GENDER AND POP CULTURE

Ramapo College of New Jersey
First Year Seminar
Tuesdays / Fridays 3:15PM-5:05PM Room TBD

PROFESSOR: Kat McGee, J. D.
Office: C214       Office hours by appointment
Phone: (201) 684-7136      Email: kmcgee@ramapo.edu

PEER FACILITATORS: Cassidy Ebert and Grace Maute

As an added resource for first-year students, each section of First-Year Seminar (FYS) will have a peer facilitator. These upper-level students will attend FYS classes and assist the instructor with the academic topics covered in this seminar. They will serve as discussion leaders on issues that pertain to your personal and social development. Peers will also facilitate weekly discussions on the class readings, as well as determine half of your participation grade for this class. Your peer facilitator will be your mentor and will be available to you to provide guidance on navigating the different personal and social hurdles that you may encounter in your first year at Ramapo.

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR DESCRIPTION:

Designed for first-time, full-time, first-year students, First-Year Seminar (FYS) provides a comprehensive introduction to college-level learning. Seminar courses are developed around an academic theme or topic that is based on one of Ramapo College’s academic pillars. First-Year students will have the opportunity to select a seminar that best suits their interests while learning about Ramapo’s academic foundation. The First-Year Seminar course helps students in their transition from high school to college life both in and out of the classroom. The common learning outcomes of FYS are: critical and creative thinking, college-level writing, oral communication, information literacy, and technological competency. FYS classes are small to emphasize open discussion and experiential learning within the context of the theme of the seminar course. Peer facilitators play an essential role in each FYS class ensuring that first-year students have guidance from a more experienced student. FYS is also the home of the Ramapo Summer Reading Program; all first-year students read the same book and discuss and write about it in their seminars. FYS encourages new students to participate in a community of learners, to strengthen their critical thinking skills, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM COURSE:

This course fulfills the First-Year Seminar category of the general education curriculum at Ramapo College. Common to all First-Year Seminar (FYS) courses, you will develop critical thinking skills that are basic to college level study, regardless of your area of interest. You will be reading, writing, and participating in thoughtful group discussions with the aim of developing the skills of a scholar. You will learn to support your arguments using a foundation of knowledge and facts rather than simply using personal opinions and experiences.
GENDER AND POP CULTURE COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce students to college life via two different experiences: student development and academic challenge. The first will provide students with a variety of tools to make the most of your college experience here at Ramapo. The academic component of this course will be an interactive, discussion-based class in which we will explore the social and cultural meanings of gender through the lens of American popular culture. This course will study the ways in which pop culture impacts our lives and our society. We will critically examine how the media constructs gender roles of men and women and how these constructs become cultural norms. We will learn about gender as a set of culturally (not biologically) constructed behaviors that are deemed appropriate for men and women. Class readings and viewings will come from traditional feminist texts, essays, blogs, films, and even YouTube, to illustrate the portrayal of gender in contemporary society. Come prepared to discuss and think critically about gender and its relationship to race, class, sexuality and other identities. Finally, the course offers a foundation of information and a framework of thought useful in more specialized gender studies courses and in everyday life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Use theoretical arguments to explain and analyze various components of popular culture.
- Apply feminist theory to analyze representations of gender in the media.
- Identify and explain how various socially and culturally constructed categories (such as gender, race, class, sexual identity, and others) function together to formulate systems of oppression.
- Think critically about the impact of popular culture in forming individual choices, as well as how they shape our society collectively.
- Articulate connections between your personal experiences and wider social structures.
- Engage in critical thinking to establish academically rigorous arguments.

MEASURABLE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will:</th>
<th>Class discussions and essays</th>
<th>Final Research Paper</th>
<th>Final Presentation</th>
<th>Course Enrichment Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate proficiency in written communication.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate information literacy and technological competency.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIRST YEAR ACADEMIC ADVISING

Each First-Year Seminar course is assigned a professional Academic Advisor from the Center for Student Success who serves as your Academic Advisor during your first year. This advisor will attend your First-Year Seminar class for a group advisement session to review general academic advising policies and procedures. They will also be available to answer any general questions regarding college policies/practices. Students are encouraged to schedule individual appointments with their Student Success Advisor for assistance with course selection and the development of a personal academic plan. If you have any questions regarding Academic Advisement please call Student Success at (201) 684-7441 or via email: success@ramapo.edu

WRITING INTENSIVE (WI) COURSE

Writing will be integrated into the life of this course. You will receive comments, direction, and support as you work on strengthening your writing skills. Your writing will be evaluated and returned in a timely fashion, allowing you to incorporate my comments into your future work. For help outside the classroom, please see me during my office hours and/or work with a writing tutor in the Center for Reading and Writing (CRW), Room: L-211, x7557, crw@ramapo.edu.

Students are expected to read and understand Ramapo College's academic integrity policy, which can be found in the Ramapo College Catalog. Members of the Ramapo College community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. Students who violate this policy will be required to meet with the faculty member and/or will be referred to the Office of the Provost. See the abbreviated version of this policy below.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Textbook TBA
- Reserve readings on Moodle as assigned.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

1. Classroom Decorum: Mutual respect and courtesy are required at all times. Class discussions are intended to create a supportive space for all students to sharpen intellectual and communication skills essential for success outside the classroom.

   - Side conversations, leaving class during lectures, text messaging, and use of mobile communication devices are unacceptable.
   - Under no circumstances will language or behavior that demeans or threatens others on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical appearance, religion, etc. be tolerated.

2. Word-processed Assignments: All word-processed assignments are required to be submitted via Turnitin.com through Moodle. Such assignments are to be double-spaced documents written in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font with 1 inch margins.

3. Late Assignments: Students are required to submit all papers and assignments on the date that they are due. The penalty for failing to do so will be an automatic subtraction of one letter grade (i.e., from a B to a C) for each week the assignment is late. Exceptions are only granted for exceptional extenuating circumstances at the professor's discretion.
4. **Academic Integrity Policy:** Students are expected to read and understand Ramapo College’s Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found in the Ramapo College Catalog. Those violating this policy will be referred to the Office of the Provost. For information on plagiarism and how to avoid committing academic fraud, please consult the following website: [http://ollie.dcccd.edu/library/Module4/M4-VII/plagar.htm](http://ollie.dcccd.edu/library/Module4/M4-VII/plagar.htm)

5. **Electronic Forms of Communication:** In accordance with Ramapo College policy, I will only use your Ramapo College email address (@ramapo.edu) to communicate with you about all course-related matters.

6. **Disabilities Accommodation:** Any student who needs course adaptation or accommodations due to a documented disability should make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Please note: Students must be registered with the Office of Specialized Services (OSS) to receive accommodations. For additional information, contact OSS at x7514 or oss@ramapo.edu.

7. **Responsibility for Missed Classes:** If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get class notes and updated assignment information from another student.

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

1. **Attendance:** 10%

Regular class attendance is imperative to your success in the course. Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class. You are permitted to miss one of our classes without needing to provide any excuse or explanation. For each class you miss after the one permitted absence, your final course grade will be lowered by one quarter of a letter grade. Students who miss 4 or more classes will fail automatically. