

**COMM/WGST 407: Section 901
Women, Minorities, and Mass Media
Spring 2019**

Class Meetings

MWF 10:20-11:10 AM; 18 Bolton Hall

Instructor Information

Dr. Srividya “Srivi” Ramasubramanian, Ph.D.

Office: 202D Bolton Hall

Office hours: Mon 1:30-2:30, Tues 1-2, and by appointment

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Course Description

This course will explore social identity in the context of popular culture and mass media. Drawing on literature from Communication, Media Studies, Women’s Studies, Africana Studies, sociology, and psychology, we will learn about theories and case studies that help understand how the media are sites for constant negotiation and construction of identities such as masculinity, femininity, blackness, and “otherness.” The term “minorities” will be interpreted broadly so that we can explore power and privilege in a variety of contexts such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, nationality, physical/mental disability, and religion.

Prerequisite

U3, U4 or approval of instructor. This is a Writing Designated (W-Course) and, as such, it is not possible to pass the course without passing the written portion.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Explain theories and concepts about how the media shape users’ attitudes and beliefs about cultural difference and vice-versa
- Develop critical media literacy skills by carefully and systematically observing, evaluating, and analyzing media texts
- Design and share an original final paper that applies theories and concepts from class to the role of media among women and minorities
- Practice academic writing skills relating to style, format, organization, and content that will help communicate effectively with audiences in the discipline
- Evaluate and provide constructive feedback to peers through class discussions and writing assignments

Required Course Materials

- Purchase course packet from MSC bookstore. Bring it to class every time we meet.
- Educational videos will be assigned for viewing through <http://mediamatrix.tamu.edu>. However, some videos screened in class may not be

available through mediamatrix. Students are responsible to locate, retrieve, and reproduce all electronic materials in this course.

- Please bring blue books and writing instruments for the in-class exams.

A note on “W” courses

This is a writing-intensive 400-level W course with several opportunities to improve your writing skills throughout the semester. A substantial portion of your grade will be based on writing assignments. You will not be able to pass this course without having completed the writing assignments. Written feedback will be provided by your peers and by the instructor for the written assignments. You are also encouraged to make appointments for one-on-one consultations with experienced writing consultants at the University Writing Center (go to writingcenter.tamu.edu for more details).

Assessment

Exams 1, 2, and 3 (15% each)	- 45%
Research paper and related writing assignments	- 45%
Proposal/bibliography	- 5%
Context/theory	- 10%
Final Paper	- 25%
Class Presentation	- 5%
Participation and exercises	- 10%

Written Exams (45%)

There will be three closed-book, closed notes exams in this course: Exam 1, Exam 2, and Exam 3. The exams will contain short-answer questions drawn from the textbook, course packet, class presentation, class discussions, and screenings. There will be a review session before each exam. Review sheets will be handed out to help you prepare effectively for the exams. Please bring a big blue book to class for these exams.

Research Paper and Related Writing Assignments (45%)

Your research paper is to be completed in incremental steps leading to the final presentation. It is crucial that you incorporate concepts and theoretical perspectives discussed in the course into your final paper. The research paper is divided into smaller writing assignments: proposal/bibliography (5%), context/theory (10%), final paper (25%), and class presentation (5%).

Assignment 1- Proposal/bibliography (5%): Pick a topic relating to media (any type that interests you: films, magazines, social media, etc.) and women/minorities (you can define minorities broadly here based on race, sexual orientation, religious orientation, mental/physical health, etc.). Intersectionality is a must to consider while picking the group that you want to focus on. Write a one-page proposal about what you plan to study and why it is important to study this topic. Excellent topics are those that are socially-relevant, topical, interesting, and relatively under-studied. Pick a topic that you are truly interested in because you have to stick with it through the semester. You should pick a

topic that we have NOT studied in depth in this class. Please consult with the instructor to make sure that you are in the right track.

Along with the one-page proposal, submit an annotated bibliography where you read, summarize, and critique 5 scholarly articles/book chapters relevant to your topic. Please meet with the instructor if you would like to learn to distinguish scholarly from non-scholarly sources. You are also encouraged to meet with the Communication librarian, Dr. Steve Bales. Clearly articulate how each scholarly source helps guide your central argument. Excellent bibliographies go beyond simply summarizing the paper. They show the instructor that the student has read, understood, reflected, and critiqued the scholarly work. Publications that are only tangentially relevant to your final project will lead to lowering of grades. You are welcome to refer to the textbook and other readings from this class but make sure that your bibliography includes 5 scholarly sources over and beyond class readings.

Assignment 2 -Context/theory (10%): Building on the previous assignment, write a 4 page double-spaced paper about the context/background relating to the specific types of women or the minority group that you have decided to focus on. Discuss the contexts (such as historical, political, economic, and social) that shape how and why media portrays these groups the way we do. Provide support for your claims by using citations of previously published works and for any statistics that you provide. It is very important to draw from theories and concepts discussed in this class that will inform your media analyses. You should cite your sources in a separate reference section for this assignment.

Final paper (25%): Write an 8-10 page final paper that builds on the previous writing assignments. Before writing the paper, immerse yourself for a two-week period with the media content that you are interested in studying. Keep detailed notes about your descriptions of the content as well as your thoughts and feelings as you analyze these media texts. Through repeated and close readings of the media texts, engage in critical analyses that reflect on the meanings of the emerging patterns. Alternatively, conduct quantitative content analyses with predefined units of analyses and coding scheme along with a detailed coding booklet. In this case, provide graphs, tables, and figures to share your findings. Make sure you make connections between your analyses and theories/concepts covered in your assigned readings and class discussions. The paper should consider potential impacts of the media messages, theoretical/practical implications, and limitations of your project.

