

# **Exploring Relationships through Fiction and Film**

**IDS 363**

**Dr. Mark Andrew Clark**

**Tuesdays 5:30**

## **Description**

This course examines our understandings of gender, race, class, and sex, and how they play a part in our developing relations with others. We will use fiction and film as our subject matter and specifically look at the perspectives an individual writer/director demonstrates around gender, race, class, and sex representations. With a critical attention to the ways people are culturally and socially classified, we will investigate the meanings and effects these labels have on individuals and groups, as well as on relationships, generally. Also, we will discuss other topics such as commitment, love, desire, morality, objectification, exploitation, possession, intimacy, friendship, and responsibility. Our explorations of these fiction and film texts will help us reflect on our own lives and experiences, and question our beliefs, values, and actions.

## **Objectives**

We will look at the readings and films from a variety of perspectives:

- a) Focusing on the complexity of relations and relationships (married, romantic, friend, gender, class, etc.)
- b) Examining writers' and directors' intentions, purposes, and motivations
- c) Uncovering/analyzing/critiquing writers' assumptions, biases, etc. in relation to gender, race, sex, and class
- d) Analyzing/critiquing cultural ideologies which show inequities between/among groups based on social group differences
- e) Investigating feminist readings of fiction and film texts
- f) Interpreting and shifting perspectives on reading (writer/reader/text/world)
- g) Reading and writing autoethnographically
- h) Analyzing/critiquing our own assumptions, biases, beliefs, behaviors, practices, etc.

## **Methods**

You will be challenged through lectures, writing assignments and readings, exercises, and class discussions. Class discussions are particularly important for exploring your reading and writing. Methods of reading texts (reader response, feminist, writer-response, etc.) and of writing texts (textual analysis/critique, journal, autobiography, autoethnography) will be demonstrated.

## *REQUIREMENTS*

### **Writing**

#### A. Formal Writing

Text Analysis/Critique

Self and Culture Critique

Autobiography/Autoethnography

Letter of Critique

#### B. Reaction Papers

Your reaction papers will develop a two-part emphasis. **First**, you will record your ideas, thoughts, impressions, interpretations, critiques, opinions, arguments, associations, questions, etc. about the readings and films assigned. This is not a paper where you write a summary of the essay or novel or film. I am more interested in what you do when you read a novel or view a film, what you think about, how your mind works to explore and interpret and interrogate, what you see as important, problematic, etc. **Second**, you will make responses about class discussions, conferences, writing assignments, and comments on writing assignments for the purpose of exploring your developing views on reading, writing, gender, sexuality, race, etc. Certain reaction papers are for the purpose of developing your different approaches to reading fiction and viewing film (writer/reader/text/world focuses). You can also include 'other matters' that you would like to share with me. I see these reaction papers as an on-going conversation in writing. I will respond back to you each week in the form of questions/comments/inquiries.

#### C. Journal Entries

The entries for this journal will be collected **3 times** and will be part of the process of doing an autobiography/autoethnography. You will record whatever you can tell me about past experiences concerning social group difference. In other words, I want you to record your memories that taught you something about gender, for example--in terms of behaviors, actions, or beliefs, something like "I remember one time when my mother said little boys aren't supposed to cry" or "My father said that little girls don't do such and such because . . ." Anything you can remember from your experiences that you would like to share with me. The purpose of these entries is to help you choose a topic for the autoethnography.

Please make sure you skip every other line, so that I can respond back to you.

