



Iona College
Department of Mass Communication

MCO 326, Section A: Race and Gender in Mass Communication

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Course Description:

This course critically examines the role of the media in constructions of race and gender in society. It analyzes race and gender issues related to media representations, media ownership, and the media workforce.

Course Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course. But it is recommended that the class be taken after completing MCO 200, Introduction to Mass Communication.

Learning Goals and Expectations (LGEs):

This course will introduce you to a number of issues and theories that are central to the study of race and gender in mass communication. We will also devote some time to exploring these ideas in relationship to class and sexual orientation. By the end of this course, a student should be able to:

1. Explain why race and gender are not simply biological facts but social constructions.
2. Comprehend the role that the mass media play in perpetuating certain ideological perspectives on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.
3. Critically assess the media industry and its products in terms of racial, gender, class, and non-heterosexual inclusion, roles, and control.
4. Discuss how representations of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation in the mass media have developed over the past century.
5. Temporarily suspend his or her own biases and look at the mass media through the lens of somebody of a different race, gender, class, or sexual orientation than his or her own.
6. Grasp how a variety of forces influence the mass media and how the mass media, in turn, influence our views.
7. Understand the tension between social structure and human agency in the ways in which mass media messages are both produced and consumed.
8. Begin to formulate informed positions on what could be done to promote a more enlightened display of cultural sensitivity and diversity by the media industries.

Assessment Tools:

Student performance will be measured as follows:

- Mini-quizzes 20% (Measures LGEs 2-4)
- Quiz 15% (Measures LGEs 1-3, 6, and 7)
- Response papers 30% (15% each) (Measures LGEs 2, 3, and 7)
- Final paper 20% (Measures LGEs 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8)
- Class participation/attendance 15% (Measures LGEs 2, 3, 5, and 7)

For each assessment tool/requirement, you will receive a letter grade based on the descriptions included in the Iona undergraduate catalogue. At the end of the semester, I will average your letter grades according to the weights listed above to determine your final grade.

Readings:

- Lind, Rebecca Ann, ed. *Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers*. Boston: Pearson, 2004. ISBN 0205344194
- Course Pack (available at Iona Bookstore)
- Other readings will be provided in class or posted on Blackboard.

Test and Assignments Description

Mini-quizzes: To help you keep up with the day-to-day reading, I will occasionally ask you to take a very brief quiz, which will consist of “objective” (true-false, multiple choice) and “subjective” (short answer) questions. This means, of course, that you should complete the assigned reading for each session *before* coming to class. Each quiz should take less than fifteen minutes to finish.

Quiz: The quiz will be comprised of both “objective” (true-false, multiple choice) and “subjective” (short answer, essay) questions. It will take less than an hour to complete.

Response papers: You will draft two four- to five-page papers based on assigned readings and other media texts. You will be required to synthesize these materials and present an argument based on them. I will provide more details later in the semester.

Final paper: You will write a ten-page paper that applies several of the key concepts of the course to the films we screen in class. For this extended essay, you will be required to conduct research. I will supply more details later in the term.

Class participation/attendance: Classroom discussions and exercises, some of which will require outside preparation, will be a major part of this course. Consequently, you’re expected to energetically participate in them.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

College Policy: Cheating and plagiarism subvert both the purpose of the College and the experience students derive from being at Iona. They are offenses which harm the offender and the students who do not cheat. The Iona community, therefore, pledges itself to do all in its power to prevent cheating and plagiarism, and to impose impartial sanctions upon those who harm themselves, their fellow students, and the entire community by academic dishonesty. When a case of academic dishonesty surfaces, a report will be filed with the dean of Arts and Sciences. In the case of a second instance, a student may be suspended from the College. Students may appeal first to the professor who discovered the instance; second, to the department chair; and third, to the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

The decision of the dean is final. Students may appeal to the Provost if the suspension is five class days or less. The student handbook describes the procedures of adjudication.

General Course Policies:

Attendance and lateness: Because of the participatory nature of this course, you are required to come to class. If you must be absent, please clear it with me ahead of time. More than one unexcused absence or frequent tardiness displays a lack of interest in the course and will be reflected in your participation/attendance grade. If you miss more than two classes (regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused) you might be given a grade of "FA," or failure due to excessive absence.

Deadline: You will be penalized one full grade for each calendar day a paper is late.

Makeup quizzes: If you miss a mini-quiz, you will not be able to reschedule a time to take it. If you miss the long quiz, you will not be able to take a makeup quiz except in exceptional circumstances. I will have the final say on whether or not such circumstances are deemed exceptional.

Extra credit: There are no extra credit opportunities anticipated for this course.

Tentative Course Outline: (Note: Films scheduled for screening are subject to substitution)

January 26	Introduction and Course Overview Why the Mass Media Matter Race and Gender as Social Constructions
February 2	Fundamental Concepts The Fabric of Oppression A Cultural Studies Approach to Media and Multiculturalism Read: Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. Excerpt from <i>Gender in History</i> . Gorham, Bradley W. "The Social Psychology of Stereotypes: Implications for Media Audiences." (Chapter 2.1) Holtzman, Linda. Excerpt from <i>Media Messages</i> . Lind, Rebecca Ann. "Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media." (Chapter 1)
February 9	Fundamental Concepts Ideology, Hegemony, and Mass Media The Active Audience Read: Rockler, Naomi R. "Race, Hierarchy, and Hyenaphobia in <i>The Lion King</i> ." (Chapter 6.1) Baum, Rob. "Crossing the Lines of Gender and Color: Viewers Respond to <i>Fires in the Mirror</i> ." (Chapter 3.6) Currie, Dawn H. "Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers."
February 16	Fundamental Concepts Inclusion, Roles, and Control in Mass Media Read: Jenkins, Henry. "'Out of the Closet and Into the Universe.': Queers and <i>Star Trek</i> ." Dixon, Travis L. "Journalistic Issues: News, Public Affairs, Sports Content." (Chapter 5.1) Wilson II, Clint C., Félix Gutiérrez, and Lena M. Chao. Excerpt from <i>Racism, Sexism, and the Media</i> .
February 23	Quiz An Historical Perspective History Seen through Racial and Gendered Lenses Read: Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. Excerpt from <i>Gender in History</i> .
March 2	An Historical Perspective A Brief History of Representations of Race and Gender Read: Wilson II, Clint C., Félix Gutiérrez, and Lena M. Chao. Excerpts from <i>Racism, Sexism, and the Media</i> . Gauntlett, David. Excerpt from <i>Media, Gender and Identity</i> .
March 7	Diversity in TV Gender and Sexual Orientation on the Small Screen (Screen shows) Read: TBD

- March 9 **Diversity in TV**
Race on the Small Screen
(Screen shows)
Read: TBD
- March 16 **No Class**
Spring Break
- March 23 **Diversity in Film**
Gender on the Big Screen
(Screen *Thelma and Louise*)
Read: TBD
- March 30 **Diversity in Film**
Sexual Orientation on the Big Screen
(Screen *But I'm a Cheerleader*)
Read: TBD
- April 6 **No Class**
Good Friday
- April 13 **Diversity in Film**
African Americans on the Big Screen
(Screen *Bamboozled*)
Read: Brooks, Dwight E., and George L. Daniels. "*Bamboozled?: Audience Reactions to a Spike Lee Film.*" (Chapter 3.7)
- April 20 **Diversity in Film**
Latinos on the Big Screen
(Screen *El Norte*)
- April 27 **Diversity in Film**
Asian Americans on the Big Screen
(Screen *Chan is Missing*)
Read: TBD
- May 4 **Diversity in Film**
Native Americans on the Big Screen
(Screen *Smoke Signals*)
Read: Bird, Elizabeth S. "Takes of Difference: Representations of American Indian Women in Popular Film and Television."