

Course Syllabus: TFMS 420.01
Mediated Bodies: Gender, Race, and Class on Stage and Screen
J. Klein

Fall Semester 2009
TR 10:00-11:50 AM, MH 111
4 credits

APPROACH: The subject of study will be postmodern work in electronic and live performance media. Students will explore how representations of bodies in these media (principally cinema) interrelate with constructions of gender, race, class, sexuality, age, disease, and criminality in postmodern culture. Because practices of *signifying* and *looking* constitute and produce meanings that in turn (re)form our subjectivities and regulate behavior, visual culture is key to examining the relations between power and knowledge. Bodies are always inscribed in the economies of both pleasure/desire and power; looking and seeing, as cultural practices, are always constructed in the field of gender, race, and sexuality; coding of bodies through representation secures and/or dismantles the scopical regime of truth.

By interrogating techniques and technologies of production and reception of meanings in a series of films chosen for their specific development of issues arising from mediated bodies, students will learn how to think critically about the discursive formations of subjects, others, and visual culture. Materials will include screenings of films as well as readings in film theory, performance studies, cyberculture, and cultural studies. Instructional methods will include lectures, discussions, presentations, writing assignments, and examinations.

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance:** Course goals and methods necessitate conscientious class attendance. Excessive absences (more than 3) or tardiness will adversely affect your final grade.
- **Preparation:** The quality and alacrity of your participation in classroom discussions, of your preparation of various assigned readings and projects, and of your execution of occasional in-class writing assignments will determine 20% of your final grade.
- **Presentations:** Each student will present one 15-minute research report to the class during the semester (see below for dates and possible topics). This classroom presentation, together with your submission of a written outline and annotated bibliography, will figure as 20% of your final grade.
- **Paper:** During the last week of class, we shall present a public symposium on "Mediated Bodies: Re-Presenting Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality in Performance Media." Each student will compose and present a 6-8 page paper that addresses some topic within this area. The topics will be arranged in advance, according to your interests, and will be grouped into "sessions," each of which will explore an area of the subject matter. Details of the symposium will be worked out during the second half of the semester, and the presentations will determine 25% of your final grade.
- **Examinations:** As scheduled below, students will take midterm and final examinations covering all the material on the syllabus up to that date. The exams will test your command of material in both factual and analytical capacities, and will figure as the remaining 40% (midterm = 15%, final = 20%) of your final grade. **Forewarning:** students must score above 50% on identifications in order to have their essay(s) read. Absence from a pre-announced exam cannot be excused.
- **Screenings:** Films and videos will be screened in class, necessitating absolute promptness and other viewing protocols, as described below. Occasionally run times, as noted on the syllabus, will result in an extended class period to accommodate their length. Most materials (VHS or DVD) will also be on limited library reserve for students who wish to view or review them in the library at alternative times. Students are required to view all assigned films and tapes before they are scheduled for in-class discussion.
- **Late Work:** If approved in advance, I shall accept late work, but it will be penalized one letter grade. Otherwise, assignments are due for the class period as scheduled. *Students must submit all assignments to pass the course.*
- **Incompletes:** Grades of "Incomplete" will be assigned only by approval of a written petition from the student. This petition must explain the reasons for the request, and must be accompanied by documentation of either medical or personal emergency. All "Incompletes" must be converted according to the schedule in the College Catalog.
- **Events:** Students are required to attend each of the events included specifically on the attached syllabus. Additional required events, possibly including field trips to see performances in Washington, D.C., will be announced during the semester.
- **Readings:** Your syllabus contains an enumeration of the assigned readings and their due dates. The texts are available from the College Bookstore, and other readings are accessible by e-reserves or Web sites.
- **Honor Code:** Students must abide by the "Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities" in the *Student Handbook*.

