988:202 (01) Gender, Culture and Representation: Feminist Film/Media: Politics, Culture, and Representation

Debra Zimmerman

This course will provide a critical and analytical investigation of independent feminist film and mainstream media, examining how women are represented in popular culture and how they represent themselves. Using feminist documentary as a counterpoint we will explore the way that mainstream media misrepresents and excludes women’s perspectives as well as the history of independent feminist filmmaking worldwide. Along with the classics of independent feminist film, including films by filmmakers Julie Dash, Ngozi Onwurah, Jane Campion, Sally Potter, Kim Longinotto, Lourdes Portillo and Trin T. Minh-ha, we’ll screen popular TV programs, Hollywood films and international art house cinema to explore the intersection of feminism and media culture and the construction of gender identity.

Since the 1920’s images created by white men have dominated mainstream media and culture. What happens when we deconstruct those images, looking at who has created them and who are they addressing? How have independent films by women shifted that paradigm? Feminist filmmakers have used genre and the form of documentary and narrative cinema to explore critical issues of the second and third wave of the women’s movement including: the politics of women’s health, violence against women, femicide, transnational feminism and sex trafficking. Each week we will look at independent feminist films and/or mainstream media to compare, contrast and explore the relevant social, political, ideological, and aesthetic difference between the two.

Debra Zimmerman has been the Executive Director of Women Make Movies for more than 30 years and she is thrilled to have the opportunity to share her knowledge and experience with Rutgers students as the 2014-15 Laurie Chair in Women Studies.

988:202 (02) Gender, Culture and Representation: Gender through the Lenses of Feminist Science Fiction and Feminist Science Studies

C. Read

In this course we will read and interpret short selections of feminist science fiction from the 1970's to the present. Students will have the opportunity to choose a reading of their own or to write their own science fiction. We will alternate these readings with relevant articles from feminist science studies analyzing the social and intellectual consequences for science that gender beliefs and biases bring. At the same time, we will be exploring how science as presented in popular culture shapes these very
beliefs and biases. Students will learn how to work with literature as text, how to critique scientific studies and thinking, as well as studying the relation of nature and science in the context of gender studies.