

WGS 271Y: GENDER IN POPULAR CULTURE

Dr. S. Trimble | Sept. 2016 – Apr. 2017 | Thursdays, 5-7PM | WI 1017

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: S. TRIMBLE

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12-1PM; Thursdays, 4-5PM; and by appointment

TA INFORMATION

T5101: Casey Mecija (WI 2024): casey.mecija@mail.utoronto.ca

T5102: Kiran Saili (WI 2026): k.saili@mail.utoronto.ca

T5103: Angie Fazekas (WI 2024): angie.fazekas@mail.utoronto.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From celebrity “meltdowns” to political protests to furious fanboys, how do we make sense of and evaluate what’s trending on social media? What’s “neoliberalism” and what does it have to do with reality TV? What can bodies and figures framed as “monstrous” tell us about what counts as normal? How does storytelling shape our perceptions of intergenerational conflict and resistance? How do popular media shape the worlds we inhabit—and how, in turn, do our everyday practices reflect, resist, or twist these representations? This course considers cultural studies questions about media production, audience, and representation through an anti-racist feminist lens. Together, we’ll do two things at the same time: critically analyze the sometimes violent, regressive stories that pop cultural texts tell us about the world *and* consider what kinds of counter-readings and expressive alternatives they make possible. By emphasizing *how* texts and images do what they do, this course will help you acquire the skills to discern the messages about gendered, raced, and classed identities and sexualities that are embedded in contemporary pop cultural storytelling.

REQUIRED TEXTS can be accessed through Blackboard with the exception of Allison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006), which is available either for purchase at [Bakka Phoenix Books](#) (84 Harbord Street) or for short-term loan at New College’s D.G. Ivey Library and Victoria College’s EJ Pratt Library.

GRADING SCHEME

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Value (%)</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Keyword Assignment	10	October 27, 2016
Mid-year Test	10	December 1, 2016
Close Reading/Scene Analysis Assignment	20	January 26, 2017
Analytical Essay	25	March 16, 2017
Final Test	20	March 30, 2017
Tutorial Participation	15	See course schedule

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and I'm committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Accessibility Services works with you confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without your permission. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services, including your college's writing centre, are available to all students.

Accessibility Services can be reached by phone at 416-978-8060, by email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca, or online: <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/Home.htm>.

New College's Writing Centre can be reached by phone at 416-978-8283, by email at newcollege.writingcentre@utoronto.ca, or online: <http://www.newcollege.utoronto.ca/academics/writing-centre/>.

Your success in this class is important to me. Whether you're registered with Accessibility Services, working with a writing tutor, or accessing other kinds of support, I'm happy to work together with you to develop strategies that will allow you to meet both your own learning needs and the requirements of the course.

A NOTE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS COURSE

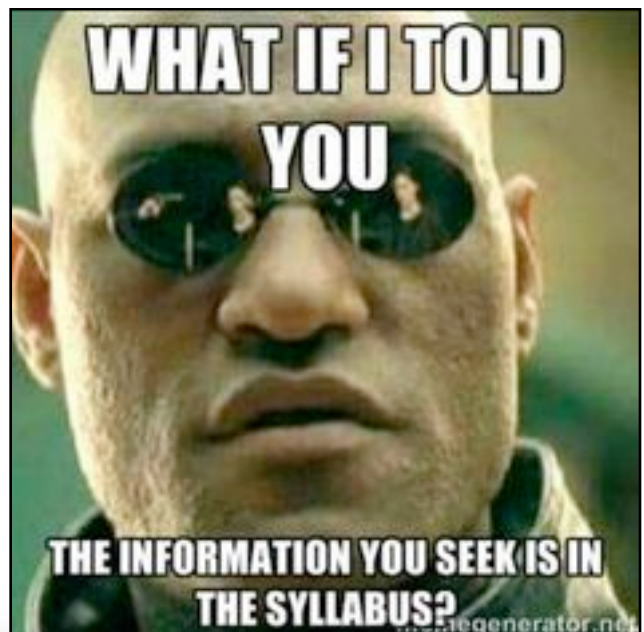
Lecture takes place between 5 and 7PM. Students will break up into tutorials between 7 and 8PM **only** on specifically selected dates. See the class schedule below for tutorial dates.

