

WST 371: Sex and the City - Women, Sexuality, and Popular Culture

Course Description:

This course critically examines how women and sexuality have been depicted in American popular culture from the 1950's to current day. Utilizing themes and images from various formats, including movies, television, and popular books we consider what ideas and images about sexuality are being marketed and sold. We examine the cultural, political, and social implications of these representations and how they speak to and from the culture at large. Do these changing representations challenge traditional notions of patriarchy? We consider questions such as: Have popular images of women and sexuality changed over time? If so, what has allowed these changes to occur? How do these popularly constructed ideas about sexuality affect attitudes concerning issues of romance and relationships, danger and violence or sexuality and sexual orientation? How do issues of race, class, ethnicity or age affect these depictions?

In this course, we will sometimes deal with difficult, sensitive issues related to depictions of sexuality. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the material at any time, please contact me.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Instructor: Dr. Michelle McGibbney Vlahoulis

Contact Info: michelle.mcgibbney@asu.edu

Office Hours: Via Zoom & In person- please email to set up time

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- To identify critical concepts in critical media theory
- To apply an intersectional framework to the critical analysis of popular culture
- To deconstruct how ideologies of the gender, race and sexuality are reflected in the popular culture and how they have changed over the decades
- To develop a broad critical perspective on media, sexuality and gender that can be used to examine the relationship between popular media and social change

Textbooks

- 1) You will be selecting your own book for the final paper; details for this will be listed in Module 1.
- 2) All required article readings will be posted on each module's "Learning Materials" page.
- 3) You will also need to purchase a small online reader. Here is the information for purchasing the *Sex & the City Ms edition*:
 - Please purchase this online subscription from Ms. in the Classroom.

- Go to: <https://www.msmagazinedigital.com/> and click on Purchase Products and ASU Readers.
- Select *Sex & the City* as your subscription option and fill out your information (name, email address, course, payment info, etc.).

If you have any problems, please email the HelpDesk at any time at micsupport@msmagazine.com or call 866-471-3652 toll free 7 days a week.

IMPORTANT: If you have an account already with ms digital - for example, if you took my intro class or another where you purchased a subscription from Ms, you need to make a **NEW** account. If you try to register with an *existing* account, it will just cause the page to error out.

Course Access

Your ASU courses can be accessed by both my.asu.edu and asu.instructure.com; bookmark both in the event that one site is down.

Computer Requirements

This is a fully online course; therefore, it requires a computer with internet access and the following technologies:

- Web browsers ([Chrome](#), [Mozilla Firefox](#), or [Safari](#))
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (free)
- Webcam, microphone, headset/earbuds, and speaker
- Microsoft Office ([Microsoft 365 is free](#) for all currently-enrolled ASU students)
- Reliable broadband internet connection (DSL or cable) to stream videos.

Note: A smartphone, iPad, Chromebook, etc. will not be sufficient for completing your work in ASU Online courses. While you will be able to access course content with mobile devices, you must use a computer for all assignments, quizzes, and virtual labs.

Help/Technical Support

For technical support, use the Help icon in the black global navigation menu in your Canvas course or call the ASU Help Desk at +1-(855) 278-5080. Representatives are available to assist you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Student Success

To be successful:

- check the course daily
- read announcements
- read and respond to course email messages as needed
- complete assignments by the due dates specified
- communicate regularly with your instructor and peers
- create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track
- access [ASU Online Student Resources](#)

Weekly Topics, Learning Outcomes & Readings:

Unit 1: Welcome- Introduction to Popular Culture & Critical Terms in WST

Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the following concepts: popular culture, gender and intersectionality.

Readings:

- Anita Sarkeesian, "Tropes vs. Women: The Evil Demon Seductress"
- Dana Leventhal, Bright Lights Film Journal, "Women in Sin City"
- Heather McIntosh, Flow, "Gendering Intelligence and Sexuality on The Big Bang Theory"
- Amanda Ann Klein, Flow, "The Hills, Jersey Shore, and the Aesthetics of Class"
- Stephen Harper, Jump Cut, "Race, gender and sexuality in Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2: Apocalypse"

Pick an advice book that you will read in its entirety for final paper.

