

Lakehead University
Department of Gender & Women's Studies
WOME / MDST / ENGL 2011/2113 Fall 2024
Feminism, Popular Culture, & Counter-Culture
██████████, Fri: 2:30-5:30pm

Dr. Jenny Roth (jroth@lakeheadu.ca)
 807-766-7116

Office Hours: Thursday 2-3pm (or other, by appointment)
In person either in my office RB-2014 (Thunder Bay) or via zoom
<https://lakeheadu.zoom.us/j/98461438277>

Course Description: This course is a feminist examination of popular culture resistance. Students will: be introduced to the field of feminist cultural studies; develop a working yet fluid definition of popular culture; examine how cultural hegemony shapes peoples' lives, and how people resist or conform to it; how popular culture is a site of cultural struggle; and analyze texts and their contexts. Materials may include film, television, pulp fiction, music, and more.

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Required Course Materials

Grey, Andrew. *Dragged to the Wedding*. Toronto, Carina Adores, 2023, Available at the Thunder Bay and Orillia bookstores.

All other required readings are on D2L and must be completed prior to each week's class.

Note: when we watch short online clips, you may see advertisements. Neither LU nor the Department of Gender & Women's Studies is affiliated with, nor

endorses, any of the products shown (unless your algorithm thinks you need to see an ad for LU, in which case we do endorse).

Learner Outcomes specific to this course

In this course you will:

- Develop your ability to orally express a position with scholarly evidence;
- Develop your scholarly writing, including improving your evidence-based approach to argumentation;
- Improve your critical analysis skills in relation to popular cultural texts;
- Develop arguments and observations based in feminist theory and methods of popular culture as a site of tension between hegemony and resistance;
- Practice your public speaking

My Availability

I check my email during regular office hours, 8:30am – 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. During busy times it could take me up to 2 days to get back to you. If you email me about an assignment at the last minute, I may not reply until it is too late, so please plan your time accordingly.

I am really happy to set up one-on-one meetings outside my regular office hours. If you can't make the office hours, send me an email and we'll find a time that works for us.

Evaluation

	Marks	Due
Weekly participation	Up to reading week: 10 After reading week: 20	Weekly, beginning in Week 2 (you can miss two weeks without penalty). See instructions and rubric below.
Noticing Your Gaze: Reflexive Project	25	October 11, 2024, by the start of class. Instructions below
Short presentation	15	On your sign-up week at the start of class: either September 27, October 25, or November 8
Take-Home Final:	30	Due by December 16,

Your choice, one of three options (See details below)		2024, by 4:00 pm. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.
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*I am very happy to give feedback on rough drafts, except your Take-Home Final, so long as I receive the draft at least one week prior to the due date.

Participation

Up to Reading week: 10 marks; After reading Week to end of course
20 marks

Be aware of appropriate classroom behaviour set out in the University's Student Code of Conduct and follow it. I expect good quality, respectful, discussion that shows you can apply the ideas that appear in the required materials (readings, films, etc.), and in my brief lecture; or that you're working to understand the concepts. Everyone is at different levels of political understanding: please be patient with each other while we learn together this term.

Marking Rubric, Participation

You can miss two weeks without penalty because I know life happens.

You receive up to 2 points each week beginning Week 2, which are totaled and transformed into a percentage which is then applied to the marks available.

Although the expectations for the second half of the term are the same as the first half, I've weighted it more heavily so you can take on midterm feedback to improve your participation grade (if necessary).

2	<p>You initiate discussion and show that you have understood and can apply the ideas in the week's required materials and brief lecture professionally and courteously, with care for your peers and support for ideas-sharing. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned readings, being prepared to actively watch any films or episodes, and being prepared to identify topics of interest in the reading in relation to the week's content in a clearly evidenced way (you show that know the reading well by backing up what you're saying with a direct quotation and page number reference, not simply paraphrasing a main idea from the text).</p> <p>This does not mean monopolizing a discussion or shutting others down, or taking up too much space by talking for its own sake. You work to allow everyone a chance to share their observations and ideas. You clearly connect anecdotal evidence to the week's materials.</p>
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1	You participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than a 2-point student. 1-point discussants' participation may indicate that they are not well-prepared for class (they paraphrase ideas from the required materials, instead of giving direct references to them), or have not given thought to the assigned materials, because they do not support the point they make in class with clear reference to evidence from the readings, or they focus only on visual materials we watch in class.
0	You do not participate. Participation is impossible if you do not attend class.