I'll use Blackboard to post lecture slides and assignment instructions and to make course-related announcements including, if necessary, cancellations. ***Please check our Blackboard site regularly!*

CONSULTATION POLICY

Your TAs and I are happy to handle brief logistical questions via email, but please be sure to consult the course outline and/or the assignment instructions first to see if the answer to your question is already available in those documents. If you wish to discuss course content or your own work in detail, please drop by during my office hours or during the office hours that your TAs will hold leading up to and after assignment due dates. In general, your TAs and I will make every effort to respond to emails within **48 hours**, though your TAs will **not** reply to assignment-related emails sent less than 24 hours before the assignment due date.

****A reminder: please include the course code in the subject line of your message.**



ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Extended instructions and marking rubrics for each of these assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

Keyword Assignment (10%) – Due: October 27, 2016

I'll provide you with a list of concepts that we'll build on throughout the year, including, for example, "ideology," "neoliberalism," and "governmentality," among others. You'll select **one** of these keywords on which to write a short paper in which you'll a) precisely define your concept using the course readings, and b) use it to critically analyze a pop culture example of your choosing (e.g. a song, video, hashtag, advertisement, episode of a TV show, etc.).

Mid-year Test (10%) – In class: December 1, 2016

A section-by-section breakdown of the test, including the exact instructions for each section, will be available on Blackboard ahead of time. The test will include a **take-home essay**.

Close Reading/Scene Analysis Assignment (20%) – Due: January 26, 2017

This assignment asks you to analyze the formal details of either a) a brief scene from *Attack the Block*, or b) a page from Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. I'll provide you with a list of options. As the longer instructions will outline, you'll be asked to make note of and interpret as many formal details as you can and then to craft a short analytical paragraph arguing how and why the passage or scene is significant in the broader context of the text from which it's excerpted.

Analytical Essay (25%) – Due: March 16, 2017

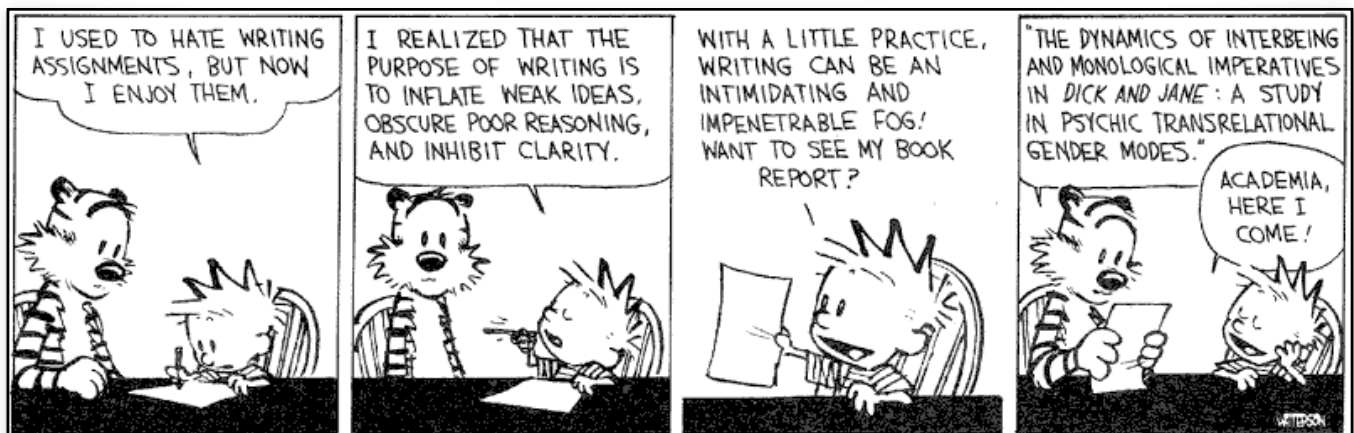
In this 4- to 6-page paper, you'll be asked to draw on concepts from the course to think through the themes from one or more of the fictions we explore in term two. I'll provide you with a list of possible essay topics in the second term.

