English 496/596 – Spring 2013
Professor Kathleen Karlyn
207 PLC; Tues 10-noon, Wed 10-11
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*** Feminist Film Criticism: Female Stars ***

Objectives: This course is intended to help students develop an understanding of feminist film criticism by applying its principles to a series of case studies of female stars. We will consider those stars in their historical and cultural contexts, examining how they are produced and marketed by entertainment industries and how their fans invest meaning in them. By the end of the course, students should become familiar with major strategies and debates in feminist film criticism as well as important developments in film and TV history.

Procedures: Each week we will see a film on Tuesday and discuss it on Thursday. For the first three weeks, I will lead our Thursday discussions, then beginning in Week 3, a student panel will lead a 30-45-minute discussion of the film and related issues.

Attendance, late work and other policies: If you are absent from class, you will need to make your own arrangements for locating and watching the material you have missed. Three absences will affect your grade, without notice. Four absences will result in failure for the course. Show up punctually. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to see me after class or you will be marked absent. Chronic lateness will constitute absences, at my discretion. No incompletes will be given and no late papers accepted unless you contact me in advance about a serious illness or other emergency. Hard copies of assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed. I do not accept e-mailed work.

Please maintain professional etiquette in your communication with me. For e-mails, put the course title in the subject line and address me as “Dear Professor Karlyn.” Bring important questions to me in person, during my office hours or by appointment, rather than communicating them to me by e-mail or during passing time between classes.

Classroom Standards: Please take active responsibility for creating a respectful learning environment within the classroom. Pay full attention to whoever has the floor. Refrain from side-conversations. Turn all laptops and cell phones off (not to “vibrate”). Don’t eat. Do your best to avoid leaving and re-entering the classroom during screenings, lectures or discussions. Be prepared to engage with controversial subjects in a thoughtful manner. Disagreements are certain to arise, but do your part to ensure that the classroom remains a place for inquisitive thought and respectful debate. Think before you speak.

Writing Standards: All written work must use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and all assignments must adhere to standards of academic honesty outlined in the Student Handbook. Do not turn in work prepared for other classes. Do not e-mail me assignments. Document all sources consulted in preparing your work, including websites and other material obtained on the Internet. If in doubt, document.
Plagiarism will result in failure for the course and additional sanctions determined by the director of Student Judicial Affairs.

**Special Needs:** If you have special needs, please see me outside class to discuss them.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be based on a midterm (20 percent); final (30 percent); term paper (30 percent); panel presentation and class participation (20 percent). The final will be a take-home exam due during the scheduled exam period.

**Texts:** The primary texts are the films shown in class and *Stars*, 2nd edition, by Richard Dyer (BFI 1998), which is available at the bookstore. Readings will also be assigned from *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, edited by Christine Gledhill (Routledge 1991) and other books that are on reserve at the Knight Library. Additional readings are available on Blackboard. Note: additional readings may be added as the course progresses.

**And one last thought...** This course may screen films that contain violence, explicit sex and “adult” themes and/or situations. If such subject matter makes you unduly uncomfortable, let me know early in the term. You should also consider whether or not this course is an appropriate choice for you.

1. **SHIRLEY TEMPLE: Studying Stars**
   
   
   Snead, James, "Shirley Temple"
   
   Eckert, Charles, "Shirley Temple in the House of Rockefeller"
   
   April 2: Introduction and *The Little Colonel* (Butler, 1935, 80 min.)
   
   April 4: Discussion of film and readings

2. **BETTE DAVIS: Case Study of a Classic Diva**
   
   
   Klaprat, Kathy, "The Star as Market Strategy"
   
   Gaines, Jane, "Costume and Narrative"
   
   April 9: *Now Voyager* (Rapper, 1942, 117 min.)
   
   April 11: Discussion of film and readings

3. **GRETA GARBO: Melodrama**
   
   Dyer, Richard, "Stars as Signs," *Stars*, 87-131
   
   Gledhill, Christine, "Signs of Melodrama"
   
   April 16: *Queen Christina* (Mamoulian, 1933, 97 min.)
   
   April 18: Discussion and PANEL 1

4. **MARLENE DIETRICH: Feminist Film Theory**
   
   Weiss, Andrea, "A Queer Feeling When I Look at You"
   
   Mulvey, Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
   
   Naramore, James, excerpt from "Marlene Dietrich in Morocco"
   
   April 23: *The Blue Angel* (Von Sternberg, 1930, 103 min.)
   
   April 25: Discussion and PANEL 2

5. **MARILYN MONROE: Sexuality**
   
   Dyer, Richard, "Monroe and Sexuality"
   
   Stacey, Jackie, "Feminine Fascinations: Forms of Identification"
   
   April 30: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks, 1953, 91 min.)
   
   May 2: Discussion and PANEL 3
6. **LUCY: Televisual Stars**  
Mann, Denise, “The Spectacularization of Everyday Life”  
Doty, Alex, “The Cabinet of Lucy Ricardo: Lucille Ball's Star Image”  
May 7: **MIDTERM EXAM** followed by episode of **I Love Lucy**  
May 9: Discussion and PANEL 4

7. **MADONNA: Postmodern Stardom  *** Guest Instructor Diana Martinez *****  
Lewis, Lisa, “Female Address on MTV,” BB  
Tetzlaff, David. "Metatexual Girl,” BB  
Geraghty, Christine. “Re-Examining Stardom,”  
May 14: Truth or Dare (Keshishian, 1991, 118 min.)  
May 16: Discussion and PANEL 5

Rippy, Maguerite H., "Commodity, Tragedy, Desire: Female Sexuality and Blackness in the Iconography of Dorothy Dandridge”  
May 21: Clips from **Carmen Jones** (Preminger 1954) and **Introducing Dorothy Dandridge** (Coolidge, 1999)  
May 23: Discussion and PANEL 6

9. **OPRAH: Television, Race and Stardom**  
Smith-Shomade, Beretta, “‘You’d Better Recognize: Oprah the Iconic and Television Talk”  
Squires, Corrine, “Empowering Women? The Oprah Winfrey Show”  
Street, Paul, “The Full Blown ‘Oprah Effect’: Reflections on Color, Class and New Age Racism”  
May 28: Clips from **Color Purple** and Oprah; **PAPER DUE**  
May 30: Discussion and PANEL 7

10: **Conclusions and New Directions: Celebrity Culture in the Digital Age**  
Gies, Lieve. "Stars Behaving Badly”  
Durham, Aisha. “Check On It”  
June 4: Graduate students’ presentations  
June 6: Conclusions

**** Bibliographic information for readings ****


Geraghty, Christine. “Re-Examining Stardom,” in **Reinventing Film Studies**, Linda Williams et at

Gledhill, Christine. " Signs of Melodrama,” **Stardom.** 207-29.


**Additional readings recommended for grad students:**


Studlar, Gaylyn, "Masochism, Masquerade and the Erotic Metamorphosis of Marlene Dietrich.” *Fabrications*

Turim, Maureen, "The Emergence of the Sweetheart Line.” *Fabrications*