Noticing Your Gaze, Reflexive Project

25 Marks, Due October 11, 2024.

Handed in on D2L before the start of class (later than start of class is late, and will have 3 marks deducted).

Format: 1000 words (ca. 4 pages, excluding any title page and works cited) maximum, excluding any title page and Works Cited. Arial, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.

I stop reading when you reach the maximum number of pages, so please edit for length if you want me to read your full assignment.

Assignment Framework:

One of the ways we are produced as docile bodies (mass consumers who behave as we should so capitalism can operate), is through internalization of the Gaze (see Week 4 notes).

Feminist fat studies, cultural studies, film studies, and anti-racist studies identify how the Gaze operates in and through each of us, so that we discipline ourselves and others.

Assignment Instructions:

For one day compliment people, *but try not to do it on the basis of how they look*. Examples of non-objectifying compliments include:

“That was a really smart answer you gave in class today”

“You were really kind when you x”

“You’re a really good listener”

“I can count on you”

“You’re a great friend”

“You’re a fantastic athlete”

(if you want more, do a quick Google search for non-appearance-based compliments)

At the end of your day, sit down and freely answer:

- How hard was it to come up with quick compliments that weren't appearance-based?
- Even though it was non-appearance-based compliment day, did you automatically (unthinkingly) compliment people on how they looked or some other physical attribute (e.g.: I love your bag) before you remembered non-appearance compliments?
- Why do you think you've been conditioned to congratulate people on their appearance, including the physical objects they use, before any other trait they hold?
- What does this exercise show you about your own embeddedness in the mechanisms of social discipline?

Then: Edit your observations so they flow as an argument. Add your introduction. Make use of course materials' (citations) to support your thoughts for the last two questions (lectures, online resources, and readings), do a final edit, and hand in your reflection.

Marking Rubric, Reflection can be found after the instructions for the Take-Home Final, "Marking Rubric for all Written Work"

Short Presentation – My feminist cultural study

Due: at the start of class on your sign-up day, 15 marks
10 minutes (which is the equivalent of 4 pages, double-spaced, typed)

Bring something (literally or figuratively) you want to share with the class, and apply your intersectional feminist lens to it: it can be anything you want (novel, film, tiktok trend, song... anything that would fall under the definition 'popular culture'). Focus your presentation so you don't run out of time. Share how your choice is polysemic (can be perceived in multiple ways). Use the language you learn in this class to support how you express your analysis, and make reference back to lectures and readings.

I will stop presenters when they reach the 10-minute mark, so keep an eye on your time as you prepare.

Marking Rubric

A (80-100): You engage in creative analysis about your chosen cultural text that shows a deep understanding of class concepts, and shows significant effort

beyond expectations. Your analysis is interesting and thought-provoking. You support your reflection with clear and specific examples from the required readings and lectures. You plan your presentation to fit the 10-minute timeframe. Differences between 80-100% will lie in clear connections to the materials and analysis depth. All marks between 80-100 indicate excellent work.

B (70-79): You engage in creative analysis about your chosen cultural text that corresponds to class concepts and shows strong effort. Your analysis is interesting and thought-provoking, but does not provide as obvious an entry into the concepts as A-range reflections. You are in command of the topic, and you show originality and enthusiasm. You support your reflection well with clear and specific examples from the required readings and lectures. You plan your presentation to fit the 10-minute timeframe. This mark indicates very good work.

C (60-69): Your presentation corresponds to class concepts but is unclear or underdeveloped. It is difficult to connect the class concepts to your cultural text. Your reflection illustrates less command of the topic and less enthusiasm than B-range projects. Support for your analysis from the materials and lectures is vague, or broadly paraphrased. You plan your presentation to fit the 10-minute timeframe. This mark indicates satisfactory work.

D (50-59): Your presentation shows some grasp of the topics and materials covered, but not much. It is nearly impossible to connect to the course concepts. The analysis shows little effort or engagement / enthusiasm. Support for your analysis is vague, or broadly paraphrased. You have not planned your presentation to fit within the timeframe. This mark indicates work that needs improvement.

E (40-49): Your presentation reveals a near-total misunderstanding of the concepts and very little grasp of the materials or subject. It shows little effort or engagement / enthusiasm in its production. Support is vague, broadly paraphrased, or non-existent. You have not planned your presentation to fit within the timeframe. This mark indicates work that needs much improvement. I will reach out to students who receive this grade to set up supports for success in the course.

F (0-39): Total misunderstanding. The presentation reveals that you seem to have no grasp of the materials or concepts. I will reach out to students who receive this grade to set up supports for success in the course.