Final Test (20%) – In class: March 30, 2017

A section-by-section breakdown of the final test, including the instructions for each component, will be available on Blackboard ahead of time. Again, there will be a **take-home essay** component of this test.

Participation (15%) – Ongoing

Your participation grade will be based on your attendance at and participation in the tutorials that we run throughout the year. Your TAs will circulate an attendance sheet in each tutorial, so please make sure that you sign in.



ASSIGNMENT REGULATIONS

Submission and Return Procedures

All written assignments are due **in lecture at the start of lecture** on the due date. Please drop your work off on the desk at the front of the classroom. (**If you have mobility issues that prevent you from getting down the stairs to the front of the lecture hall, please don't hesitate to let me know or speak to your TA about handing your assignment directly to them.)

Your TAs will return graded work at the end of either lecture or tutorial three weeks after the original due date. Our course policy is that you must **wait at least 24 hours** before contacting your TA if you have questions or concerns about your grade. This policy is in place to ensure that you have adequate time to carefully review and digest the feedback—both the grade itself and the written comments—that you've received. After this 24-hour period, if you have questions, concerns, or would simply like clarification on any aspect of your marked assignment, please send your TA **an email that clearly outlines your questions** so that the two of you can set up a meeting.

****Please note:** if you'd like to (respectfully) challenge your grade, you must first meet with your TA to discuss your concerns. If you're not satisfied with the outcome of that conversation, your next step is to meet with me.

Penalty for Late Work, Late Submission Instructions, and Extensions

Late assignments will be penalized **2% per day**, and we may choose not to accept work submitted more than 10 days late. If your assignment is late, you must do two things:

1. Email it to your TA, copying me, as soon as it's finished so that we can record an accurate submission date; and
2. submit a hard copy of your work to the WGS office assistant in WI 2035.

If there are extenuating circumstances, including and especially absence due to illness, we'll be happy to waive the late penalty if you provide appropriate documentation (a medical note or letter from your college registrar). ****Please be sure to communicate with your TA as early as possible before an assignment deadline** if you anticipate having difficulty submitting your work on time. The sooner we know about scheduling conflicts, illnesses, or other life circumstances, the more flexibility we'll have when it comes to making possible adjustments or alternate arrangements concerning your assignments and participation.

Academic Integrity

The university maintains a strict policy on academic integrity, and this course will abide by that policy. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. It's your responsibility to ensure that you're familiar with and understand the different forms of academic misconduct. Potential offences include but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism: presenting some or all of other people's published or unpublished work as your own
- Submitting the same work in more than one course

- Cheating: copying another person's answer on a test; communicating with another person during a test or exam; purchasing assignments and submitting the work as your own
- Improper academic/research practices: making up sources; using other people's research findings without permission
- Falsifying institutional documents, including tests, transcripts, and letters of permission

If you have any questions about how to cite sources properly or what constitutes plagiarism, please consult Margaret Proctor's "How Not to Plagiarize": <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

Of course, you can also feel free to bring your questions about plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct to me. I'm happy to help!

Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Definition
A+	90-100	EXCEPTIONAL. Exceptional knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and exceptional skill and/or great originality in their use in satisfying the requirements of an assignment or course.
A	85-89	EXCELLENT. Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques with a high degree of skill in their use; strong evidence of original, nuanced thinking.
A-	80-84	
B+	77-79	GOOD – VERY GOOD. High to very high level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with reasonable to considerable skill in using them; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability.
B	73-76	
B-	70-72	
C+	67-69	FAIRLY SATISFACTORY – SATISFACTORY. Acceptable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with some ability in using them.
C	63-66	
C-	60-62	
D+	57-59	PASSING. Minimal knowledge of required concepts and/or techniques; minimal evidence of critical and analytic skills.
D	53-56	
D-	50-52	
F	0-49	FAILING. Does not meet university standards.