Unit 2: Not Just June Cleaver: Representations of Female Sexuality in the 1950's, from Barbie to Beauty Pageants.

Learning Objectives:

1. Articulate how gender, race, and sexuality are represented in 50's popular culture using an intersectional analysis.
2. Identify what characteristics mark 50's popular culture and the golden age, including the construction of the nuclear family.

Readings:

From Ms. Sex & the City Reader:

- Out-of-Body-Image
- Doll Parts: The "Barbie Executioner"
- Mattel's New "Monster High Dolls" Play On Old School Stereotypes
- Why Aren't We Protesting Miss America?
- Happy-To-Be-Nappy Barbie
- This Week, Drown Barbie

Other Readings:

- [Miss America](#). This is a transcript of the PBS Miss America video.
- Miss America Documentary Reading
- American Experience: This is a three-page article about the Miss America Pageant/American Experience.
- Read The Miss America 1948 Contract & Timeline on PBS
- American Experience/ PBS- Breaking the Color Line
- Marilyn Monroe: Anything but a dumb blonde
- Doris Day: Before She Was A Virgin

Unit 3: Good Girls Don't: Female Sexuality in the 1960's – Cautionary Tales, The Birth Control Pill, The Sexual Revolution & More

Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the social movements of the 60's
2. Articulate how gender, race and sexuality are represented in 60's popular culture.
3. Identify what characteristics mark cautionary tales

Readings:

From *Ms. Sex & the City Reader*:

- 1963, *I Was a Playboy Bunny* - written by Gloria Steinem, the bunny who went undercover and later founded "Ms Magazine"
- Yes, The Playboy Club IS That Bad

Other Readings:

- The Male Gaze
- Gaze, Art & Popular Culture

Unit 4: Single Girl in the City: From Mary Tyler to Charlie's Angels-what does Feminism have to do with it?

Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the social movements of the 70's and identify the two main branches of feminism
2. Articulate how gender, race and sexuality are represented in 70's popular culture.
3. Identify what characteristics mark the single girl in the city and how this challenges traditional notions of patriarchy

Readings:

From *Ms. Sex & the City Reader*:

- 1972 - Spring, Click! The Housewife's Moment Of Truth
- 1973 - December, TV: Same Time, Same Station, Same Sexism
- 1975 - November, Prime Time Comes of Age
- 1976 - November, Is There Sex After Sex Roles? Once the role playing is over, what will our sex lives be like?
- 1979 - November, An Unmarried Man: Report on a New American Syndrome / The Unmarried Man – Vital Statistics
- 2011 - Fall, The Pill Turns 50
- 2011 - Fall, Birth Control for Men? The half-century quest for male contraception may finally pay off

Other Readings:

- A reparative reading of Mary Tyler Moore

Unit 5: Backlash: 80's: No Place for Women: Race, Film Noir & The Femme Fatale

Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of 80's popular culture and backlash

2. Identify what characteristics mark film noir

Readings:

Ms. Sex & the City:

- November, Single Living: The Growing Popularity of Women who are Changing our Attitudes and Our Live.
- 2012 - Winter, Singled Out: Why is the media obsessed with the marriage rate of black women?
- 2011, Fighting Racism, One Swimsuit at a Time
- 2011, Why Aren't We Protesting Miss America?

Other Readings:

- Lori A. Tribbett-Williams, *Saying Nothing, Talking Loud: Lil' Kim And Foxy Brown, Caricatures of African-American Womanhood*, 10 *Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies* 167-207, 167-172 (2000)
- *The Conversation*, Explainer: what does the 'male gaze' mean, and what about a female gaze?
- *The Bad Girl Turned Feminist: The Femme Fatale and the Performance of Theory*

Units 6 & 7: Sex & the City in the 90's and Beyond

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of 90's popular culture
2. Demonstrate what has changed since the 50's in terms of representations of women
3. Deconstruct what the "white" wedding in American society represents and who it includes

Readings:

From *Ms Sex & the City:*

- 1995 - November/December, Sitcom Women: We've Come a Long Way. Maybe
- 2000 - June/July, Otherwise Engaged: Marriage is an offer I can refuse
- 2000 - June/July, What, Me Marry?
- 2009 - Winter, The F Word on The L Word: And by that we mean feminism
- 2012 - Winter, Four (Same-Sex) Weddings & a Funeral
- 2011, Tina Fey and Ellen: Making the F Word and the L Word OK for the Masses
- 2011, Sex and the City: Imagine it Today!

