



**Spring 2007**

**HIST 347**

**Gender History and American Film**

**Tues/Thurs 10:30-12: Grad. Education bldg, room 200**

**Screenings Wednesday 6-8: Annenberg School, room 111**

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**Office hours: Tues/Thurs 2-3 and by appointment**

More than any other medium, the motion pictures fostered new ideals and images of modern womanhood and manhood in the United States. Through the twentieth century, gender representations on the screen bore a complex relationship to the social, economic, and political transformations marking the lives and consciousness of American men and women. This course explores the history of American gender in the last 100 years through film. It treats the motion pictures as a primary source that, juxtaposed with other kinds of historical evidence, opens a window onto gendered work, leisure, sexuality, family life, and politics. We will view a wide range of Hollywood films since 1900, as well as films made by blacklisted artists and feminists.

### **Readings:**

The following books are available at the Penn Book Center and are on reserve in Rosengarten:

1. Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989)
2. Sonya Michel and Robyn Muncy, eds. *Engendering America: A Documentary History, 1865 to the Present* (McGraw-Hill, 1998). **\*\*NOTE:** This book has just gone out of print but Penn Book Center has acquired 25 copies; it is easily shared, or you may wish to order a used copy online from ABEbooks, Amazon, or Alibris.
3. Steven J. Ross, ed., *Movies and American Society* (Blackwell, 2002).
4. Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Routledge, 2006).

The major films for the course (screened Wednesday 6-8 pm) are also on reserve in Rosengarten. I recommend that you view at least some of the films more than once.

Articles marked "CR" in the syllabus will be available in a bulk pack from Campus Copy Center, 3907 Walnut Street.

Articles marked "BB" are on the Blackboard course website [[courseweb.upenn.edu](http://courseweb.upenn.edu)] under "Course Documents." "Course Documents" materials are organized by week. I will also post contemporary film reviews and other brief historical documents before we discuss the films.

The syllabus includes URLs for articles on external websites; these are also available on Blackboard at “External Links.” Please note that articles on Blackboard are not included in the bulkpack.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. *Attendance, preparation and participation:* Attendance in class and Wednesday film screenings is required. An attendance sheet will be circulated at all class meetings. More than two absences from class may result in my lowering your final grade. If you are absent from a film screening, you must view the film and write an analysis of it, which will *not* count as one of your required film analyses. The course will mix lectures and discussions, and will be more successful if everyone completes the day’s reading before class. Thought participation in class discussion will be taken into account in your final grade.

2. *Two film analyses.* 4-5 pages each. These papers require you to do a close analysis of the primary film of the week, discussing it in terms of the historical themes and issues raised by the assigned articles and primary sources. The paper is due the Monday after the film. One paper **must** be submitted by February 19th; the second no later than March 26th. Be sure to plan ahead!! Each paper will be 15% of final grade.

3. *Reception/historical context exercise.* 4-5 pages. This requires you to find two reviews, fan magazine articles, or other primary documents related to the primary film of the week, and discuss what they reveal about how the film was understood at the time. A sign up sheet will be distributed early in the semester, and you must choose a week in which you are **not** writing a film analysis. Only one of your documents may be from a digital source. Individually or as a group, you will make a brief presentation about your findings to the class (usually the day after the film screening). Paper is due the Monday after the film. Please turn in the documents with the paper; if they are in digital format, I will post them to the Blackboard website. 20% of final grade.

4. *Research project on a film of your choice.* 10-12 pages. You will analyze the film, contextualize it with other primary sources that address the film itself or its themes, and discuss its meaning for the history of gender in the period in which it was produced and exhibited. I will distribute a handout with suggestions of films and detailed instructions for how to do this project. Email me with the name of the film you wish to research and why no later than March 15 (earlier is better!). Papers are due April 19<sup>th</sup>. 30% of final grade.

5. *Take-home final.* Essay format. Distributed in the last class; due 4/24. 20% of final grade.

### **Other Matters:**

*Communication:* I hold office hours because I’d rather speak to you in person; if you have a schedule conflict, we can make an appointment at another time. Please write email using accurate and appropriate language, as if you were in working in a business rather than IMing your friends. I will respond to email but not always immediately; if your question requires a lengthy reply or a conversation, I will ask you to see me during office hours.

*Written work:* All written work should be double-spaced, with 1" margins and fonts set at 10-12 points. No faxed papers or e-mail attachments will be accepted. Late papers may be marked down.

