
Disability and Gender in Film

UW Madison, Fall 2016
M/W 4-5:15, Sterling 1333

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Course Description

Film grew out of the mass entertainment popular during the 1800s, including the amusement park, the circus, the fair, the Grand Guignol, and the illustrated lecture. This genealogy makes films continued fascination with disability and gender legible, but it does not fully account for why disability and the gendered body still occupy a place at the center of both prestige and popular film. This course will use film theory, gender theory, and disability theory to work through the cultural and aesthetic function of disability in film from the earliest days of cinema to the contemporary space of new media. We will begin by considering how the cinema has been both accessible and inaccessible to women and to people with disabilities before moving on to consider genre, narrative, and spectacle in films depicting disability before ending with a consideration of how people with disability have used film to communicate their own experience of narrative and visual culture.

Classes will consist of a combination of activities: dialogue-based lectures, discussion, collaborative learning activities, group work and in-class assignments, and viewing and analyzing narrative films, documentaries, and other multi-media.

Course Objectives

1. Explore and be able to describe how disability and gender have been aesthetically and narratively represented in American film.
2. Identify, discuss, and evaluate key intellectual, cultural, aesthetic, generic, social, economic, and political factors that have shaped and influenced the depiction of gender and disability in American film.
3. Consider the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability in American film texts.
4. Explore the social, historical, and cultural constructedness of gender, disability, and sexual identities as well as contestations over the meanings, representations, and experiences of “womanhood”, “manhood”, “disabled”, and “normal”.
6. Understand main theoretical concepts from women’s studies and film studies and be able to use them to analyze film texts.
7. Analyze gender and disability from an interdisciplinary perspective, using critical tools drawn from a variety of methodologies.
8. Critically examine representation and cultural production through a feminist lens.

Course Materials

1. **Learn@UW:** Throughout the term, articles and book chapters, assignments, study guides, films, and other materials will be uploaded to the course website. *Please check this site regularly.*

2. **Required Films:** Films will be available online and on reserve at College Library (Helen White Hall). Films must be screened by the date they appear on the syllabus.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation/Attendance	10%
Class Kick-Off	10%
Sequence Analysis	15% Due: 10/5
YouDescribe Response	10% Due: 11/2
Film Responses (3)	15%
Reading Responses (3)	15%
Research Paper	25%
Prospectus	Due: November 30
Final Paper	Due: December 16, 5 p.m.

Course Policies and Assignments

1. In-Class Policies and Practices: This course is built using the principles of active, engaged learning. What this means in practice is that the classroom is a place of interaction, where each of us, as learners, is prepared, thoughtful, courteous, and patient. In order for this to work, each of us must also be more than simply physically present in the room. Instead, you are expected to arrive to class on time, having done the assigned readings on the day they are listed in the schedule, and having viewed the required film(s).

While in class, you are asked to turn off and put away all electronic devices, including laptops and tablets. All course slides will be posted on Learn@UW, so your focus should be less on taking notes and more on engaging with the material at hand by asking questions

and taking part fully in group activities. Not complying with these requirements will result in a lowering of your participation grade and may be grounds for your removal from the classroom.

Because this course asks us to think deeply and critically about a number of sensitive topics, I ask that we all remain as open to diverse viewpoints as possible and that we remain civil, courteous, and kind in our interactions. At the same time, I ask that we are willing to debate and question both each other and the theoretical texts. These debates should stem from your careful consideration of the course materials rather than purely from your opinion or personal beliefs. NOTE: This course will require you to critically and thoughtfully consider work that depicts graphic violence, bodily difference, depictions of racism, and explicit sexuality. Please consider a different course if you wish to avoid these materials.

2. Class Attendance: Students are expected to be present and on-time for all class sessions, and attendance will be taken using your name tents.

All students are allowed to miss three classes without penalty; after this, each absence will cause your attendance grade to be reduced by 2%. As I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, please consider this policy as you schedule your semester. If students have prolonged medical concerns or other concerns not covered here, it is their responsibility to contact me as soon as possible. If you will be missing class in observance of a religious holiday or school activity, please email me within the first two weeks of the semester and arrange with your classmates to obtain notes for the classes you will miss.