**\*\*Formal Writings and Reaction papers must be typed. One assignment can be turned in late without penalty, what I call a 'grace' essay. Revisions **may** also be required. Journal**

entries can be hand written, if you prefer. *Conferences are encouraged, so we can talk about your reading and writing.*

### **Novels**

Metalious' *Peyton Place*  
Thomas's *The White Hotel*  
Winterson's *Written on the Body*  
Morrison's *Sula*  
Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*  
Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*  
Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*  
*Bulk-pack of Readings*

### **Films**

Karlsruhe's For the Bible Tells Me So  
Condon's Kinsey  
Forbes' The Stepford Wives  
Reed's The Break-Up  
Lyne's 9 ½ Weeks  
Kaplan's The Accused  
Lee's Jungle Fever  
Babbit's But I'm a Cheerleader  
Metamorphosis: Man into Woman  
Rosscam's Against a Trans Narrative

### **Assessment and Grading**

\*\*My **expectations** are that you will be here on time, hand assignments in on time, and have no absences. I also expect that you will read and view what is assigned, will be prepared to talk about the readings and films, and will participate in discussions about the readings and films (as well as other topics) on a consistent level. Lateness (attendance and assignments) and absences will greatly effect your grade as well.

You will be assessed on these **eight** criteria for your written assignments:

- 1) Acquisition of knowledge about the shifting perspectives of reading—writer/reader/text/world focus
- 2) Ability to perform analytical and critical reflection (particularly demonstrating the practice of a cultural critique around gender and sexual representations
- 3) Application of a gender, feminist, and sexual reading to novels and films
- 4) Acquisition of knowledge about and the writing of autoethnography
- 5) Engagement/Interest
- 6) Effort/Determination
- 7) Labor/Work
- 8) Progression/Development (particularly in learning to write an autoethnography and shifting reading perspectives, as well as in the quality and care of your writing, which will involve such things as the lessening of sentence level, grammar, and punctuation errors, syntax and paragraphing problems, and organizational and structural issues, etc.)

Grading will be on a contractual arrangement.

**15%** of your grade will be based on *Kiss's* textual analysis/critique (4 ways of reading)

**30%** of your grade will be based on the drafts of the autobiography/autoethnography and the journal entries.

**40%** of your grade will be based on the reaction papers

**15%** of your grade will be based on the preparation of, participation in, and discussion of the reading and film texts.

Students who fulfill all of these requirements and perform at a satisfactory level will be in the **C range**. Students who take their responsibilities to heart and whose weekly assignments reflect serious attention to the eight criteria will be in the **B** range. The grade of **A** is reserved for those students whose reading and writing show substantial improvement and consistency in all eight criteria, particularly in relation to the level of achievement in understanding and doing autoethnography, in the ability to shift reading perspectives, in the acquisition of knowledge and application of a feminist perspective, and in the facility in the practice of critique. Students who fail consistently in attending to the eight criteria, who do not attend class, who do not prepare/participate/discuss readings and films, and who neglect assignments will receive **Ds** or **Fs**.

## **SYLLABUS**

### **Week 1** 5:00 to 8:00

Introduction to Course

Reading—Elders’ “Preface” to *Harmful to Minors*

Film (on reserve) Condon’s *Kinsey* and Karlake’s *For the Bible Tells Me So*

Topics—biological and religious beliefs about sexuality

Questions about Sex/Gender/Sexuality

Writing—Definitions/Commentaries

### **Week 2**

*Adolescent and Community Relations*

Ways of Reading (writer/reader/text/world focuses)

Reading and Discussion—Metalious’s *Peyton Place*

Topics—adolescent sexual experience and desire; role of the community; gossip/rumor

Writing—Reaction #1 AND Journal #1

### **Week 3**

*Cultural and Political Relations*

Discussion—Autobiography/Autoethnography

Film (on reserve) Forbes’s *The Stepford Wives*

Readings and Discussion— Frye’s “Oppression”

Farmer’s “The Personal Is Still Political”

Baumgardner & Richards' "The Number One Question about Feminism"

Alleyne's "A Grab Won't Cure My Feminism"

Ms. "Let's Get Real about Feminism: The Backlash, the Myths, the Movement"

Snyder's "What Is Third-Wave Feminism?"