Other Readings from *Feminist Television Studies Journal:*

- Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water: Miranda and the Myth of Maternal Instinct on *Sex and the City*
- Charlotte Chooses Her Choice: Liberal Feminism on *Sex and the City*.
- Fabulousness as Fetish: Queer Politics in *Sex and the City*.
- The Limits of Defamiliarization: *Sex and the City* as Late Heterosexuality

Course Schedule

Sun Jan 22

	Assignment	Module 2: Response Paper 1	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jan 27	Assignment	Module 3: Quiz	due by 11:59pm
Sun Jan 29	Assignment	Module 3: Discussion	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 3	Assignment	Module 4: Response Paper 2	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 10	Assignment	Module 5: Quiz	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 12	Assignment	Module 5: Discussion	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 19	Assignment	Module 6: Book Review Paper	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 28th	Assignment	Module 7: Quiz	due by 11:59p

Grading/ Grade Breakdown

Your grade will be determined based on the following grading schema:

- 2 Response Papers (30 points each) = 60 points total
- 3 Quizzes = 70 points total
- Book Review Paper = 110 points total
- 2 Online Discussions = 40 points total

Total = 280 points

Grade	Points Range
A+	98-100%
A	94-97%
A-	90-93%
B+	88-89%
B	84-87%
B-	80-83%
C+	78-79%
C	70-77%
D	60-69%
E	59% and below

Grading Procedure

Grades reflect your performance on assignments and adherence to deadlines. Graded assignments will be available within one week of the due date. ***You have one week to contest your grade after it is posted. Please do not wait to ask about grades until the end of the semester.***

Submitting Assignments

All assignments, unless otherwise announced, MUST be submitted to the designated area of Canvas. Do not submit an assignment via email.

Assignment due dates follow Arizona Standard time. Click the following link to access the [Time Converter](#) to ensure you account for the difference in Time Zones. Note: Arizona does not observe daylight savings time.

Grade appeals

Grade disputes must first be addressed by discussing the situation with the instructor. If the dispute is not resolved with the instructor, the student may appeal to the department chair per the [University Policy for Student Appeal Procedures on Grades](#).

Late or Missed Assignments

Notify the instructor **BEFORE** an assignment is due if an urgent situation arises and you are unable to submit the assignment on time.

Follow the appropriate University policies to request an [accommodation for religious practices](#) or to accommodate a missed assignment [due to University-sanctioned activities](#).

Assignments

1. **Papers:** All papers are double spaced and you are welcome to use any format style you are comfortable with (APA, MLA, etc.). Please note no late assignments will be accepted.
 - o **Response Papers:** 2 papers (2 pages each) @ 30 points each.

These papers must be concise and address all questions in prompt- specific questions are under the respective modules. They will be due by 11:55 pm Arizona time. Topics vary- please see information under weekly modules.

- o **Book Review Paper:** 1 paper (5-6 pages) @ 110 points. For your book review paper you are to choose an advice book. This advice book should be about dating, relationships, marriage, sex, etc. The first two pages should give an overview of your book, main points/topics discussed/etc.; the last half of your paper should focus on addressing stereotypes associated with men and/or women, assumptions made about men and/or women and relationships; gender role expectations and/or sexual scripts. For example: What assumptions about sexuality are made? Are there gendered expectations? What is the author assuming about its audience and their sexual orientation? Please incorporate at least one scholarly source for this paper assignment.

Here are some examples of book chosen by students in the past: (please note these are just examples - you do not have to pick one of these books)

- *He's Just Not That Into You*
- *The Rules*
- *The Hook Up Handbook*
- *Dating For Dummies*
- *It's Called a Breakup Because It Is Broken*
- *The Perfect Marriage for Dummies*

2. **Weekly Online Discussion & Participation:** You will be required to participate in 2 online discussions (350-450 words total per week - this includes your response post as well) around questions posted - there will be a total of 3 graded posts. You will be required to post responses by 11:55 pm Arizona time will be the cut off. In each of your 3 posts you must answer all the questions I have posted (some will ask you to specifically refer to readings) as well as respond to one or more of other students' posts. This is a 350-450 word post and you will post with all the required response items and respond to at least one other student- you can do this all in one post or come back and respond to a student/s later.
3. **Quizzes:** You will have 3 quizzes based off the readings/lecture and weekly module material. Each quiz will be timed and you can only take the quiz once. Please note no late assignments will be accepted. Please anticipate system problems- do not wait until the deadline to always submit materials or post responses. If you do experience a problem you must contact the help desk and provide a ticket to me.

Communicating With the Instructor

Community Forum

This course uses a discussion topic called "Community Forum" for general questions and comments about the course. Prior to posting a question or comment, check the syllabus, announcements, and existing posts to ensure it's not redundant. You are encouraged to respond to the questions of your classmates.

Email questions of a personal nature to your instructor. You can expect a response within 48 hours.

Chat

The Chat tool in Canvas allows students and teachers to interact in real time. Use Chat only for informal course-related conversations unless your instructor informs you otherwise. Chat is not ideal for questions about assignments; instructors are not required to monitor it and conversations may be buried or lost.

Email

ASU email is an [official means of communication](#) among students, faculty, and staff. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check their ASU-assigned email regularly.

All instructor correspondence will be sent to your ASU email account.

ASU Online Course Policies

View the [ASU Online Course Policies](#)

Academic integrity

Students must use their own, original work. Students must refrain from obtaining, uploading or submitting material that is not the student's original work to any course assignment or discussion used in this course or any other course unless the students first comply with all applicable citation guidelines and copyright laws. Faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected plagiarism and copyright infringement and impose sanctions as listed below.

Academic dishonesty includes any act of academic deceit, including but not limited to possessing, reviewing, buying, selling, obtaining, posting on a site accessible to others, reviewing materials from a site accessible to others, or using, without appropriate authorization, any materials intended to be used for an academic evaluation.

Academic integrity and anti-plagiarism policy

Academic honesty is expected of all students in any materials intended to be used for an academic evaluation, including, but not limited to: all examinations, papers, presentations, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity>.

[Plagiarism](#) of any kind will not be tolerated. Students must take the exams independently without assistance from other students. Students may not submit papers written by persons other than themselves. Students must submit original work for this course and may not submit papers previously submitted to (an) other class (es). The ASU student academic integrity policy lists violations in detail. These violations fall into five broad areas that include but are not limited to: (1) Cheating on an academic evaluation or assignment; (2) Plagiarizing; (3) Academic deceit, such as fabricating data or information; (4) Aiding academic integrity policy violations and inappropriately collaborating; (5) Falsifying academic records. See <https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity>

Copyrighted materials

All the content in this course, including lectures, are copyrighted materials. Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell or distribute course content or notes taken during the conduct of the course (see ACD 304-06). Students may not upload to any course shell, discussion board or website used by the course instructor or other course forum, material that is not the student's original work, unless the student first complies with all applicable copyright laws. The instructor reserves the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement (see ACD 304-10).

Prohibition of distributing or selling class notes

Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell, or distribute course content or notes taken during the course. In accordance with [ACD 304-06 Commercial Note Taking Services](#), written permission must be secured from the official instructor of the class in order to sell the instructor's oral communication in the form of notes. Notes must have the notetaker's name as well as the instructor's name, the course number, and the date.

Sanctions for academic integrity violations

Possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal from ASU. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Student conduct and appropriate behavior

Additionally, required behavior standards are listed in the [Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures, Computer, Internet, and Electronic Communications policy, SSM 104-02](#) policy against threatening behavior, per the *Student Services Manual*, "Handling Disruptive, Threatening, or Violent Individuals on Campus", and outlined by the [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#). Anyone in violation of these policies is subject to sanctions.

[Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference](#) by other members of the class. An instructor may withdraw a student from the course when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process per [Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#).