Final presentations (5%): Summarize the key points from your final project into a tri-fold poster or a laptop-based slide show to share with the class in a creative, attractive, informative format. Be prepared to answer questions from the audience and bring additional materials to support key arguments that you make in the poster.

All papers are due at the beginning of class on dates indicated in the course calendar. Use double-spaced, 1 inch margin, 12 point Times New Roman font for all papers. Remember to put your ID number (assigned in the first week of class) on all the papers and staple them. Cite all sources in a separate reference section at the end of the paper. All papers

should be submitted in class. Please do not send them via email or drop them off at my office. Incomplete assignments, missing, and late assignments will be awarded zero points. Only insightful papers that go beyond the class readings will get above average grades. Mediocre assignments will receive mediocre grades.

Participation and exercises (10%)

Every week, you will be assigned to an in-class or homework activity related to the assigned readings and documentary films. Class participation is based on the instructor's subjective assessment of your engagement in discussions, group activities, and assignments in the course.

Attendance

You are allowed to miss up to **two class periods** without penalty in this course. For unexcused absences in excess of these two, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade per absence. Please see Student Rule 7. <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07> Documentation is due as per the deadlines specified in Student Rule 7. I do not accept the "Explanatory Absence for Absence from Class Form" in this course.

Grading Policies

Grades have to be earned in this class for completing course requirements. To be fair on all students, extra credit opportunities, if made available, will apply to all students and cannot be given to individual students.

89.5% to 100%	A
79.5% to 89.4%	B
69.5% to 79.4%	C
59.5% to 69.4%	D
Below 59.4%	F

Class Policies

- All assigned readings should be completed before coming to class. Please be prepared to summarize and discuss the assigned readings during class.
- Assigned readings, class discussions, blog entries, handouts, guest lectures, video screenings, and your own final project are all fair game for exam questions.
- As a courtesy to other class members, please turn off all cell phones during class time. If you have a special situation that requires you to receive or send cell phone messages in class, kindly let the instructor know in advance.
- Laptops and other electronic word processing devices are not allowed in the class except for note-taking purposes. Violation of this policy would lead to a no-laptop rule for everyone in class for the rest of the semester.
- Audio recording, photography, and video recording during class are prohibited.

Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule. All chapter numbers refer to the chapters in the course packet.

Wk	Dates	Topic of the week	Assigned readings	Activities
1	Jan 14/16/18	Social construction, gender, & popular culture	Read Chap. 1 <i>Video: Miss Representation</i>	
2	Jan 21/23/25	Cultivation, ableism, and TV programs	Read Chap. 3.1 <i>Video: Tough guise</i>	No class on 1/21 (MLK Day)
3	Jan 28/30/Feb 1	Social cognitive theory, body image, colorism, and advertising	Read Chap. 5.9 <i>Video: Slim hopes</i>	Writing workshop 1 on 2/1; Topics due on 2/1
4	Feb 4/6/8	Contact hypothesis, sexual orientation, and sitcoms	Read Chap. 7.1 <i>Video: Further off the straight and narrow path</i>	No class on Feb 8 (instructor away on work trip)
5	Feb 11/13/15	Review and Exam 1	All materials from Unit 1	Exam 1 on 2/13
6	Feb 18/20/22	Attribution theory, social class, and magazines	Read Chap. 9.1	Assignment 1 draft for peer review on 2/18; Writing workshop 2 on 2/22
7	Feb 25/27/Mar 1	Social identity theory, religion, and films	Read Chap. 3.4 <i>Video: Reel bad Arabs</i>	Assignment 1 due on 2/25
8	Mar 4/6/8	Priming, African Americans, and music videos	Read Chap. 7.6 <i>Video: Hip hop: Beyond beats and rhymes</i>	
9	Mar 11/13/15	Spring break	Spring break	Spring break
10	Mar 18/20/22	Framing, Latino Americans, and news media	Read Chap. 5.2 <i>Video: Latinos beyond reel</i>	TAMU RISE and journalism conference on 3/22
11	Mar 25/27/29	Review and Exam 2	All materials from Unit 2	Exam 2 on 3/27; Comm Diversity conference on 3/29
12	Apr 1/3/5	Model minority discourse, Asian Americans, and dramas	Read Chap. 5.4 <i>Video: Slanted screen</i>	Assignment 2 draft for peer review on 4/1
13	Apr 8/10/12	Symbolic annihilation, Native Americans, and sports	Read Chap. 3.7 <i>Video: Race, power and American sports (on library website through Kanopy)</i>	Writing workshop 3 on 4/8; Assignment 2 due on 4/10
14	Apr 15/17/19	Media literacy, intersectionality, and children's programs	Read Chap. 6.2 <i>Video: Mickey Mouse Monopoly</i>	No class on 4/19 (reading day)
15	Apr 22/24/26	Review and Exam 3	All materials from Unit 3	Exam 3 on 4/24
16	Apr 29/30	Final presentations in class on 4/29		Upload final paper by 5/5 midnight

Disability Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is extremely important. Always cite your sources when you are referring to ideas that you are not your own. Aggie honor code: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” As a student of Texas A&M University, you are committed to following the Aggie honor code. Plagiarism, falsification, cheating, fabrication, complicity, multiple submissions, abuse and unauthorized access to university resources will not be tolerated in this course. All students of this course should read up details about the Aggie code in the following website: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/aggiecode>

Ground Rules for Class Discussions

Considering the nature of this course, it is especially important that we establish a few ground rules in the classroom to encourage engaged, mindful, and honest discussions. I hope everyone feels comfortable to share and explore ideas in this class. During the course of such free and open discussions, it is quite possible that disagreements will arise. I welcome disagreements in the spirit of critical academic exchange, but please remember to be respectful of other points of view, whether you agree with them or not. In this class, derogatory comments based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, or nationality will not be tolerated.