WGS 271Y: GENDER, RACE & CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR CULTURE

CLASS SCHEDULE—TERM 1

September 15	Introductions
September 22 *Tutorials*	<p>I. Frameworks and Vocabularies</p> <p>POLITICAL ECONOMY, PART 1</p> <p>Harvey, “Introduction” and excerpt from “Freedom’s Just Another Word...” (<i>A Brief History of Neoliberalism</i>, 1-4 and 5-19. Oxford UP, 2005)</p> <p>Lull, “Ideology” and “Hegemony” (<i>Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach</i>, 13-16 and 48-52. Polity Press, 2000)</p> <p>Chomsky and Herman, “A Propaganda Model” (excerpt from <i>Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media</i>. Pantheon, 1988)</p> <p>Fallows, “Trump Time Capsule #92: ‘How the Media Undermine American Democracy’” (<i>The Atlantic</i>, September 3, 2016)</p>
September 29	<p>POLITICAL ECONOMY, PART 2</p> <p>Weber, “Makeover Nation: Americanness, Neoliberalism, and the Citizen-Subject” (<i>Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity</i>, 37-79. Duke, 2009.)</p> <p>Chloeanneking, ““Positive Attitude’ Bullshit: On the dangers of radical self-love” (<i>Millennial Posse</i>, July 8, 2015)</p>
October 6 *Tutorials*	<p>AUDIENCES AND PARTICIPATIONS, PART 1</p> <p>Hasinoff, “Sexting as Media Production: Rethinking Social Media and Sexuality” (<i>New Media & Society</i> 15.4 [2013]: 449-65)</p> <p>Nakamura, “The Unwanted Labour of Social Media: Women of Colour Call Out Culture as Venture Community Management” (<i>New Formations</i> 86 [2015]: 106-12)</p> <p>Valenti, “Anita Sarkeesian Interview” (<i>The Guardian</i>, Aug. 29, 2015)</p> <p>**Recommended: Ross, “The Naysayers” (<i>The New Yorker</i>, September 2014)</p>
October 13 *Tutorials*	<p>AUDIENCES AND PARTICIPATIONS, PART 2: A SELFIE CASE STUDY</p> <p>Kara Walker’s, <i>A Subtlety, or The Marvelous Sugar Baby</i> (2014)</p> <p>Please see Blackboard for a complete list of reading links for this class.</p>

October 20 *Tutorials*	<p>REPRESENTATION</p> <p>Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media” (<i>Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader</i>, ed. Dines and Humez, 81-84. SAGE, 2011)</p> <p>Flores et al., “We Got Game: Race, Masculinity, and Civilization in Professional Team Sport” (<i>The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication</i>, ed. Nakayama and Halualani, 417-45. Blackwell, 2010)</p>
October 27 *Keyword assignment due*	<p>II. (Social) Media Monsters</p> <p>“MAD” CELEBRITIES</p> <p>Voronka, “Making Bipolar Britney: Proliferating Psychiatric Diagnoses Through Tabloid Media” (<i>Radical Psychology</i> 7.2 [Winter 2008])</p> <p>Nigatu, “In Defense of Kanye’s Vanity: The Politics of Black Self-Love” (<i>Buzzfeed</i>, Jun. 20, 2013)</p> <p>Ahmed, “Selfcare as warfare” (<i>feministkilljoys</i>, Aug. 25, 2014)</p>
November 3	<p>POST-FEMINIST FEMININITIES, PART 1</p> <p>McRobbie, “Top Girls? Young Women and the New Sexual Contract” (<i>The Aftermath of Feminism</i>, 54-93. SAGE, 2009)</p> <p>Murphy, “The Girl: Mergers of Feminism and Finance in Neoliberal Times” (<i>S&F Online</i> 11.1-11.2 [2012/2013])</p>
November 10	<p>POST-FEMINIST FEMININITIES, PART 2</p> <p>Hutcheon, “Risky Business: The ‘transideological’ politics of irony” (<i>Irony’s Edge</i>, 9-34. Routledge, 1994)</p> <p>Weidhase, “‘Beyoncé feminism’ and the contestation of the black feminist body” (<i>Celebrity Studies</i> 6.1 [2015]: 128-31)</p> <p>Goldstein, “Why Nicki Minaj’s Refusal To Be ‘Polite’ Is A Necessary Political Statement” (<i>ThinkProgress</i>, August 31, 2015)</p>
November 17 *Tutorials*	<p>ENRAGED (WHITE) SHOOTERS</p> <p>Ahmed, “The Organisation of Hate” (<i>The Cultural Politics of Emotion</i>, 42-61. Routledge, 2004)</p> <p>Hamblin, “Toxic Masculinity and Murder” (<i>The Atlantic</i>, June 16, 2016).</p>

