***Boy Meets Girl*** *(2014)*

<https://www.autostraddle.com/disclosure-trans-lives-on-screen-is-a-vital-document-of-trans-cinema/>

[**https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc57.2016/-Feder-JuhaszTransActivism/index.html**](https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc57.2016/-Feder-JuhaszTransActivism/index.html)

**Film background:** *Boy Meets Girl* was released in 2014. It was written and directed by Eric Schaeffer, who is a cisgender man. Schaeffer was adamant that the role of Ricky go to a transgender woman, explaining to Filmmaker Magazine, "Being an independent filmmaker, I had the latitude to cast a trans woman and not have to satisfy a studio (which would have ponied up a ton of money) by casting a famous cisgender man or cisgender woman, which likely they would have required. I felt it socially important that a trans woman play the trans part." Schaeffer cast Michelle Hendley, who was in cosmetology school and had never acted before, but who had a YouTube channel in which she spoke openly about her identity, her interests, and her transition. The film was nominated for many LGBTQ film awards, including a GLAAD Media Award.

**Plot summary:** The film follows a 20-year old transgender woman, Ricky (Michelle Hendley), who lives in Kentucky and dreams of moving to New York to become a fashion designer. chats with her best friend, Robby (Michael Welch) and expresses her frustration with dating men. Then she meets Francesca, (Alexandra Turshen), a wealthy cisgender woman who is engaged to David (Michael Galante), a cisgender man who is a Marine serving in Afghanistan. At Robby's urging, Ricky comes out as trans to Francesca; Francesca is not knowledgable about trans identity, but she is supportive. The two become friends and eventually lovers, despite Francesca's engagement. When David returns home early from Afghanistan, he is enraged by Ricky and Francesca's relationship, and it is later revealed that some of his anger stems from a past sexual encounter with Ricky, which he has kept secret. After deciding that she doesn't love Francesca, and perhaps that dating Francesca would be risky considering Francesca's conservative family's overtures, Ricky has a fight with Robby, who says cruel things to her about her identity despite his lifelong support. Ricky's younger brother, Sam (Joseph Ricci) shows Robby a video he found on her computer from seven years prior, in which she explained that her mother left the family because she didn't accept Ricky's identity, and that has led Ricky to acts of self-harm. Robby finds Ricky, and finally expresses to her that he was jealous of Francesca and he has romantic feelings for Ricky. The two begin dating. While Ricky gets rejected from a New York fashion school, Francesca and Robby start a crowdfunding campaign to help Ricky move to New York. She and Robby set off to pursue their dreams in the city, and Ricky posts the video from her childhood, which ends with an uplifting message. The film ends with a montage of many different people watching her video in support of her.

**Content warning:** *Boy Meets Girl* contains brief nudity, references to self-harm, transphobic comments, and frank discussion of sexual acts.

**Notes:**

* I’ve provided 3 clips/trailers from films mentioned by Julia Serano in Chapter 2 of *Whipping Girl.* Because the reading for Day 2’s class is short, you may want to also assign students to watch these videos before class, as it may give students a sense of the archetypes that Serano addresses in her reading.
* This week we will be reading essays from Julia Serano’s book, *Whipping Girl.* It might be worth noting for students that while many of her ideas are still highly relevant, some of her language is not widely used. For example, [GLAAD](https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender) explains about the word transsexual: “An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries.” Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual*is **not**an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term a person prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.” Similarly, while Serano’s chapter is titled “cissexual privilege,” today, most people refer to “cisgender privilege.”
* It may be worth discussing with students that this film, while notable in its casting of a trans woman actress for the lead role, was written and directed by a cisgender man. That there have been interesting critiques and debates about its representation of trans women and narrative development. If you have time, you could have students’ read different perspectives from LGBTQ media outlets like [Them](https://www.them.us/story/boy-meets-girl) and [Autostraddle](https://www.autostraddle.com/boy-meets-girl-is-heartwarming-groundbreaking-has-cute-queer-kissing-280713/) to examine some of these questions.

