prepare something of a press kit to serve as the basis of this pitch: prep a preview (a “sizzle reel” or commercial or ad) of your product, identify a specific audience, make a case for advertisers who you would want to sponsor your product. The goal is to convince your peers that whatever you created belongs under WWGS Media. Make sure they understand what you are pitching, how it is relevant to the mission of WWGS, and what it adds to the media landscape.

Given the wide variety of possibilities with this project, you are encouraged to come to me regularly with questions. I want to see you succeed, to be creative, and to enjoy yourself while you learn, so I will do my level best to work with and support you and your project.

What happens if I turn in an assignment late?

All assignments are due on the dates designated in the syllabus. If you make arrangements with me ahead of time, I may agree to accept a late assignment. If prior arrangements have not been made, you will receive a lowered grade (one whole letter grade or 10% per day) for that assignment.

How will I know what my letter grade is?

This course uses the standard UWSP grading system.

94 – 100% = A	77 – 79% = C+	< 60% = F
90 – 93% = A-	74 – 76% = C	
87 – 89% = B+	70 – 73% = C-	
84 – 86% = B	67 – 69% = D+	
80 – 83% = B-	60 – 66% = D	

Grade disputes cannot be made until **24 hours after a grade is received** and must begin with a written request and justification for a grade change.

I need to talk to you about something. How do I get in contact with you?

Contact Information



EMAIL is the quickest way to reach me: lindsay.bernhagen@uwsp.edu

TEXT is also available for emergencies: 715-316-3308



CALL my office any time (715-346-3177). Leave a voicemail if I do not answer.



ZOOM is available by request

Inclusivity Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Office hours

Because I have another position at UWSP, my schedule varies widely from week-to-week. For that reason, office hours are by appointment. If you want to stop by to see if I'm in the office, feel free to do so. If I'm here, my door is open! Individual meetings can be arranged through an email request, phone call, or conversation directly before or after class.

I have a special circumstance. What policies and resources are in place to help me?

Absences due to Military Service

You will not be penalized for class absence due to unavoidable or legitimate required military obligations, or medical appointments at a VA facility, not to exceed two (2) weeks unless special permission is granted by the instructor. You are responsible for notifying faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible and for providing documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students to verify the reason for the absence. The faculty member is responsible to provide reasonable accommodations or opportunities to make up exams or other course assignments that have an impact on the course grade. For absences due to being deployed for active duty, please refer to the [Military Call-Up Instructions for Students](#).

Religious Beliefs Accommodation

It is UW System policy to reasonably accommodate your sincerely held religious beliefs with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements.

You will be permitted to make up an exam or other academic requirement at another time or by an alternative method, without any prejudicial effect, if:

- There is a scheduling conflict between your sincerely held religious beliefs and taking the exam or meeting the academic requirements; and
- You have notified your instructor within the first three weeks of the beginning of classes (first week of summer or interim courses) of the specific days or dates that you will request relief from an examination or academic requirement.
- Your instructor will accept the sincerity of your religious beliefs at face value and keep your request confidential.
- Your instructor will schedule a make-up exam or requirement before or after the regularly scheduled exam or requirement.
- You may file any complaints regarding compliance with this policy in the Equity and Affirmative Action Office.

Equal Access for Students with Disabilities

UW-Stevens Point will modify academic program requirements as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or students with disabilities. The modifications should not affect the substance of educational programs or compromise academic standards; nor should they intrude upon academic freedom. Examinations or other procedures used for evaluating students' academic achievements may be adapted. The results of such evaluation must demonstrate the student's achievement in the academic activity, rather than describe his/her disability.

If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform me and contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 346-3365 or Room 609 Albertson Hall.

Cool, I want to do well in this class, but none of that helps me. What else is available?

- **Me!** Please feel free to contact me at any time over the course of the semester regarding papers, concerns, observations, etc. I want you to *always* see me if you are having difficulty with an assignment or class material. I will do everything in my power to make this course work for you, as long as I can do so in a way that is fair to other students in the course. Email is generally the most efficient way to get in contact with me and I diligently aim for a maximum of 24-hrs. turnaround time in response to emails, unless I explain otherwise in class.
- If you don't feel comfortable coming to me, you may also reach out to the chair of Sociology, **Amy Zlimen** (azlimen@uwsp.edu) to discuss any concerns.
- **Taking care of yourself:** A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other, and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises during the semester are encouraged to contact the [UWSP Counseling Center](#) for assistance, support and advocacy. This service is free and confidential.

Tutoring	Advising	Safety and General Support	Health
Tutoring and Learning Center helps with Study Skills, Writing, Technology, Math, & Science. 018 Albertson Hall, ext 3568	Academic and Career Advising Center, 320 Albertson Hall, ext 3226	Dean of Students Office, 212 Old Main, ext. 2611	Counseling Center, Delzell Hall, ext. 3553. Health Care, Delzell Hall, ext. 4646

UWSP Service Desk

The Office of Information Technology (IT) provides a Service Desk to assist students with connecting to the Campus Network, virus and spyware removal, file recovery, equipment loan, and computer repair. You can contact the Service Desk via email at techhelp@uwsp.edu or at (715) 346-4357 (HELP) or visit this [link for more information](#).

Shouldn't there be something in here about plagiarism?

There should! It's required. I have a lot of experience engaging with violations of academic misconduct policies. I recognize that the rules regarding academic misconduct can sometimes be confusing for students with respect to specific assignments or course work. If you have questions, I encourage you to come and see me. **I am always willing and prepared to help clarify any aspects of the work for this course that may be confusing.** If you have questions or concerns about a particular assignment, you should talk with me before the assignment is submitted. Ignorance or misunderstanding of the UW System policy will not serve as a valid excuse for academic misconduct. Here's the policy, for your reference:

UWSP 14.01 Statement of Principles

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the University of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors.

To read UWSP's definition of academic misconduct, please consult UWSP 14.03. In short, examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating on an examination
- Collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course
- Submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another
- Submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas
- Stealing examinations or course materials
- Submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course
- Tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student
- Knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Students suspected of academic misconduct will be asked to meet with me to discuss the concerns. If academic misconduct is evident, procedures for determining disciplinary sanctions will be followed as outlined in the [University System Administrative Code, Chapter 14](#). Let's not get to this point, okay? Talk to me before the assignment is due.

Got it. Now what are we going to be doing day to day?

That's a [separate document](#) so you can easily access the course schedule without having to scroll through all of this other stuff.