3. Class Participation: All students are expected to participate fully in class discussions, group assignments, and other classroom activities. The class will decide the grading for participation, and you will assign your own daily participation grade. Further details will be distributed in the second week.

4. Class Kick-Off: On each Thursday, groups of 3-4 students will give a 10-15 minute presentation relevant to the topic of the week. These presentations can include games, debates, role-playing, or any other activity you feel will generate participation. You will be expected to bring in clips from the films as well as from outside sources along with AT LEAST three questions meant to spark our larger discussion. Each member must submit at least three discussion questions for the week in advance. Each member will be graded by the other members of the group as well as by the instructor.

5. Sequence Analysis: As a way to gain experience in writing about the visual and narrative aspects of film, you will write a short (4 page) paper analyzing a 1-2 minute sequence. Further instructions will be distributed in class.

6. YouDescribe Response: Building upon the skills you learned in the sequence analysis, you will provide the audio description for a film clip using the YouDescribe platform. This experience will provide the basis for a 4 page reflection paper. Further instructions will be distributed in class.

7. Response Papers: Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to submit on-line 2-page, double-spaced response papers to three readings AND three films. These MAY NOT overlap with your presentation. Each response will consider one point at length without summarizing the reading or film. Instead, responses should engage with the reading or film in depth, considering how they fit within the larger context of the course. Some ideas to consider:

- How does the reading/film address the notion of social construction?
- Does the author take up intersectionality? How and along what axes?
- What types of support does the author use?
- How does this reading/film connect with other texts from the course?
- What did you find particularly compelling in the reading/film and why?

All response papers will be submitted on Learn@UW. The first response is due by 9/28, the second by 10/12, the third by 10/26, the fourth by 11/9, the fifth by 11/23, and the sixth by 12/7. No late responses will be accepted without prior approval.

8. Research Paper: There are two parts to the final paper, both of which must be completed to receive any credit. The first will be to submit a film of your choosing and an annotated bibliography which must be approved. The final paper will be typed, proofread, and properly cited. Full instructions will be distributed by 10/30.

Universal Access

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Academic Integrity

1. MLA style is preferred for all class work, and more information can be found in the library, by asking your instructor or the Writing Center, or by consulting the following guide: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

2. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. This includes all uncited use of the words, ideas, or images of another student, author, artist, or text. Please familiarize yourself with the

university policy on academic misconduct at
<https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>

Grades

All grades will be calculated using the UW grading scale:

A	93-100	AB	88-92	B	83-87	BC	78-82
C	70-77	D	60-69	F	below 60		

Grade Appeals: Please speak first to me if you have questions about a grade. If that discussion does not resolve your question, consult with the Gender and Women's Studies Chair, Judy Houck. They will attempt to reach an informal resolution and will inform you of the formal Appeals Procedures if necessary.

Schedule

Readings and films will be discussed **on** the dates indicated; therefore, they should be read **prior to** that date. All readings listed are required; recommended readings will be posted on a weekly basis. This schedule may change as the semester progresses; updates will be posted to Learn@UW and announced in class.

1. Defining Fields

Week 1: Introduction to Film Studies/Gender Studies/Disability Studies

Read:

9/12: Marja Evelyn Mogk, "Introduction"; Catherine Kudlick, "Why We Need Another Other"

Assignment: Find a recent (within the last 24 months) article about casting disability in film or television. Print out and be prepared to discuss your choice.

9/14: Georgina Kleege, "Audio Description Describe: Current Standards, Future Innovations, Larger Implications"; Stephen Safran, "The First Century of Disability Portrayal in Film: An Analysis of the Literature"

Screen:

9/14 (in class) *Daredevil* (2015-present)

Week 2: Early Film and Eugenics

Read:

9/19 Scott Curtis, "Between Observation and Spectatorship: Medicine, Movies, and Mass Culture in Imperial Germany"

Susan Schweik, "Race, Segregation, and the Ugly Laws"

9/21: Russell Johnson, "Clara Bow in *Free to Love* (1925): Feature Films and Eugenics in the 1920s"

View:

9/21: *Free to Love* (1925)

Week 3: Film and Mass Culture

Read:

9/26: Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity"

9/28: Beth Haller and Robin Larsen, "Public Perception of Real Disability: The Case of *Freaks*"

Screen:

9/28: *Freaks* (1932)

*******Response 1 Due*******

2. 'Classical' Hollywood and Spectacle

Week 4: War and Trauma

Read:

10/3: Timothy Noah, "PTSD and the Good War"

(<http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/timothy-noah/103698/ptsd-and-the-good-war>)

John Nickel, "Disabling African American Men: Liberalism and Race Message Films"
10/5: Sonya Mitchell, "Danger on the Home Front: Motherhood, Sexuality, and Disabled Veterans in American Postwar Films"

Screen:

10/3: *Home of the Brave* (1949) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdcyQ2Cv4Xc>

10/5: (in-class) clips from *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *The Men*, *The Big Parade*

*****10/5: Sequence Analysis Due*****

Week 5: Spectacles of History

Read:

10/10: Jennifer Wang, "A Struggle of Contending Stories': Race, Gender, and Political Memory in *Forrest Gump*"

10/12: Robyn Wiegman, "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity"

Screen:

10/12: *Forrest Gump* (1994)

*****Response 2 Due*****

Week 6: The Medical Gaze and Women's Films (The Gaze, Part 1)

Read:

10/17: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

10/19: Johnson Cheu, "Seeing Blindness on Screen: The Cinematic Gaze of Blind Female Protagonists"

Screen:

10/19: *A Patch of Blue* (1965)

Week 7: 'Jealous or Crazy' (The Gaze, Part 2)

Read:

10/24: Mary Ann Doane, "The Clinical Eye: Medical Discourses in the 'Woman's Film' of the 1940s"

10/26: Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess"

Recommended: Mary Anne Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator"

Screen:

10/26: *He Loves Me...He Loves Me Not (Á la folie...pas de tout)* (2002)

*****Response 3 Due*****

3. Paratexts, Expanded Cinema, and New Media

Week 8: Deafness and Female Sexuality

Read:

10/31: selection of reviews

11/2: Lisa Cartwright, "The (Deaf) Woman's Film"

Screen:

11/2: *The Tribe* (2015)

*****YouDescribe Assignment Due*****

Week 9:

Read

11/7: bell hooks, "Moving Beyond Pain" and "The Oppositional Gaze"

11/9: Selections from Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies*

Screen:

11/7: *Compensation* (2002)

*****Response 4 Due*****

Week 10: Technologies of Difference

Read:

11/14: Rosalind Galt, "Derek Jarman and Queer Aesthetics"

11/16: Temple Grandin, selections from *Thinking in Pictures*; Bruce Henderson, "Visuality, Performativity, and 'Extraordinary Bodies': A Review Essay"

Screen:

11/14: (screen in class) *In My Language* (2007),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hI2jc>

Annie Dearest <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXNUN5OCZdY>,

Blue (1993)

11/16 *Temple Grandin* (2010)

Week 11: Playing Crip: Biopics and Respectability Politics

Read:

11/21: Shoshana Magnet, "Erasing Queerness/Constraining Disability"

11/23: Micki Nyman, "Interpretation Makes It Real: Disability and Subjectivity in the Biopics of Three Female Artists"

11/23: *Frida*

*****Response 5 Due*****

Week 12: Truth in Editing: Documentaries and Ethnographies

Read:

11/28: Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, "After the Panopticon: Contemporary Institutions as Documentary Subject"

11/30: Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, "Body Genres: An Anatomy of Disability in Film"

Screen:

11/30: (in-class) *The Titicut Follies* (1967)

*****Annotated Bibliography Due*****

Week 13: New Intersections

Read:

12/5: J. Halberstam, "*Finding Nemo* and Transgender Creatures"

12/7: Vivian May and Beth Ferri, "'I'm a Wheelchair Girl Now': Abjection, Intersectionality, and Subjectivity in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*"

12/5: *Finding Nemo* (2003)

12/7: *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997)

*****Response 6 Due*****

Week 14:

Read:

12/12: Disability and Contemporary Television

12/14: Wrap up and review

Research Paper Due 12/16 at 5:00 p.m.