Take-Home Final – Scholarly research paper

30 marks, due by December 16, 2024, 4:00 pm.

Format: 1250 - 1500 words (ca. 5-6 pages) excluding any title page and Works Cited. Arial, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.

Illustrate how popular culture is a site of cultural struggle using **one** of the following concepts:

1. The Gaze / objectifying scopophilia;
2. Gendered genres; or,
3. Audience / fan reception

Your paper will use clear support from course materials in all our Units with citations, and will additionally include support from two external peer-reviewed journal articles you have researched using the LU Library.

Marking rubric for all written work

A+ (90-100%): Near-Perfection. The work clearly develops a near-irrefutable argument concisely and convincingly. Ideas are linked and flow clearly from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. The argument leads clearly and inexorably to its conclusion, is stimulating to read and shows analytical and connective abilities well in excess of expectations for the level. There are no errors in scholarly documentation or formatting, and the work is virtually free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Secondary sources never stand in for student's own thoughts and are used intelligently to evidence the argument.

A-, A (80-89%): Excellent. The work thoughtfully develops an interesting thesis; secondary source material is used intelligently, and not as a substitute for the student's own thinking in scholarly work. The student is in command of the topic and shows some originality and enthusiasm in discussing it. The work is well organized, convincingly argued, and clearly expressed – a pleasure to read. It is mainly free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, and uses the conventions of scholarly documentation correctly.

B-, B, B+ (70-79%): Very Good to Good. The work is a competent, accurate treatment of its topic. It is well-written and has a clear thesis. Writing at the bottom of this range may not have fully digested the materials, and may lean uncritically on secondary sources. The organization is good and the sentences are all comprehensible. There are few errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. The work follows standard conventions of scholarly documentation.

C-, C, C+ (60-69%): Good to Fair. The thesis is unclear, or trivial, or undeveloped. Much of the work is summary or paraphrase, with only occasional analytical comment. There may be inaccuracies; writing at the bottom of this range may rely exclusively on secondary sources instead of the students' own thoughts. The writing is disjointed; some sentences may be convoluted and incomprehensible. There may be mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

D-, D, D+ (50-59%): Poor. The work has serious inaccuracies and inconsistencies. The student has some grasp of the topic, but not much. Where sources are cited, they tend to be misused or misinterpreted. The student may express opinions, but does not support them with evidence or argument from the course materials in support of their position. The writing lacks coherence, is unclear, and has many errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

E (40-49%): Failure Grade. Near-total misunderstanding. The student has very little grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly.

F (0-39%): Failure Grade. Total misunderstanding. The student seems to have no grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, is full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly. Any cases of plagiarism will be submitted to the Dean with my request that a mark of zero be assigned.

Extensions, Late Work and Academic Misconduct

Due Dates and Late Penalties

You have all assignment instructions and due dates from the first day of class, so there will be no extensions, except in the case of a documented medical or other emergency.

Late work will be reduced by 3 marks, which is a significant loss. Work more than 7 days late will not be accepted without University-approved documentation.

Work will be considered late if it is handed in after the date and time noted in the Syllabus

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is a serious offence. The principle of academic integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting property (including paraphrased ideas), and avoiding misrepresentation is a core principle in University study and scholarly work. I will pursue breaches of Academic Integrity to their full disciplinary extent.

Resources to help you avoid academic misconduct:

- Me (Dr. Jen Roth): if you are unsure about how to avoid academic misconduct, or whether something is or is not misconduct, ask me

- Review the rules at: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/provost-vice-president-academic/academic-integrity-plans-policies/academic-dishonesty-regulations>
- Use the resources available at Owl at Purdue which contains examples of APA, and MLA, including information on: paper formatting, in-text citations, footnotes and endnotes, and works cited / references / bibliographies: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
- Refer to the “Citation PP Handout,” which uses APA and MLA as examples, and the “Ice Cream citation example” in the Course Resources – Feminist Theory section of our class website

GenAI Use Prohibited

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variant Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E. NB: Generative AI that is spellcheck or grammar check is acceptable (it’s built into most word processing programs and Grammarly). Using sentence-producing predictive text in word processing or Grammarly is not acceptable.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity (“Use of Unauthorized Materials”).

Support Resources

In distress or crisis?

