

EngLit 1703
Spring 2006
Bishop, E.

Women and Film
06-2
Lwrn 207 Wednesday 6-9:50pm
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Dr. Ellen Bishop
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Course Description

The position of women in American public culture has changed almost continuously across the 20th century from the suffragettes in the beginning of the era up to the "Supermom" dilemmas of the 80's, and the postmodern dispersal of identity at the end of the millennium. Always entangled with these changing roles of women and the correlated larger questions of identity have been the issues of gender identity and sexual orientation. This whole, complex and shifting landscape has been captured in interesting ways by American cinema. What does cinema have to tell us -- through the glass darkly, perhaps -- about all these changes? How does cinema itself as a complex medium figure into the issues of gender and sexuality? We will look at a selection of films that have been read as significant to the women's movement and examine such issues as the influences of Freudian thought on both theories of gender and cinema, the idea of gender as a masquerade, and the perspective that queer theory adds to these debates. Students will be asked to participate weekly in online discussion boards, to respond to one of the assigned films in greater depth, make one class presentation with a partner, and to write a final critical paper.

Required Texts

Feminist Film Theory: A Reader ed. Sue Thornham NYU Press
Essays in Modules in Backboard Courseweb site

Schedule

*** Films are screened at the end of each class, so the readings for each film are listed for the following week's discussions. For example, the reading for *Where the Boys Are* which will be screened 1/4/06, is the Smith essay listed on 1/11/06.**

1/4/06 Film: *Where the Boys Are* Henry Levin 1960

1/11/06 Film: *Marnie* Alfred Hitchcock 1964
readings: Smith essay in book

1/18/06 Film: *The Crying Game* Neil Jordan 1992
readings:: Mulvey essay in book

- 1/25/06 Film: *Morocco* Joseph Von Sternberg 1930
 readings: "Femininity as Discourse" in Bb module 1
 readings: "Gender and Dichotomy" in Bb module 2
- 2/1/06 Film: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* Howard Hawks 1953
 readings: "Masochism an the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema" in
 Bb module 3
- 2/8/06 Film: *Some Like It Hot* Billy Wilder 1959
 readings: "Womanliness as Masquerade" in Bb module 4
 readings: "Joan Riviere and the Masquerade" in Bb module 5
- 2/15/06 Film: *The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer* Irving Reis 1947
 readings: Doane's 2nd essay in book
 readings: Citron, LeSage, Mayne et.al. in book (chapter 9)
- 2/22/06 Film: *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* Patrice Rozema 1987
 readings: "Cary Grant in the 50's: indiscretions of the bachelor's
 masquerade" in Bb module 6
 readings: Johnston essay in book
- 3/1/06 Film: *Daughters of the Dust* Julie Dash 1991
 readings: reviews of *Mermaids* in Bb module 7
- 3/15/06 Film: *Alien* Ridley Scott 1979
 readings: hooks essay in book
 readings: TBA module 8
- 3/22/06 Film: *Aliens* James Cameron 1986
 readings: Clover essay in book
- 3/29/06 Film: *Imitation of Life* Douglas Sirk 1959
 readings: Creed essay in book
- 4/5/06 Film: *She's Gotta Have It* Spike Lee 1986
 readings: TBA
- 4/12/06 Film: *Go Fish* Rose Troche 1994
 readings: hooks essay Bb module 9
 readings: Ebert Review in Bb module 10
- 4/19/06 Film: *Thelma and Louise* Ridley Scott 1991
 readings: Review of *Go Fish*
 readings: Hollinger essay in Bb module 11

Student Responsibilities

1. Students will be expected to come to class on time, stay until class is dismissed, and actively participate in the discussions. One absence will be ignored. After that, your grade will be negatively affected.
2. Students will be expected to complete coursework on time.
3. Students will be expected to behave in accordance with generally accepted standards of “polite” behavior towards everyone in the class. A key element to this “polite” behavior is a tolerance for different opinions and a focus on the intellectual work of making responsible arguments rather than on personal assertions. Name calling or the use of pejorative terms or terms generally understood as insulting to any particular group will not be tolerated.
3. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please read the university policy stated in the online section of the Pitt website for an exact definition of plagiarism and the consequences of it.

Student Work

1. Students will be asked to form partnerships with one (or perhaps 2) others. Each partnership will lead the class discussion on a particular evening. I will do the first two and students will be able to choose from the rest. Leading the discussion entails being very conversant on the film and readings for that evening – being able to raise questions about the relations between the films, and the readings and the theoretical perspectives in them, for example and to offer thoughtful interpretations and opinions on them. The partners will also hand in written responses to the film/readings for the evening when they lead the class. These responses should be 2-3 pages minimum and should explicitly examine the film of the evening in light of the readings.

Students should feel free to contact me during the week when they are preparing their class leadership evenings with any questions or ideas they may want to test out before the class. These leading-the-class opportunities are not meant to be exam-like, in other words, I don't expect you to have everything all sorted out and I am more than willing to talk with you ahead of time on your topics. These evenings are a chance for students to raise interesting questions and to venture their own ideas and reactions to the films and essays for the night.

2. Students will be asked to participate in the discussion board feature of the courseweb site for the class. Everyone will be expected to respond to every film each week via the discussion board. These responses can be informal, but edited and carefully thought about.
3. Students will be asked to select a topic for their final papers before spring break and to hand in a synopsis of their argument by 3.29.06. Final papers will

be due Friday at noon (or before) during finals week. These paper should be 10-12 pages minimum with standard margins, spacing, and fonts.

Grades

30% class discussion (including discussion board)

30% final paper

20% class discussion leadership

20% paper on class discussion leadership topics

*for more details on grading policies, paper topics etc. please see the courseweb site for this class anytime after 1/8/06.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

Disabilities:

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and the Disability Resources and Services no later than the 2nd week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 216 William Pitt Union.