

**Humanities and Religious Studies 185  
Women in Film and American Culture  
Winter 2009 (GE category D2)**

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Study of major social issues confronting American women, examined through their images in film and other visual and literary arts.

This Humanities course has an American Studies "bent," designed to fulfill the General Education requirement for a class which deals with "major social issues of the contemporary era."

Like other forms of popular art, Hollywood films have a complex relationship with American society and culture: they at once influence and reflect the beliefs and actions of Americans living in the twentieth century. Within this context, the course is intended to introduce the student to the variety of ways in which film study and the investigation of other art forms can illuminate both socio-cultural and artistic-aesthetic concerns and preoccupations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/Students who are successful in HRS 185 will be able to:

- Describe female images in various art forms;
- Analyze how the depiction of women in American art has corresponded to women's changing roles in modern American society;
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of film as an art form (in which the opportunity, indeed the necessity, for creativity exists), in order to explain how filmmakers communicate "meaning" or content through the manipulation of formal elements;
- Demonstrate visual literacy and an accompanying skill in critical thinking. Most Americans are more than willing to be passively "entertained" by film. A major aim of this course is to encourage students to become more informed, active, and analytical viewers of film.

**TEXTS:**

- Molly Haskell. *From Reverence to Rape*
- a "popular" romance/western/adventure novel
- packet of articles available from University Copy, 646 Howe Avenue-- behind Tokyo Fro's on Fair Oaks Blvd/929.6147 (\*\*)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

You will be expected to have read the day's assignment before the class meeting. Sometimes the material will be discussed in detail; sometimes only mentioned as background for the day's work.

**EVALUATION:**

- 2 review/reaction papers (3-5 pgs): each worth 100 points  
refer to assignment guidelines handout  
NB: at least one paper should deal with a film seen outside class
- 2 tests: each worth 100 points. Purchase two 886E scantrons, please.
- participation: worth 100 points (the success of the course depends, in large measure, on the engagement of the students with the materials and class itself. I expect students to participate on a regular and informed basis. Simply being physically present does not constitute participation.)

500-450 A

449-390 B

389-330 C

329-275 D

**PROFESSORIAL QUIRKS:**

- NO LATE WORK ACCEPTED
- The classroom door will be closed 5 minutes after the class period begins and NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED ONCE THE DOOR IS "CLOSED."

## CALENDAR

### **January 6: INTRODUCTORY MEETING**

#### **January 7: HEROINES AND SHEROS**

READ: Haskell: chapter 1/ The Big Lie

Pearson and Pope. "The Female Hero in American and British Literature" \*\*

FILM: *She Done Him Wrong* OR MY CHOICE

#### **January 8: FORMULA**

READ: Romance/adventure novel of your choice

Hubbard: "Category Romances: What Has Happened to Cinderella. . ." \*\*

FILM: *Pretty Woman*

#### **January 13: WOMAN AS IMAGE: THE MOVIE MUSICAL**

READ: Haskell: chapter 2/The Twenties and chapter 3/The Thirties

Mulvey: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" \*\*

FILM: *Goldiggers of 1933* or *Chicago*

**Reaction paper 1 due no later than today**

#### **January 14: WOMEN'S FILMS**

READ: Haskell: chapter 4/The Woman's Film and chapter 5/The Forties

FILM: *Mildred Pierce* or *Now Voyager*

**\*\*Test 1**

#### **January 15: WOMEN'S ROLES IN SOCIETY AND THE MOVIES**

READ: Haskell: chapter 5/the Fifties

Friedan: excerpts from *The Feminine Mystique*

FILM: *Pat and Mike*

#### **January 20: WOMEN IN DANGER**

READ: Haskell: chapter 8/The Sixties

Clover: "Her Body, Himself" \*\*

FILM: MY CHOICE

#### **January 21: MARILYN**

READ: Haskell: chapter 9/The Age of Ambivalence

Dick: "Marilyn Monroe: Cult Heroine" \*\*

Rollyson: "More than a Popcorn Venus" \*\*

FILM: *The Seven Year Itch* OR *Bus Stop* OR *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*

**Reaction Paper 2 due no later than today**

#### **January 22: FASHION**

READ: Basinger: "Fashion and Glamour" \*\*

FILM: *The Women*

**\*\*TEST 2**