

## COM/WS/AES 489: Ethnicity, Gender and the Media Fall 2004

Instructor: Meredith Li-Vollmer

Class Meeting Times: M, W 4:30-6:50, 326 Communications

Office: 121 Communications

Office hours: M, W 3:30-4:15, directly after class, and by appointment

Office phone: 543-9128

E-mail (the best way to reach me): [mlivollm@u.washington.edu](mailto:mlivollm@u.washington.edu)

Web site: <http://courses.washington.edu/cmu489/home.html>

### **Overview of class:**

This course will examine the representation of race, gender, and sexual identity in the media, investigate what influences these representations, and consider their repercussions. Using a combination of lectures, class exercises, assignments, discussion, and student projects, we will explore such questions as:

- How are race, gender, and sexual identity socially constructed by the media?
- How are power and privilege related to media representation and stereotyping?
- How do the economics and working practices of media industries play a role in portrayals and coverage of groups, particularly racial minorities, women, gays and lesbians?
- What are the differences between how the commercial media and independent media depict racial minorities, women, gays and lesbians?
- What effects might these images have, and what sense do audiences make of them?
- What are the needs and interests of minority communities, and are they being met by the mainstream media?
- Is change in the diversity of media images likely, and what can be done to promote change?

The first two-thirds of the course will focus on entertainment media and the final third will address news media.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify both current and historical patterns of representation and stereotyping in mainstream entertainment and news media, and discuss their connections to issues of power and privilege.
- Explain the influence of media industries' economic imperatives and working norms on representations of race, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Discuss the effects of media representation on audiences, and how audience members may interpret the meanings of media representations.
- Analyze depictions and coverage of people of color, gays and lesbians, women, and the dominant culture in entertainment and news media.
- Explain the goals and functions of the ethnic and community media.
- Develop ideas about how to improve entertainment and news media to better reflect the nation's true diversity.

### **Class Expectations:**

In class, we will engage with the ideas and issues of race and gender in the media through discussions, group exercises, research projects, and lectures. Your active participation in the learning process is expected and valued. Race and gender in the media is a stimulating topic area, filled with controversies that touch upon our personal values, beliefs, and issues of identity. I encourage you to share your thoughts, concerns, and opinions in class—we will have a stimulating learning environment and a richer learning experience if we can discuss a wide range of perspectives. At the same time, the issues we will address can be highly emotional ones and we won't always agree with one another. It is absolutely vital that everyone feels safe to air her or his ideas and opinions. Please be sensitive and respectful to other viewpoints when making comments and contributing to discussion.

### **Course Requirements**

You will meet the course objectives by fulfilling the following requirements:

- Writing a 5-page analysis of minority representation in film and presenting your findings with a group of colleagues.
- Demonstrating your understanding of the material through a midterm exam and final exam. They will both be short answer/essay exams. At least a week prior to the exam dates, I will distribute a list of potential exam questions. The questions that appear on the exams will come from those lists.
- Completing “mini-assignments” throughout the term. These short assignments are designed to get you thinking about issues we will address in class and provide us with material to discuss. They usually will be announced 1-2 class sessions before they are due.
- Gathering information about diverse neighborhoods in Seattle on a “community field trip.” The information you gather will be compared to the coverage of these neighborhoods in the Seattle news. You may participate in a group field trip on Monday, December 6 or you can conduct a field trip to a Seattle neighborhood on your own at a time convenient to you. More details about this assignment will be given in class.

### **Grading**

Demonstration of learning through:	Points
Midterm	50
Film representation paper	100
Group presentation on film representation	20
Assignments (including “mini-assignments” and the community field trip assignment)	20
Class participation: thoughtful participation in discussion, attentive listening to others, engagement in group activities	10
Final Exam	100

Your final grade will be calculated on a straight scale using the following percentages (as per UW grading standards):

- 90-100% = A (3.5-4.0)
- 80-89% = B (2.5-3.4)
- 70-79% = C (1.5-2.4)
- 60-69% = D (0.7-1.4)
- below 60% = F (0.0)

**Readings:**

The readings are critical to your understanding of the material. I have tried to select readings that will introduce you to important theoretical concepts and also provide concrete examples from the mass media. In some cases, the readings will provide valuable background for issues we will discuss further in class. At other times, the readings will supplement what we discuss in class by addressing issues and concepts that we do not have time to cover in class sessions. On the syllabus, I have also included some key concepts or questions to keep in mind as you do the readings. Please complete the readings prior to coming to class and be prepared to discuss them. Material from the readings should be incorporated into the midterm and final exam.

- Main text (at the UW Bookstore): Dines, Gail, & Humez, Jean M. (2003). *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. This is edited volume contains readings that vary in style and degree of difficulty—some are formal academic studies, some are reprinted articles and book chapters, and others are more personal essays. Some of the readings include jargon from the field of media studies—if you encounter an unfamiliar term, refer to the glossary at the back of the book.
- Readings packet, available at The Ave Copy Center, 4141 University Way NE, Suite 103.
- At least one ethnic/community press publication. More information will be given about finding these publications.

<b>Reading and Class Schedule</b>	
W, 9/29	<b>Introductions; Overview; Power, Privilege, and Discrimination</b>
M, 10/4	<p><b>Introduction to Cultural Studies; Ideology and Representation</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in the textbook:</u></p> <p>Kellner, Douglas. "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp.9-20). This author introduces a <i>cultural studies</i> approach to studying issues of race, class and gender in the media. This approach analyzes the <i>political economy</i> of the media, <i>media texts</i>, and <i>audience reception</i>. What do these terms refer to, and according to the author, why is it important to study them?</p> <p>Hall, Stuart. "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 89-93. What does Hall mean by the term "ideology"? Why is it so powerful? How does concern about ideology lead to concern about "inferential racism"?</p> <p>Lull, James. "Hegemony." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 61-66. How does the author define hegemony? Why are mass media so effective as tools of hegemony?</p>

W, 10/6	<p><b>Media Effects, Stereotypes, and the Active Audience</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in the packet:</u></p> <p>Entman, Robert M. &amp; Rojecki, Andrew. (2000). "Culture, Media, and the White Mind: The Character of Their Content." <i>The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race on Television</i>. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>In this reading, the authors attempt to understand how animosity has developed between blacks and whites and what role the media has played in this tension. How do people cognitively process information about race? What are prototypes, and how do they develop?</p> <p><u>Required reading in the textbook:</u></p> <p>Radway, Janice A. "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 67-78. The author interviewed women who enjoy reading romance novels, a genre that has been criticized for promoting patriarchal ideologies. What did she find out about what meaning these novels have for their fans? Do they necessarily accept patriarchal ideology?</p> <p>Pietersem, Jan Nederveen. "White Negroes." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 111-115. What common characteristics do stereotypes of Irish, blacks, and Chinese share? Why were such stereotypes employed?</p> <p><u>Optional reading in the textbook:</u></p> <p>Sender, Katherine. "Selling Sexual Subjectivities: Audiences Respond to Gay Window Advertising." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 302-313. How does sexual identity affect how the audience members in this study interpret "gay window advertising?" What does this say about the effects of the media?</p>
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M, 10/11	<p><b>Political Economy of the Entertainment Media Industry and the Production of Images</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in the textbook:</u></p> <p>Croteau, David and Hoynes, William. "The New Media Giants: Changing Industry Structure." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 21-39. Today, there are literally hundreds of television channels for viewers to watch. So why isn't there more diverse programming on TV, according to the authors?</p> <p>Steinem, Gloria. "Sex, Lies, and Advertising." In Dines &amp; Humez, 223-229. Steinem recounts her experiences with advertisers as the editor of <i>Ms.</i> magazine. In what ways did advertisers influence (or try to influence) the content of <i>Ms.</i>?</p> <p>Fejes, Fred. "Advertising and the Political Economy of Lesbian/Gay Identity." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 212-222. How did publications targeted at lesbians and gays change when the publications became more dependent on advertisers? How might this change affect gay and lesbian identities? How did the emergence of a gay male target audience affect other types of media?</p>
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	<p><u>Optional:</u> Wilson, Clint C. II &amp; Gutierrez, Felix. "Advertising and People of Color." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 283-292. How did advertisers change their images of African Americans and Latinos when they started to court them as consumers?</p>
W, 10/13	<p><b>Case study of race, gender, and economics in media: Hip-hop workshop by Original Skin Inc.</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in text:</u> Perry, Imani. "Who(se) Am I?: Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hop." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 136- The author argues that the potential for "female subjectivity" of some female hip-hop artists are undermined by the visual image. What does she mean by this? How do marketing strategies and commercial interests influence the image (and indirectly, the artistic message) of female hip-hop artists?</p>
M, 10/18	<p><b>Social Construction of Race in Entertainment Media</b></p> <p><u>Reading in the packet:</u> Navarro, Mireya. "Trying to get beyond the role of the maid: Hispanic actors are seen as underrepresented, with the exception of one part." <i>The New York Times</i>, Thursday, May 16, 2002.</p> <p><u>Reading in the text:</u> Reading on Social Construction of Race in Entertainment Media: Zook, Kristal Brent. "The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television. In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 586-596. What prompted the Fox network to cancel the majority of its black productions in the 1990s? What are the differences between black-cast shows and black-produced shows?</p> <p>Coleman, Robin R. Means. "Black Sitcom Portrayals." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 79-88. What did black viewers find in black sitcoms that resonated with their own experiences? What aspects of the black sitcoms did they reject?</p>
W, 10/20	<p><b>Social Construction of Race: Commercial vs. Independent Media</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in the text:</u> Bogle, Donald. "Workplace Dramas, Ensemble Casts, 1990s Style. In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 633-641. Despite the recent inclusion of African American characters in primetime dramas, how is the representation of African Americans still often flawed?</p> <p>Sun, Chyng Feng. "Ling Woo in Historical Context: The New Face of Asian American Stereotypes on Television." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 656-664. How is the character of Ling Loo on the TV show Ally McBeal both conform to Asian American stereotypes and break away from them? Why do you think this character had appeal to the American public?</p>
M, 10/25	<p><b>Race and Gender in Children's Media</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in the packet:</u> Seiter, Ellen. (1995). "Utopia or Discrimination? Commercials for Kids." In E. Seiter, <i>Sold Separately: Parents and Children in Consumer Culture</i>, pp.</p>

	<p>115-144. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.          In what ways are children of different ethnic groups portrayed in advertisements, according to Seiter's analysis, and what might be the messages children pick up from the ads?</p> <p>Spector, Alan J. (1998). "Disney Does Diversity: The Social Context of Racial-Ethnic Imagery." In Y. R. Kamalipour and T. Carilli (Eds.), <i>Cultural Diversity and Media</i>, pp. 39-49. Albany: State University of New York Press. The author identifies a number of ethnic stereotypes in Disney films, many of them created in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Do you think people today should be concerned about these stereotypes from older films?</p>
W, 10/27	<b>Midterm</b>
M, 11/1	<p><b>Gender Images and Advertising</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in text:</u>          Kilbourne, Jean. "The More You Subtract, the More You Add: Cutting Girls Down to Size." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 258-267.</p> <p>Katz, Jackson. "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity: From Eminem to Clinque for Men." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 349-358.          According to the author, why is it important to pay attention to how white men are portrayed in the media? What themes did Katz find in advertisements portraying white masculinity? (more readings, next page)</p> <p>Crane, Diana. "Gender and Hegemony in Fashion Magazines: Women's Interpretations of Fashion Photographs." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 314-332.          What did the author's study suggest about how women are affected by images of women in fashion advertisements?</p> <p><u>Optional:</u>          Kirkham, Pat &amp; Weller, Alex. "Cosmetics: A Clinque Case Study." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 268-273.</p>
W, 11/3	<p><b>Entertainment Media and Portrayals of Women</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in text:</u>          Rogers, Deborah D. "Daze of Our Lives: The Soap Opera as Feminine Text." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 476-481. According to the author, how do soap operas reinforce male privilege and a patriarchal ideology? Does she see much potential for viewers to oppose or subvert that ideology?</p> <p>Zook, Kristal Brent. "Living Single and 'The Fight for Mr. Right': Latifah Don't Play." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 129-135.          According to this reading, the TV show Living Single presented a complexity of ideological narratives: 1) a male-centric narrative, 2) an autobiographical black perspective, and 3) a radical feminist perspective. How were all three present in this show?</p> <p>Lindsey, Karen. "In Their Prime: Women in Nighttime Drama." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 625-632.</p>