*Evaluations:* In evaluating your work, I look for how well you have understood the material and formulated a thoughtful, engaging, and persuasive response; how well you back up your statements with evidence and offer an argument, not simply an opinion; how coherent, clear, and well organized your paper is; how you use language, with a preference for writing that is vivid, precise, and grammatically correct.

Students are required to complete all assignments to pass the course. Improvement over time will be taken into consideration in determining course grades.

*Classroom environment:* I encourage the free expression of thought and diversity of opinion in all my courses. Censorship, including self-censorship, defeats the purposes of higher education. But I also believe that free expression is most free when it is accompanied by civility, respect, and tolerance. My aim is not to impose a point of view on you, but to encourage you to think about your own views, to subject them to the test of evidence and argument, and to revise and refine them when appropriate. Be open to the perspectives of others, engage their arguments thoughtfully, and answer them by acknowledging their viewpoints.

*Academic honesty:* Plagiarism, fabrication, and facilitating the academic dishonesty of others are grounds for failure in this course. Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as your own work. You may not copy another writer's exact words without using quotation marks around them and citing their source. Nor may you use the ideas or information of another without citing their source in a reference (a footnote or endnote). You may not submit the already written papers of another or the research of another. Although you are encouraged to discuss the readings and your ideas with your classmates, you must develop, outline, and write your papers alone. Please ask if you are unsure about how to cite sources.

## Course Outline

### **1/9-1/11      Movies as History: Gender Representations and Gendered Experience**

#### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, introduction, 1-40

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, ch. 2

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 1-11, 38-52

**View** for Thursday some of the films in the Library of Congress/American Memory motion picture collections:

“Inventing Entertainment”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/edhtml/edhome.html>

“Inside an American Factory”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/papr/west/westhome.html>

“Origins of American Animation”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/oahtml/oahtml.html>

“The Life of a City”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/papr/nychome.html>

“American Variety Stage”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vshtml/vshome.html>

“America at Work, America at Leisure”: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awlhtml/awlhome.html>

**In-class:** Early ‘actualities’ and ‘attractions’

## **1/16-1/18      New Women, Social Problems, and Progressive Reform**

### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 42-63

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, ch. 3

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, pp. 60-63, 73-80, 89-103, 111-112, 116-118, 131-143

Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 1-24

Shelley Stamp, “‘Oil on the Flames of Vice’: The Battle over White Slave Films in New York City,” *Film History* 9 (1997): 351-64 [BB]

**In class:** excerpts from “Way Down East” (1920), “A Florida Enchantment” (1914), and some Edison shorts

**Wednesday screening:** “Traffic in Souls” (1913)

## **1/23-1/25      Interracial Encounters in the Jim Crow Era**

### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 164-190

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, ch. 4

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 16-20, 27-34, 112-115

Gerald R. Butters, Jr., “From Homestead to Lynch Mob: Portrays of Black Masculinity in Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates*,” *Journal for MultiMedia History*, Vol. 3 (2000) [BB]

Francis G. Couvares, “The Good Censor: Race, Sex, and Censorship in the Early Cinema,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7 (1994): 233-251

Peggy Pascoe, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of “Race” in Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, No. 1. (Jun., 1996), pp. 44-69. [BB]

**In class:** excerpts from “Birth of a Nation” (1915) and “Broken Blossoms” (1919)

**Wednesday screening:** “Within Our Gates” (1920)

## **1/30-2/8      The Jazz Age [note: no class on 2/1]**

### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 64-96

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, ch. 5, also pp. 14-23

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 70-73, 80-85, 105-107, 118-127

Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 25-76

Gaylyn Studlar, "The Perils of Pleasure: Fan Magazine Discourse as Women's Commodified Culture," *Wide Angle* 13 (1991): 6-33 [BB]

Gaylyn Studlar, "'Optic Intoxication': Rudolph Valentino and Dance Madness," in *This Mad Masquerade*, 150-198 [CR]

Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (1933), excerpts [CR]

**In class:** excerpts from "It" (1927); "College" (1927)

**Wednesday screening 1/31:** "Our Dancing Daughters" (1928)

**Wednesday Screening 2/7:** "The Sheik" (1921)

## **2/13-2/15 Gender and the Economic Crisis: The Great Depression**

### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 98-120 (120-126 optional), 128-157

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, ch. 6

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 161-187

Elaine S. Abelson, "'Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them': Gender and Homelessness in the Great Depression," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 105-127. [BB]

Ruth Schonle Cavan and Katherine Ranck, *The Family and the Depression*, excerpts [CR]

