

## Course Description

This course will interrogate the representation of people and communities across a range of intersectional identities in film and television through the lens of creators. Through readings, screenings and discussions students will examine how marginalized groups have been represented on screen, identifying harmful and stereotypical depictions and erasures from the past to the present day. Students will learn creative tools and tactics to combat harmful representation and implement these tactics in their own creative work. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of research, lived experience, and authenticity to ensure inclusive and equitable representation across all media platforms.

## Learning Objectives | *Students will be able to...*

- Analyze representations of marginalized groups in films and TV series spanning multiple generations and genres
- Identify harmful representations across an array of intersectional identities
- Develop an appropriate vocabulary with which to discuss intersectional media representation
- Explain how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development
- Examine the relationship between on-screen portrayals and their real-world ramifications
- Apply a work-flow process that ensures more inclusive and equitable representation in their own creative practice

## Course Management:

This course is managed on D2L. To log on, go to: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

**Grading Scale:** A = 90%-100% plus/ minus = top/ bottom B = 80%-89%,  
C = 70%-79%, D = 60%-69%, F = 59% and below

## Final grade breakdown (approximate and subject to change):

Attendance & Participation 15%

Project Proposal 10%

Case-Study Essay 20%

Group project/presentation 15%

Final Essay (2000 words) OR Media Statement of Inclusion 40%

An incomplete grade may only be assigned to a student if: (1) the student has experienced an extenuating circumstance near the end of the term, (2) the student is in good standing in the class, (3) the request is made in advance. It is solely up to the discretion of the instructor to

grant an incomplete.

## **GRADE PROFILES**

**A** work demonstrates consistently clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while showing independent, sophisticated thought. Work consistently improves.

**B** demonstrates mostly clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while showing mostly independent thought. Improves with some lapses.

**C** demonstrates sometimes clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while work remains dependent on teacher/notes/texts. Inconsistent improvement.

**D** frequently demonstrates unclear, imprecise & inaccurate understanding of key concepts. Does not demonstrate improvement.

**F** demonstrates undisciplined or non-evident thinking with little to no comprehension of key concepts.

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## **Course Schedule**

(Texts preceded by “READ” or “WATCH” are due the week listed. Because this class focuses on rectifying historic harms in media representation, many of the texts we read/watch will deal explicitly or implicitly with the legacy of sexism, racism, and other forms of marginalization. Content warnings for particularly difficult texts will be provided, but a general content warning for all course content is warranted here.)

## **SCREENINGS AND READINGS ARE DUE BEFORE CLASS.**

### **WEEK 1 – COURSE INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION (9/7)**

*Lecture: Class/student introductions. The basics of media analysis and ethical creativity from a creator’s perspective. The “positive” images debates. Stereotypes. What is representation?*

WATCH: Jay-Z - “Moonlight”

WATCH: Trevor Noah - “The Problem with Cop Shows”

READ: “Plastic Representation,” Kristen J. Warner

READ: Excerpts from Halberstam/Wallace, The “Positive” Images Debates

READ: “On Whiteness & the Racial Imaginary,” Claudia Rankine & Beth Loffreda

### **WEEK 2 – GENDER (9/14)**

*Lecture: Toxic masculinity & the male gaze. Gender stereotypes. How film language and narrative structure fuel the gaze.*

WATCH: *Mad Max: Fury Road*, George Miller, 2015 (D2L)

READ: "Media Masculinity," Bell Hooks.

READ: "The Male Glance," Lilly Loofbourrow

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Fleabag*, s01e04, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, 2016 (Amazon Prime)

### **WEEK 3 – GENDER (9/21)**

Lecture: *Towards intersectional representation. The Bechdel test and beyond. Likeability. Sexism in character descriptions.*

WATCH: *I May Destroy You*,\* Michaela Coel, 2020—Eps. 1 & 7 (HBO)

READ: "Here's Looking at Her: an intersectional analysis of women, power and feminism in film," Jean-Anne Sutherland and Kathryn M. Feltey

READ: Excerpt from *Hood Feminism*, Mikki Kendall

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Insecure*, Pilot – *Insecure As Fuck*, Issa Rae, 2016 (Netflix/HBO)

*\*This series explores issues of consent and sexual assault, and, therefore contains brief, but nevertheless difficult scenes featuring the disregard of consensual boundaries and sexual assault.*

### **WEEK 4 – RACE & ETHNICITY (9/28)**

Lecture: *The white gaze and the white savior complex in Hollywood film and television. Racial stereotypes. The problem with color-neutral casting/writing. Real world ramifications.*

WATCH: *Green Book*, Peter Farrelly, 2018. (D2L)

WATCH: Toni Morrison Interview (D2L)

READ: "Race and Popular Cinema: Whiteness in *City of Joy*," by Raka Shome.

