





Women and Gender Studies (WGST) 210

Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Media (Revision 2)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

[Individualized study online](#)  . Delivered via Brightspace.

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites:

None

Precluded:

None

Challenge:

WGST 210 is not available for challenge.

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

WGST 210: Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Media introduces students to the important field of critical media studies with a focus on how gendered and sexual identities are represented in advertising, comics, popular film and television, social media, and transmedia franchises. It also considers engagement with media by viewers and fans.

Unit 1 starts by challenging the dominant paradigm of mass communication that is founded on a model of transmission of messages by the media, which in turn are understood to have direct effects on consumers. We then shift to focus on the critical paradigm, which takes account of how readers make meaning out of media texts (reception).

Units 2, 3, and 4 use a critical/cultural approach to the study of media, which understands identity as socially constructed. We will critically examine how female, male, and queer bodies are represented in popular media texts and also pay attention to how those representations are taken up by viewers and fans.

The second half of the course is organized around four contemporary digital media cultures: consumer, celebrity, participatory, and “selfie” (social media). Each unit discusses representations of gender and sexuality as well as audience engagement and forms of fan participation and activism.

Outline

PART I: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE MEDIA

Unit 1: Media Representation, Identity, and Reception

- 1.1 Shifting Paradigms in Media Studies
- 1.2 Studying Gender and Sexuality in the Media: An Overview

Unit 2: Miss Representation—Women in the Media

- 2.1 Dramatic Women
- 2.2 Real Women
- 2.3 Transmedia Women

Unit 3: Eye on the Guy—Masculinity in the Media

- 3.1 Hard Bodies

3.2 Soft Bodies, Failed Masculinities?

3.3 Stories for Girls?

Unit 4: Queering the Media

4.1 Here but How Queer?

4.2 Queer Resistances

PART II: DIGITAL MEDIA CULTURES

Unit 5: Consumer Cultures

5.1 Gender and Advertising

5.2 Sexuality and Consumption

Unit 6: Celebrity Cultures

6.1 From Star to Celebrity

6.2 Celebrity Engagement

Unit 7: Participatory Cultures

7.1 Bad Fans

7.2 Resistance and Community

Unit 8: Social Media and Selfie Culture

8.1 Resistance and the Selfie

8.2 Intimate and Pornographic Self-Representation

Learning outcomes

When you have completed WGST 210, you should be able to

- distinguish between the dominant and critical paradigms that inform the study of media;
- demonstrate an understanding of and explain central concepts from gender and sexuality studies in relation to media studies;
- recognize that gender and sexuality are not stand-alone identities and intersect with race, ethnicity, ability, and other social identities;
- provide and explain examples of findings from research studies that critically analyze representations of gender and sexuality in a variety of

popular media genres;

- provide and explain examples of engagement by audiences and fans with popular media texts; and
- apply the critical/cultural approach to conduct a discourse analysis of media representation of gender and sexuality.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for WGST 210, you must achieve a course composite grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [↗](#). The weighting of the composite grade is as follows:

| Activity | Weight |
|--|-------------|
| Assignment 1: Unit 1 Review | 15% |
| Assignment 2: Midterm Review | 20% |
| Assignment 3: Case Study Proposal | 15% |
| Assignment 4: Reflections on Digital Media Culture | 10% |
| Assignment 5: Case Study Paper | 40% |
| Total | 100% |

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's **online Calendar** [↗](#).

Materials

Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:





Hilton-Morrow, W., & Battles, K. (2015). *Sexual identities and the media: An introduction*. Routledge.

Richardson, N., & Wearing, S. (2014). *Gender in the media*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Other Materials

All other materials are available online.

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) 
- › [Program planning](#) 
- › [Request assistance](#) 
- › [Support services at AU](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 2, March 26, 2025

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