	What criticisms does the author have of most television shows portray women? What does she like about the five shows that she reviews?
M, 11/8	<p><b>Working Women and Female Relationships on TV; Gay and Lesbian Representation: A Historical Perspective</b></p> <p><u>Reading in the text:</u>  Byars, Jackie and Meehan, Eileen R. "Once in a Lifetime: Constructing 'The Working Woman' Through Cable Narrowcasting." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 613-624. How have changes in women's employment affected television programming? What strategies does the Lifetime channel use to attract upscale female viewers without wholly alienating the upscale male audience?</p> <p>Raymond, Diane. "Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp.98-110. Do popular TV shows featuring gay characters (such as Will &amp; Grace) subvert the status quo or reinforce it, according to this author?</p>
W, 11/10	<p><b>Lesbians and Gays on Television</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in the text:</u>  Hart, Kylo-Patrick R. "Representing Gay Men on American Television." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 597-607. This reading describes how gay men were presented on three popular TV shows during the 1990s. What was positive about these representations, and what was problematic, according to the author? Do you think the representation of gay men has changed significantly since then, or do you see some of the same patterns continuing today?</p> <p>Hubert, Susan J. "What's Wrong With This Picture: The Politics of Ellen's Coming Out Party." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 608-612. What criticisms does the author have of Ellen Degeneres' "coming out" episode? Do you agree with them?</p> <p>Gamson, Joshua. "Sitting Ducks and Forbidden Fruits." In Dines &amp; Humez, pp. 553-570. The author argues that daytime talk shows are more open than primetime television in presenting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. Why does he think this is the case? How does the race of the experts, guests, and audiences on these talk shows affect what kind of ideology is espoused?</p>
M, 11/15	<p><b><i>Representation in Film papers due</i></b></p> <p><b>Representation in Film: Student presentations</b></p>
W, 11/17	<b>Representation in Film: Student presentations</b>
M, 11/22	<p><b>News, Framing, and Diversity</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in packet:</u>  Entman &amp; Rojecki. (2000). "Violence, Stereotypes, and African Americans in the News." <i>The Black Image in the White Mind</i>.  How do news frames change, depending on the race of the people in the news?</p>
W, 11/24	TBA

M, 11/29	<p><b>Deciding What's News: The Coverage of Race, Gender, and Sexual Identity</b></p> <p><u>Required reading in packet:</u>  Kahn, Kim Fridkin, and Goldenberg, Edie N. (1991.) "The Media: Obstacle or Ally of Feminists?" <i>Annals of the American Academy of Political &amp; Social Science</i>, 515, pp. 104-113. How does the coverage of female political candidates differ from male candidates? What might account for these differences?</p> <p>Fleeson, Lucinda. (2000). "Rush to Judgment." <i>American Journalism Review</i>, 22 (9): 21+. This article describes how The New York Times' erroneous coverage of Wen Ho Lee, a Chinese-American scientist falsely accused of spying for China. What lead to the poor reporting by the Times? How may have ethnicity played a factor?</p> <p>Leang, Amy. "Newsrooms must walk the 'diversity' walk, not just talk the talk." <i>ASNE Reporter</i>, Friday, April 6, 2001.  The author was an intern from the Seattle Times, sent to a cover a national journalism conference (American Society of Newspaper Editors) for the conference's in-house daily publication. This brief article covers her reaction to the attitudes she found at the conference.</p>
W, 12/1	<p><b>Diversifying Mainstream News; Ethnic and Community Press</b></p> <p><u>Required readings in the packet:</u>  Henry, Neil. (2003). Racial reverberations in newsrooms after Jayson Blair: The coverage of scandal showed once again that African Americans are still not allowed to be seen as individuals when they fail. <i>Nieman Reports</i>, 57(3): 25-28. What impact did the Jayson Blair scandal (in which a young black reporter was found to have plagiarized and fabricated stories he wrote for the <i>New York Times</i>) on attitudes towards minority reporters and diversity programs in journalism?</p> <p>Greenstein, Jennifer. "Just Add Color." <i>Brill's Content</i>, March 1999. This article deals with the potential for "tokenism" in diversifying the news. What problems in diversity coverage still exist at this reporter's newspaper, despite their efforts to include more minority voices?</p> <p><u>Other required reading:</u>  Ethnic/Community press publication of your own choosing.</p>
M, 12/6	<p><b>Community Field Trip</b></p>
W, 12/8	<p><b>Communities and News Coverage</b>  <i>Due: Community Field Trip assignment</i></p>
M, 12/13	<p><b>Final Exam</b></p>