Netiquette --appropriate online behavior-- is defined by the instructor and includes keeping course discussion posts focused on the assigned topics. Students must maintain a cordial atmosphere and use tact in expressing differences of opinion. Inappropriate discussion posts may be deleted by the instructor.

If you deem content shared by an instructor or student offensive, bring it to the attention of the instructor or, alternatively, to the unit chair or director.

The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities accepts [incident reports](#) from students, faculty, staff, or other persons who believe that a student or a student organization may have violated the Student Code of Conduct.

Prohibition against discrimination, harassment, and retaliation (Title VII and IX)

Policy on Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation

Arizona State University is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation for the entire university community, including all students, faculty members, staff employees, and guests. ASU expressly prohibits [discrimination](#), [harassment](#), and [retaliation](#) by employees, students, contractors, or agents of the university based on any protected status.

Title VII

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a federal law that provides that no person be discriminated against based on certain specified characteristics: sex, race, color, national origin and religion, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information. Inappropriate conduct need not rise to the level of a violation of federal or state law to constitute a violation of this policy and to warrant disciplinary action/sanctions.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited.

Reporting Title VII and IX violations

Your instructor is a mandated reporter and therefore obligated to report any information regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence.

An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>.

Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employees or expulsion of students. Students are encouraged to report harassment to instructors and the [Dean of Students Office](#).

ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Statement on inclusion

Arizona State University is deeply committed to positioning itself as one of the great new universities by seeking to build excellence, enhance access and have an impact on our community, state, nation and the world. To do that requires our faculty and staff to reflect the intellectual, ethnic and cultural diversity of our nation and world so that our students learn from the broadest perspectives, and we engage in the advancement of knowledge with the most inclusive understanding possible of the issues we are addressing through our scholarly activities. We recognize that race and gender historically have been markers of diversity in institutions of higher education. However, at ASU, we believe that diversity includes additional categories such as socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status, nationality and intellectual perspective.

Land acknowledgement

ASU acknowledges the twenty-two Native Nations that have inhabited this land for centuries. Arizona State University's four campuses are located in the Salt River Valley on ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples, including the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) native communities. We acknowledge the sovereignty of these nations and seek to foster an environment of success and possibility for Native American students and patrons.

Mental health

Students may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These emotional health concerns or stressful events may diminish academic performance and/or reduce the ability to participate in daily activities. [ASU Counseling Services](#) provides counseling and crisis services for students who are experiencing a mental health concern. Any student may call or walk-in to any ASU counseling center for a same day or future appointment to discuss any personal concern. ASU's dedicated crisis line is available 24/7 for crisis consultation by calling 480-921-1006. New telehealth counseling system MySSP provides "Open Call and Open Chat" allows students to talk to counselors immediately, 24/7 and 365 days a year. Students can also schedule continued counseling through MySSP. Counseling is available in 50 languages and services are available anywhere in the world.

Accessibility statement

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended (ADAAA) of 2008, professional disability specialists and support staff at the Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS) facilitate a comprehensive range of academic support services and accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

[Qualified students with disabilities may be eligible to receive academic support services and accommodations.](#)

Eligibility is based on qualifying disability documentation and assessment of individual need. Students who believe they have a current and essential need for disability accommodations are [responsible for requesting accommodations and providing qualifying documentation](#) to SAILS. Every effort is made to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

Qualified students who wish to request accommodation for a disability should contact SAILS by going to <https://eoss.asu.edu/accessibility>, calling (480) 965-1234 or emailing Student.Accessibility@asu.edu.

Student Privacy: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (also called FERPA or the Buckley Amendment) affords students certain privacy rights regarding their education records. Those rights are summarized below. For more detailed information about FERPA, consult [SSM 107-01: Release of Student Information](#) [1] or contact [University Registrar Services](#) [2]. See <https://students.asu.edu/print/12951> for details about your rights including: The Right to Inspect, The Right to Amend, The Right to Consent, and The Right to File a Complaint.

Syllabus disclaimer

The syllabus is a statement of intent and serves as an implicit agreement between the instructor and the student. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule, but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. Please remember to check your ASU email and the Canvas shell often.