READ: "The Cultural Politics of Color Blind Casting," by Kristen J. Warner

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Reservations Dogs*, Pilot, Sterling Harjo & Taika Waititi, 2021 (Hulu)

### **WEEK 5 – RACE & ETHNICITY (10/5)**

Lecture: *Moving beyond color neutral creation. Cinematography: lighting Black and Brown actors. Negotiated Authenticity and the oppositional gaze.*

*Assignment due: Proposal for Final Project (due Sunday 10/8)*

WATCH: *The Mauritanian*\*, Kevin Macdonald 2021. (Netflix, D2L)

READ: "The Unbearable Whiteness of Hollywood: Thoughts on Asian American Representation in Pop Culture" (link in D2L)

READ: "The Unwritten Rules of Black TV" by Hannah Giorgis

READ: "Organic Representation," Aymar Jean Christian & Khadeja Costley White

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Beef*, Pilot – *The Birds Don't Sing, They Screech in Pain*, Lee Sung Jin, 2023 (Netflix)

*\*This film depicts some violence including a sexual assault*

## **WEEK 6 – QUEER & TRANS (10/12)**

*Lecture: What is queer? Issues in queer representation. LGBTQ+ erasures.*

WATCH: *Moonlight*, Barry Jenkins, 2016. (D2L)

READ: “What’s Happening in Queer Cinema,” Alex Jung, *Vulture*

READ: “The Bisexual Revolution Will Be Televised” Framke

READ: “Organic Representation,” Aymar Jean Christian & Khadeja Costley White

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Heartstopper*, s01E03 – Alice Oseman (2022) (Netflix)

## **WEEK 7 – QUEER AND TRANS (10/19)**

**No in-person class! This week will be asynchronous (online)**

*Recorded Lecture: Hetero-, Homo-, & Cis-normativity. Trans representation. Queering narrative structure.*

*Assignment due: Case Study Essay (due Sunday 10/22)*

READ: “Representing Trans: Visibility and its Discontents”

WATCH: *Disclosure*, Sam Feder, 2020. (Netflix)

WATCH: *Pose*, S2E10, “In My Heels” (Hulu)

Respond to the corresponding screening prompts on the discussions board. **Not doing so will constitute an absence for that week.**

## **WEEK 8 – SOCIAL CLASS & INCOME INEQUALITY (10/26)**

*Lecture: Representations of class, wealth inequality, power relations, and social mobility. Classism in narrative structure.*

WATCH: *Parasite*, Bong Joon-ho, 2019. (D2L)

READ: “Representing the Poor,” bell hooks

READ: “Benign Inequality: Frames of Poverty and Social Class Inequality in Children’s Movies”

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, s01E06 – Mistaken Identity, Andy & Susan Borowitz, 1990 (Hulu)

## **WEEK 9 – ABILITY & THE FUTURE OF REPRESENTATION (11/2)**

*Lecture: Understanding disability (cognitive, mental, physical) as a political, cultural, and historical experience. Media stereotypes of disability. Curative logics & narrative structures. Ageism. The importance of narrative sovereignty.*

WATCH: *BoJack Horseman*, Bob-Waksberg, S04E6, S06E10, 2014 (Netflix)

READ: "Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies," Clare.

READ: "Cosplaying Oppression: Hollywood's History of Excluding Autistic People From Their Own Stories," Rosenberg.

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Love on the Spectrum*, S02E06, 2019 (Netflix)

## **WEEK 10 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS (11/9)**

## **WEEK 11 – FINAL PROJECTS DUE (11/16)**

### **Changes to Syllabus**

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under 'News' in D2L, and emailed to you.

### **Course Outcomes/Assignments**

- Class Participation: Show up on time, weekly. Read the readings, watch the screenings, and participate thoughtfully in class discussions.
- One project proposal.
- One case-study essay that explore singular aspects of inclusivity in media. Must be linked to final project. (1000ish words each).
- One group project/presentation.
- One final essay (~2000 words): Analyze a contemporary film or television series that demonstrates aspects of "organic" representation. The essay should develop and apply an inclusive and intersectional framework for understanding the film/series and how it structurally challenges and/or innovates to create culturally specific representation. The essay should lead to new insights about the film/TV series while also contributing to contemporary media theory around what it means to create inclusive representation.