**Materials for this week:**

* Day 1: Trans 101 Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3ZzpTxjgRw>
* Day 2: Video clips from *The Crying Game* and *Transamerica* (Watch before class) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0qVhhIfWr4>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z-o1RVdnHE>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9jz3uz8cqc>
* Day 2: Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity.* Seal Press, 2007. (Excerpt provided: Ch 2: "Skirt Chasers: Why The Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels")
* Day 3: Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity.* Seal Press, 2007. (Excerpt provided: Ch. 8: "Dismantling Cissexual Privilege")

**Lesson 1 – “Trans 101” and Close Reading:**

1. (7 min) Screening quiz.
2. (8 min) Watch Trans 101 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3ZzpTxjgRw>

* *Defines key terms and concepts, such as gender, transgender, non-binary, transitioning, distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation, etc.*

1. (3 min) Jot down notes.
2. What key ideas did this video cover?
3. What questions do you have about the terms or concepts raised in the video?
4. (5 min) Discuss the questions above.
5. (15 min) Student-led scene analysis (see notes in *But I’m A Cheerleader* lesson plan and materials for details on this).
6. (3 min) Start teacher-led scene analysis with screening clip. (Closing scene - 1:34:48-1:37:30)
7. (4 min) Discussion prep.
8. How does this closing scene conclude Ricky’s story? What mood and message does it establish, and how does Schaeffer create that mood and message?

* *Symbol: A close-up shot on the rear-view mirror shows Ricky pinning Francesca’s barrette to the mirror; this could be a symbol that indicates she is bringing part of Francesca with her on the journey ahead; perhaps because of Francesca’s role in helping her raise money to fulfill her dreams. In the shot, the focus shifts from Francesca’s barrette being clipped to the mirror to Ricky glancing at herself in the mirror, perhaps indicating the connection between the two characters.*
* *Setting: After asking if she is ready, and Ricky saying, “what do you think?” sarcastically, Robby floors the engine and the pair drive off into the horizon. While this film seems to be partly focused on the fact that LGBTQ people live in places beyond New York City, this story concludes with an unsentimental and unquestioned choice to leave for the city. However, the montage that follows lingers on the setting that Robby and Ricky are leaving behind: a windy road with lush green forests, farmland, a small church with a tall steeple, a main street in a small town. Like Ricky’s glance in the rearview mirror, this montage seems to linger on Ricky’s past and setting before setting off into the future.*
* *Editing: In the montage, the first half involves fairly long cuts that intersperse 12-year-old Ricky’s video with Robby and Ricky driving, as well as introducing the small groups of people watching her video. In the second half, the shots of Robby and Ricky disappear and we only see faster-paced cuts that switch between Ricky’s 12-year-old self and the current watchers of her video. The first half of the montage emphasizes the future she is setting out for, while the second half seems to emphasize the connection and empathy the viewers are having with seeing her childhood self open up about her challenges.*
* *Theme: Presumably, this video is being posted on her YouTube channels, and the watchers be among the people who have send her money to fund her trip to New York. This suggests that people around the world, of many different backgrounds, are seeing her story and connecting with it, and seeing her as more than the object she has been treated as (by Robby, Francesca, David, and her mother) over various points of her life. For once, it seems that people are listening to her experience, her pain and watching her overcome it.*

1. (17 min) Whole class discussion. If time permits, have students share their responses with a partner before moving into discussion.
2. How does this closing scene conclude Ricky’s story? What mood and message does it establish, and how does Schaeffer create that mood and message?
3. **Extension question:** Were you satisfied with the ending of *Boy Meets Girl*? Why or why not?

**Lesson 2: Examining *Boy Meets Girl* Alongside Julia Serano’s Essay, “Skirt Chasers”**

**Lesson 3: Examining *Boy Meets Girl* Alongside Julia Serano’s Essay, “Dismantling Cissexual Privilege”**