**In class:** excerpts from "Baby Face" (1933) and "Gold Diggers of 1933"

**Wednesday screening:** "My Man Godfrey" (1936)

## **2/20-2/22 Work and Motherhood in the World War II Era**

### **Reading:**

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 189-219

Susan Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children: Federal Child Care Policies in the World War II Era," *Polity* 26 (1994): 655-675 [BB]

Leisa D. Meyer, "Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in the Women's Army Corps during WWII," *Feminist Studies* 18 (1992): 581-601 [BB]

Phillip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*, excerpt [CR]

Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, excerpt [CR]

**In class:** "The Hidden Army" (1943); "Miracle of Morgan's Creek" (1944); "Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter" (1980)

**Wednesday screening:** "Mildred Pierce" (1945)

## **2/27-3/1 Rehabilitating Men**

### **Reading:**

Laura McEnaney, "Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945-1953," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1265-1291 [BB]

David Gerber, "Anger and Affability: The Rise and Representation of a Repertoire of Self-Presentation Skills in a WWII Disabled Veteran," *Journal of Social History* 27 (1993): 5-27 [BB]

Rebecca Jo Plant, "The Veteran, His Wife, and Their Mothers: Prescriptions for Psychological Rehabilitation after World War II," in D. Oostdijk and M. Valenta, eds., *Tales of the Great American Victory: World War II in Politics and Poetics*, [BB]

**Wednesday screening:** "The Best Years of Our Lives" (1946)

*Spring break, 3/6-3/8*

### **3/13-3/15      Gender and Culture of the 1950s**

#### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 192-219

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 223-241, 252-254

Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 24-35

Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 97-144

James J. Lorence, "Cold War America: The Great Fear Comes Home," in *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth*, 1-17 [CR]

Daniel Horowitz, "Rethinking Betty Friedan & *The Feminine Mystique*: Labor Union Radicalism & Feminism in Cold War America," *American Quarterly* 40 (March 1996): 1-42. [BB]

Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1959," *Journal of American History* 79 (March 1993): 1455-82. [BB]

**In class:** excerpts from 1950s "social guidance" and "hygiene" films; "Adams Rib" (1949); "All That Heaven Allows" (1955); "Pillow Talk" (1959)

**Wednesday screening:** "Salt of the Earth" (1954)

### **3/20-3/22      The American Dilemma**

#### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 249-278

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 241-246, 255-257

Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*, 111-138 [CR]

Ed Guerrero, "The Black Man on Our Screens and the Empty Space in Representation," *Callaloo* 18 (Spring 1995): 395-400 [BB]

Steve Estes, "I am a Man!: Race, Masculinity, and the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike," *Labor History* 41 (2000): 153-170 [BB]

**In class:** excerpts from "Imitation of Life" (1934 and 1959)

**Wednesday screening:** "Nothing But a Man" (1964)

### **3/27-3/29      Masculinity in the Vietnam Era**

#### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 280-312

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 257-266, 294-298

Joshua B. Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26 (1993): 725-245 [BB]

Christian Appy, *Working Class War*, ch. 1 [CR]

Bob Muller, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, "A Veteran Speaks—Against the War" (1971)  
[http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/VVAW\\_Muller.html](http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/VVAW_Muller.html)

**In class:** excerpts from "Green Berets" (1968); "Easy Rider" (1969); "Deer Hunter" (1978)

**Wednesday screening:** "Coming Home" (1978)

### **4/3-4/5      The Feminist Gaze**

#### **Reading:**

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 269-290, 298-307

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16(1975): 6-18 [BB]

"Interview with Lizzie Borden," *Feminist Studies* 15 (1989): 327-345 [BB]

"Documents from the Women's Liberation Movement," Duke University,  
<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/>

Chicago Women's Liberation Union Herstory archives,  
<http://www.cwluherstory.com/CWLUArchive/archive.html>

**In class:** excerpts from "Growing Up Female"(1971) and "Daughter Rite" (1980)

**Wednesday screening:** "Born in Flames" (1983)

*Research project due 4/5*

### **4/10-4/17      Gender Tensions and Resolutions in the Late 20th Century (no class 4/12)**

#### **Reading:**

Ross, *Movies and American Society*, 313-2

Michel & Muncy, *Engendering America*, 313-332

**In class:** excerpts from "Kramer vs. Kramer" (1979); "Working Girl" (1988); "Fatal Attraction" (1987)

**Wednesday screening 4/11:** "The Wedding Banquet" (1993)

### **4/19      Final thoughts & discussion.**

*Take home final due 4/24*