OR

- Media Statement of Inclusion (~2000 words): Complete an essay that articulates your own ideas about creating inclusive and intersectional media. What would an inclusive and intersectional media "utopia" look like? What kinds of media-making, viewing, and distribution do you want to support? What do you want to refuse? Within the essay, you should also engage in self-reflection on your past practices, as well as which films/TV series (from both inside and outside the syllabus) served as your inspiration.

(NOTE: Final essays must incorporate academic criticism as well as a film or television series you explore outside of class. Film/TV reviews without their own bibliographies and notes are not considered academic criticism. Footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography are mandatory for your own essays (use MLA conventions).)

### **COVID-19 Health & Safety Precautions**

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic:

- 1) Masks are not required in indoor spaces on campus. However, DePaul will continue to be a mask-friendly campus and wearing a mask will be highly recommended for all indoor spaces.
- 2) If you are joining a meeting or gathering and a participant asks you to wear a mask, please do so. If you need one, masks are available at a limited number of first-floor desk areas near building entrances
- 3) Stay home if sick
- 4) Keep current with your COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions
- 5) If you test positive for COVID-19, follow all **isolation guidance**, including wearing a face mask

The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

### **Attendance**

If you are well, I hope you will come to class on time and stay for the duration. If you are unwell, or suspect you may have been exposed to COVID, please stay home and take care of yourself. If you know you will be absent or late, let me know and we'll work something out. Otherwise, students are expected to attend each class, arrive on time, and remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student.

The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

### **The Way Things Work: Assignments and Due Dates**

Details for all assignments and readings will be discussed in class and posted on D2L. Unless otherwise noted, the due date is the start of class on the day an assignment is due and anything after the start of class is late. This is true even if you are absent. Graded assignments will lose one full letter grade for each week (or partial week) they are late. *I can be flexible about this as long as you communicate with me about how and when you will fulfill the requirements for any late assignments.*

#### *At-Home Screenings:*

Links to screenings will be provided on D2L except for Weeks 3, 7, and 9 which require HBO, Netflix & Hulu subscriptions.

#### *Reading assignments:*

Students are expected to fully complete assigned readings on time so they are prepared for class discussions and writing assignments. Reading matters. When done well, it is the most effective and efficient way to access another's intelligence, experience, and wisdom. Students who manage their time to allow for careful reading will more successfully learn and participate in this course.

Highlight at least one quote from each reading that stand out to you, resonate with you, or that represent ideas you would like to discuss or might delve more into in your final project.

#### *Writing assignments:*

This may course require students to write both analytically and creatively. All formal compositions are expected to be typed, properly formatted, and carefully proofread.

### **Academic Policies**

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **Decorum and Civil Discourse**

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be socially responsible leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement**

This class is rooted in an anti-racist, queer, and intersectional feminist ethos. It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the multitude of lived experiences that students bring to class be viewed as a resource, strength, and source of joy. In all of my courses, I strive to include texts by/for/about marginalized creators and theorists. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. Sometimes the topics that we cover in class are challenging, not just intellectually but emotionally. While I expect there to be rigorous discussion and even disagreement in our class discussions, I ask that you engage in discussion with care and honor for the other members in the classroom. I am open to having difficult conversations, and I strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives and protects those of us with marginalized identities from harm. Please note: there is a big difference between difficult conversations, which involve exploration, questioning, listening, curiosity, and growth, and social violence, which involves the routine presentation or defense of hateful sentiments, resulting in pain, shame, or fear. If you are prone to making socially violent statements, this is not the course for you. Socially violent behavior will be dealt with via discussions with the professor or a dean, or, possibly, failure of the course. If at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

### **Trigger Warnings**

Learning is uncomfortable. Because this class focuses on rectifying historic harms in media representation, many of our course texts (screenings) will deal with the legacy of sexism, racism, and other forms of social violence. Content warnings for particularly difficult texts will be marked, and I will do my best to foster a classroom in which we can relate courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week. This is a

chance for growth. Film can be transformative and cathartic. However, it can also bring up past trauma. We will discuss these topics courageously, respectfully, and honestly as equals. If you ever need to step out, due to something that happens externally or internally at class, go ahead, but you will be expected to take responsibility for missed work and schedule a time to propose an alternative way to engage with the course material.

### **Your Name & Pronouns**

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

### **DePaul University's Land Acknowledgment**

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

### **Online Course Evaluations**

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the



student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

### **Withdrawal**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

### **Retroactive Withdrawal**

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM.

### ***The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:***

Autumn Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
Winter Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
Spring Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
Summer Terms:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

### **Excused Absence**

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

### **Incomplete**

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form. By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor. An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: Student Center, LPC, Suite #370 | Phone number: (773)325.1677