Topics—identity, voice, and representation; feminism; cultural critique

Writing—Journal #2 and Reaction #2 (*thoughts about feminism*)

#### **Week 4**

*Individual & Social Relations(ethnicity, race, religion)*

Readings and Discussion— Thomas's *The White Hotel*

Topics—female sexual desire; explorations of the erotic; sex and death

Writing-- Reaction #3 (Reader Response) AND Journal #3

#### **Week 5**

*Commitment Relations*

Reading and Discussion—Winterson's *Written on the Body*

Film (on reserve) Reed's The Break-Up

Topics— exploring the 'ending' of relationships; commitment; responsibility; desire/use of sex

Writing—Reaction #4 (Text Response)

#### **Week 6**

*Body Relations I*

Film (on reserve) Lynn's 9 ½ Weeks

Readings and Discussion— Munters' "Fat and the Fantasy of Perfection"

Greer's "The Stereotype"

Quinn's "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power And Meaning of 'Girl Watching'"

Jeffrey's "Keeping Women down and out: The Strip Club Boom and the Reinforcement of Male Dominance"

Davidson's "Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand?"

Topics— objectification; representation; fantasy; desire; pleasure

Writing— 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of Autoethnography

#### **Week 7**

*Women's Relations*

Reading and Discussion—Morrison's *Sula*

Topics: friendship; possession; betrayal; love  
Writing— Reaction #5 (World Response)

### **Week 8**

#### *Body Relations II*

Reading and Discussion— Funk's "The Culture of Rape"  
Reitan's "Rape as an Essentially Contested Concept"  
Bogdanich's "Reporting Rape, and Wishing She Hadn't"  
Bussell's "Beyond Yes or No: Consent as a Sexual Process"

Film (on reserve) Kaplan's The Accused

Topics—power, pain, and rape

### **Week 9**

#### *Same Sex Relations*

Reading and Discussion—Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*

Film (on reserve) Lee's Jungle Fever

Topics—male desire and practice; sexual and gender identity

Writing—Reaction #6 (Writer Response)

### **Week 10**

#### *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality Relations*

Readings and Discussion—Weeks' "Question of Identity"  
Bristow's "Introduction" from *Sexuality*  
Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"  
Cole & Cates' "Compulsory Gender and Transgender  
Existence: Adrienne Rich's Queer Possibility"

Film (on reserve)—Babbit's But I'm a Cheerleader

Topics— sex; gender; sexuality; sexual classification/categorization; sexual essentialism/  
constructivism; heteronormativity

Writing—2<sup>nd</sup> draft of autoethnography

### **Week 11**

#### *Contextualizing Sex, Gender and Sexuality Relations*

Reading and Discussion—Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*

Topics—intersections of sex and gender; exploitation; manipulation; function of film  
narrative

Writing—Textual Analysis/Critique (writer/reader/text/world)

### **Week 12**

*Transgender and Transsexual Relations*

Film (on reserve)—Rosscam’s Against a Trans Narrative & Metamorphosis: Man into Woman

Readings and Discussion—Whittle’s “Foreward”

Bornstein’s “The Question of Gender”

Feinberg’s “Allow Me to Introduce Myself”<sup>a</sup>

Schrock, Reid, & Boyd’s “Transsexuals’ Embodiment of Womanhood”

Stryker’s “My Words to Victor Frankenstein.....”

Rohrer’s “The Ethical Case for Undercounting Trans Individuals”

Topics—transgenderism; transsexuality; sexuality critique

Writing—Reaction #7

**Week 13**

Transgender and Transsexual Relations (CONTINUED)

Topics: transgenderism; transsexuality; sexuality critique

**Week 14**

*Desire and Relationships*

Reading and Discussion--Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*

Topics—sexual identity and autonomy; friendship; female desire

Writing—Reaction #9

**Week 15**

Wrap up—Questions/Comments/Conferences/Letter of Critique

Writing—3<sup>rd</sup> (final) Draft of Autoethnography