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CShaNXhajf0vbT8oCmBao3aQo_HX45QT/view

Student Accessibility Services

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

Indigenous Student Services

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services>

Student Health and Wellness

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness>

Office of Human Rights and Equity

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/human-rights-and-equity>

Ombudsperson

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/ombuds-office>

Writing Help and other Supports

<https://mysuccess.lakeheadu.ca/home.htm>

Weekly Topics and Materials

Unit I. Introduction to Feminist Cultural Studies

Wk. 1, September 6 – Introduction to the Course and all of us

Wk 2, September 13 - Feminist Cultural Studies

Reading: Harvey, Alison. “The Fourth Wave” and “Intersectionality.” *Feminist Media Studies*. Polity, 2020, 16-24.

Discussion Question [DQ]: How do you think adding “feminist” to “cultural studies” helps us to understand a popular text or phenomenon differently?

Activity: Think of an example of a cultural text or popular cultural phenomenon that has had a big impact on you to share: as a group, we’ll consider how an intersectional feminist analysis enriches our understanding of everyone’s texts.

Wk. 3, September 20 – Polysemic Analysis & Cultural Complexity (or, Let’s get Taylor Swift out of the way while we learn about polysemy)

Reading: Cullen, Shaun. “The Innocent and the Runaway: Kanye West, Taylor Swift, and the Cultural Politics of Racial Melodrama.” *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2016, pp. 33–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12160>.

Clip: “Kanye West Interrupts Taylor Swift at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwTx1VuMIqo>

DQ: How does personal location affect audience reception of popular cultural texts and/or events? How do multiple perspectives help us to understand our culture better, and challenge a dominant, privileged, worldview?

Unit II. The Gaze: Power, Control, and Resistance

Wk. 4, September 27 – Introduction to the Gaze and Feminist Film Studies

Reading: Hollows, Joanne. “Film Studies and the woman’s film.” *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*. Manchester University Press, 2000, 38-66.

DQ: What characterizes a ‘chick flick’? Why are ‘chick flicks’ devalued? What do you think of Haskell’s claim that chick flicks are “soft core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife” (42)? What do you make of Doane’s argument that female spectatorship is masochistic narcissism (53)? Can you think of any obvious examples of the Gaze, gendered or otherwise, working in films you’ve seen?

Reminder: Brief presentations this week

Wk 5. Oct 4 – Shifting the Gaze

Readings:

de Coning, Alexis. "Recouping Masculinity: Men's Rights Activists' Responses to *Mad Max: Fury Road*." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 174–176, doi:10.1080/14680777.2016.1120491.
Reglińska-Jemioł, Anna. "Victim-Warriors and Restorers—Heroines in the Post-Apocalyptic World of *Mad Max: Fury Road*." *Text Matters (Łódź)*, no. 11, 2021, pp. 106–18, doi:10.18778/2083-2931.11.08.

Film [IC]: *Mad Max: Fury Road*

DQ: As you watch *Fury Road*, note how the film's editing produces a feminist gaze, or at least a gaze that challenges the traditional patriarchal gaze: What do we see, and not see? How do traditional tropes about masculinity/femininity appear, and how are they undermined? How does the film play with our expectations and assumptions about power and gender?

Reminder: Noticing Your Gaze: Reflexive Project is due next week before class

Wk. 6, Oct 11 – Social Media, Surveillance, and Identity Production

Reading: Kanai, Akane. "Between the Perfect and the Problematic: Everyday Femininities, Popular Feminism, and the Negotiation of Intersectionality." *Cultural Studies (London, England)*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2020, pp. 25–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2018.1559869>.

Episode [IC]: "Nosedive." *Black Mirror*, created by Charlie Brooker, Teleplay by Rashida Jones and Mike Schur, Directed by Joe Wright, Season 3, Episode 1, Netflix, 21 October, 2016.

DQ: How does social media, in "Nosedive" and your own life, thinking about Kanai's work, impact on identity production?

Reminder! Noticing Your Gaze: Reflexive Project is due this week before class.

Wk. 7, October 18 – Reading week

Read *Dragged to the Wedding* over the break so you're not stressed before Week 11. As you read, make notes of page numbers and quotations that will help you in discussions about the novel within the context of romance tropes. Have a look at the DQs for Week 11 to help you.

Unit III. Authority, Interaction, and Production

Wk 8, Oct 25 – Introduction to Fandoms, Authors/Authority and Creative Control

Readings:

- Arzbaeher, Lauren. "10 Books You Didn't Know Started Out as Fan Fiction." *Business Insider*, Reviews. 18 July 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/guides/learning/fanfiction-books>, Accessed June 20, 2024.
- Flegel, Monica, and Jenny Roth. "Writing a New Text: The Role of Cyberculture in Fanfiction Writers' Transition to 'legitimate' Publishing." *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2016, pp. 253–72, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cww/vpw010>.
- Roth, Jenny, and Monica Flegel. "It's like Rape: Metaphorical Family Transgressions, Copyright Ownership and Fandom." *Continuum (Mount Lawley, W.A.)*, vol. 28, no. 6, 2014, pp. 901–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.964175>.