OFFICE HOURS/ELECTRONIC ACCESS:

T, 12:00 - 1:15 PM

W, 1:00 - 2:15 PM

and by appointment

MH 179C; ext. 4251

jrklein@smcm.edu (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

<http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/>

TEXTS:

hooks, bell. *Reel to Real*

Jones, Amelia. *Body Art: Performing the Subject*

Kauffman, Linda. *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture*

Kipnis, Laura. *Bound and Gagged*

Kondo, Dorinne. *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater*

Kuhn, Annette. *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (recommended)

Morse, Margaret. *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (recommended)

Sturken, Marita and Cartwright, Lisa. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*

Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (recommended)

also electronically accessible materials, as assigned

e-reserves password: XNy3

PRESENTATION TOPIC EXAMPLES:

Yvonne Rainer's Films

Re-Presentations of Carceral Culture

Positions on Pornography

Depicting the Body of the Criminal

Virtual Gender (or Race or Class or Sexuality)

The Gaze and Live Performance

Commodification of "Blackness" (BET, MTV, etc.)

The Aged Body on Film

Fibreculture, Cyberculture, Cyborgs

Video Games

Performances of Posthuman Bodies

The Brandon Teena Story/Boys Don't Cry: The Hollywoodification of Queer

Some Like It Hot/The Crying Game: Historicized Transgendering

SOME RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

Electronic Syllabus: <http://www.smcm.edu/users/jrklein/420.F09.pdf> (See for clickable links)

Department of Theater, Film, and Media Studies: www.smcm.edu/tfms/

Yahoo's Film Theory/Criticism Index: http://dir.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Movies_and_Film/Theory_and_Criticism/

Internet Movie Database: <http://us.imdb.com/>

British Film Institute: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/>

Links to Performance and Gender sites: <http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/Linkspage.htm>

Compendium of Cultural Studies Resources: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/culturalStudies.html>

Jump Cut (Media in Relation to Class, Race, and Gender): <http://www.ejumpcut.org/home.html>

Voice of the Shuttle (Humanities Resources site): <http://vos.ucsb.edu/>

[List of Online Dictionaries and Glossaries](#)

[Postmodern Index of Authors and Terms](#)

[Introducing Postmodernism \(for ordering\)](#)

WEEK TOPIC (ASSIGNMENTS DUE) (SPECIAL EVENTS**)**

INTRODUCTORY CONCEPTS: PERFORMANCE MEDIA AND RE-PRESENTATION OF BODIES

- 1 Sept T Course Introduction: Minding the “Mindless,” Embodying the Disembodied (**TFMS Open House, W, 7:30PM, Bruce Davis Theater**)
- R Movies: Mimetic or Constitutive? (hooks, pp. 1-9, 20-26, 47-51)
- 8 Sept T Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics (Sturken/Cartwright pp. 1-44)
- R Apparatuses of Production and Reception: Mutual Constitution of Meaning (Sturken/Cartwright pp. 45-108)

GENDERED BODIES AND (re)MASTER(ed) NARRATIVES

- 15 Sept T **Screening of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*** (124 min, 1981) (Kuhn, “Textual Gratification” and “Making Visible the Invisible,” pp. 42-81 or e-reserve)
- R *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*: Embodying the Past/Mediating “Truth” (<http://www.smcm.edu/users/jrklein/Double%20or%20Nothing.htm>)
- 22 Sept T **Screening of *The Pillow Book*** (121 min, 1996) (**Presentation topics due**; Jones, pp. 1-19; Kondo, pp. 3-28)
- R *The Pillow Book*: The Inscripted Body (<http://www.worlds4.com/greenaway/> ; <http://filippos.com/poems/>)

MEDIATED RACE, SEX, AND SEXUALITY

- 29 Sept T **Screening of *Girl 6*** (101 min, 1996) (Kipnis, pp. vii-92, 122-160)
- R *Girl 6*: bell’s Hook (hooks, pp. 10-19, 197-213)
- 6 Oct T Racing and E-Racing the Subject (E-reserves of Fanon, Pratt, Mercer, Doane, Dyer)
- R **Midterm Examination**
- 13 Oct T Reading Day: No Class Meeting
- R Denaturalizing the “Natural” (Kuhn, “The Body in the Machine,” pp. 106-124 or e-reserve; E-reserves of Jhally)
- 20 Oct T **Student Presentations** (presentations due, as scheduled)
- R **Student Presentations** (presentations due, as scheduled)
- 27 Oct T **Student Presentations** (presentations due, as scheduled)

QUEERING ALTERITY

- R **Screenings of *The Attendant*** (8 min, 1992) **and *The Body Beautiful*** (23 min, 1991): Coding Dis-Ease (Preview) and (Re?)Inscribing Class (Kauffman pp. 1-15, 83-100; hooks, pp. 91-97)
- 3 Nov T (Advising Day, BUT) **Screening of *Paris is Burning*** (71 min, 1990) (Kuhn, “Postscript,” pp. 191-251 or e-reserve)
- R *Paris is Burning*: Construction of Constructedness (hooks, pp. 214-226)
- 10 Nov T **Screening of *Tongues Untied*** (55 min, 1990): Re-Presenting Queer (hooks, 83-90; recommended: e-reserve article on *Six Feet Under*, by Sam Chambers)
- R **Screening of *M. Butterfly*** (101 min, 1993): Race, Feminization, Betrayal (Kondo, pp. 31-54, 211-225) (***Arms and the Man* opens, 8PM, Bruce Davis Theater**)

TRANSGRESSIVE (OBJECT) BODIES

- 17 Nov T **Screening of *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*** (100 min, 1997, VIEWING OPTIONAL):
Bad Girls, Sick Boys: Re-Presenting the Transgressive (Kauffman, pp. 19-80, 101-114)
- R *Sick*: Intersubjectivity and the Dispersed Subject (Jones, pp. 197-240;
<http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0502/blood.htm>)
- 24 Nov T **Screening of *Privilege***: Mediating the Hotflashbacks of Menopause (100 min, 1990) (E-reserves from Phelan;
<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/5.2/Finnane.html>;
<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Humanities/tkitao1/films/rainer.html>)
- R Thanksgiving Break
- 1 Dec T **Screening of *Marx, the Video: A Politics of Revolting Bodies*** (30 min, 1990) (Kuhn, "Part IV: Replacing Dominant Cinema," pp. 125-190 or e-reserve)
- R Abjection and the Numbed (Docile) Body (Kauffman, pp. 115-145)

CARBON BODIES/SILICON BODIES

- 8 Dec T The Cyborg Body (E-reserves of Kennedy, Nakamura, Lupton, Balsamo, and Featherstone;
<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>)
- R Ascent of the Virtual (E-reserves from Morse, pp. 3-35, *Weldon Rising* program commentary)
- 12 Dec Sa Symposium: Mediated Bodies: Re-Presenting Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality in Performance Media (**Papers due**)
(Times TBA)
- 16 Dec W **Final Examination, 9-11:15 AM**

VIEWING AND CLASSROOM PROTOCOLS:

- ▶ Some of the films we shall be watching in class are nearly 2 hours in length. Therefore, I shall start the films promptly at 10:00 am. Because of the particular significance of beginnings and endings, you will need to arrange your lives so that you can arrive promptly and remain through the end.
- ▶ Before class begins or films start, get yourself situated so that you will not need to leave the room, rustle your belongings, or pant from the exertion of stair-climbing during the screening. Do not distract others by making unnecessary noise or conversation. *Turn off cell phones and pagers.* Arrive in time to sign the roll sheet.
- ▶ Do whatever you need to do (get sufficient sleep at night, for example) in order to avoid sleeping during screenings.
- ▶ If something in a film offends you, close your eyes and/or cover your ears. If you are easily offended, drop the course. You are welcome to raise this issue – like any other issue related to the films – in class discussion or privately with me.
- ▶ If you **MUST** leave or enter the room during a screening, please avoid throwing light on the screen and distracting others.
- ▶ If you have extenuating circumstances that make it difficult for you to comply with any of these protocols, let me know.