November 24

Tutorials

THUGS AND RIOTERS

Butler, “Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia” (from *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Gooding-Williams, 15-22. Routledge, 1993)

Yancy, “[Walking While Black in the ‘White Gaze’](#)” (*New York Times*, September 1, 2013)

Anspach, “[Will You Finally ‘Say Her Name?’](#)” (*Ebony*, July 21, 2015)

** Recommended: Moore, “[A Ferguson Syllabus: Reading a Movement](#)” (*Mic*, August 7, 2015) and [The Black Lives Canada Syllabus](#).

December 1

****MID-YEAR TEST****

WGS 271Y: GENDER, RACE & CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR CULTURE

CLASS SCHEDULE—TERM 2

January 5 *Tutorials*	III. Times of conflict RACE, SPACE, AND ALIEN INVASIONS Watch on your own time: <i>Attack the Block</i> (dir. Cornish, 2011) Graham, “ Hoodies Strike Fear in British Cinema ” (<i>The Guardian</i> , November 5, 2009)
January 12 *Tutorials*	HAUNTED HOUSES AND QUEER CHILDREN, PART 1 Bechdel, <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> (2006) Brogan, “The Duke Freshmen Refusing to Read Fun Home Are the Ones Who Need it Most” (<i>Slate</i> , August 25, 2015) Garber, “ Call it the Bechdel-Wallace Test ” (<i>The Atlantic</i> , August 25, 2015)
January 19 *Tutorials*	HAUNTED HOUSES AND QUEER CHILDREN, PART 2 <i>Fun Home</i> , cont.
January 26 *Close Readings due*	ZOMPOCALYPSE NOW Carey, “Iphigenia in Aulis” (short story included in <i>An Apple for the Creature</i> , eds. Harris and Kelner, 161-86. London: Jo Fletcher Books, 2012)
February 2	GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE Watch on your own time: <i>Ghostbusters</i> (dir. Feig, 2016) Sims, “ The Ongoing Outcry Against the Ghostbusters Remake ” (<i>The Atlantic</i> , May 18, 2016) Brown, “ How a racist, sexist hate mob forced Leslie Jones off Twitter ” (<i>Fusion</i> , July 19, 2016) <i>**Please note that this article documents disturbing racist language and imagery</i>
February 9	CONSUMING YOUTH Watch on your own time: <i>The Bling Ring</i> (dir. Coppola, 2013) Sales, “ The Suspects Wore Louboutins ” (<i>Vanity Fair</i> , March 2010)

February 16 *Tutorials*	IV. Everyday Life: Encounters and Practices MOVING Ahmed, “Habit Spaces” (excerpt from Chapter Three: “The Orient and Other Others” in <i>Queer Phenomenology</i> , 129-42. Duke, 2006) King, “Borders” (<i>One Good Story, That One: Stories</i> , 131-45. HarperPerennial, 1993)
February 23	READING WEEK—NO CLASS
March 2 *Tutorials*	FEELING Hochschild, “Exploring the Managed Heart” (<i>The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling</i> , 3-23. Berkeley: U of California P, 2012) Pybus, “Accumulating Affect: Social Networks and Their Archives of Feelings” (<i>Networked Affect</i> , ed. Hillis et al., 235-49. MIT Press, 2015) **Recommended: “The New Norm” (<i>Invisibilia</i> podcast, June 17, 2016): http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/481887848/the-new-norm
March 9 *Tutorials*	LISTENING <i>Readings TBA.</i>
March 16 *Essays due*	IMAGINING <i>There are no required readings for today’s class.</i>
March 23	REVIEW CLASS
March 30	**Final Test**