DQ: How might we interrogate the dominant idea of a singular author based on this week's readings? Are you a fan of anything? If yes, how do you see your fannishness intersecting with the producer of the work you love (what is your relationship)? How is fan fiction a good example of polysemia?

Reminder Short presentations this week

Wk. 9, Nov 1 – Which fans count? Power, Control & Backlash

Readings:

- Blodgett, Bridget, and Anastasia Salter. "Ghostbusters Is for Boys: Understanding Geek Masculinity's Role in the Alt-Right." *Communication, Culture & Critique*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2018, pp. 133–46, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcx003>.
- Jones, Leslie. "Racist Ghostbusters Trolls Nearly Broke me." *Rolling Stone*. September 19, 2023 <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-features/leslie-jones-memoir-ghostbusters-racist-trolls-kate-mckinnon-1234827643/>

Film: *Ghostbusters: Answer the Call*

DQ: Like *Fury Road*, *Ghostbusters: Answer the Call* was a site of intense cultural struggle. What do you see being challenged in the film? Why do you think so many dudes were angry? What does the continuing fallout of the struggle tell us about the complexities of our society, cultural production, and multiple sites of resistance?

Unit IV. Gendered Genres

Wk. 10, Nov 8 – Intro to Gendered Genres: Romance

Reading: Hollows, Joanne. "Reading Romantic Fiction." *Feminism, Femininity, and Popular Culture*. Manchester University Press, 2000, 68-88.

DQ: How is romantic fiction (film, television, tropes) a site of struggle? How does romance both reproduce and challenge dominant ideas about masculinity, desire, love. Are you a lover of romance? Why does Hoggart style the transition of an active working class to a passive mass the 'feminization' of men (71)? What do you think Shulamith Firestone means when she writes: "romanticism is a cultural tool of male power to keep women from knowing their condition etc." (72 et. seq.). Do you agree? Disagree? Why? Modleski put forward a number of arguments about the ways in which we can 're-read' Harlequin romances; what are they?

Reminder Short presentations this week

Wk. 11, Nov 15 – Let's read Romantic fiction

Reading: *Dragged to the Wedding*

Romantic fiction, we learned last week, is fantasy that plays an important and complex role. It resists and perpetuates dominant ideas about culture, human relations, desire, gender performance, and sex.

DQs:

1. With evidence from the novel, show how *Dragged* reflects Hollows' analysis of romance novels, and how it might not
2. How does *Dragged* perpetuate dominant ideas about romance?
3. How does it resist those dominant ideas?
4. How do the characters' experiences broaden the romance genre?
5. Do you think romance is still gendered feminine if it focuses on men? Why or why not? Use your intersectional feminist lens when considering.

Wk. 12, Nov 22– Rom Coms for the 4th Wave – *Bridgerton*

Readings:

Rhimes, Shonda. Interview by Zak Cheney-Rice. "A Shonda Story: Rhimes Made *Bridgerton* a TV phenomenon but hadn't written its world. *Queen Charlotte* is all hers." *Vulture*. 8 May 2023, <https://www.vulture.com/article/shonda-rhimes-bridgerton-and-queen-charlotte-interview.html>. Accessed June 19, 2024.

Hanus, Stephanie L. "Interracial Romances and Colorblindness in Shondaland's *Bridgerton*." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2024, pp. 447–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231198440>.

Episode: "Queen to Be." *Queen Charlotte*, created by Shonda Rhimes, Teleplay by Shonda Rhimes, Directed by Tom Verica, Episode 1, Netflix, 24 May 2023.

DQ: The *Bridgerton* series has come under scrutiny for colour-blindness and rewriting history. How do our individual personal locations affect

how we view and experience *Bridgerton*? Shonda Rhimes' *Queen Charlotte* forged new ground: how? Why do you think she did what she did in her back story to establish the Bridgerton universe? Does she address *Bridgerton* scrutiny, in your opinion?

Unit V: Conclusion

Wk 13, November 29 – Applying the Concepts

Film: *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*

Bring your Pop Culture hats! This week is your opportunity to shine, and to show you can apply what you've learned this term. The film allows us to consider: Polysemia; Romance; Gendered genres; Cultural struggle; Fandoms, authorship, and production; Audience reception; The gaze; Power/oppression; Intersectionality; Masculine-linked / feminine-linked; And more.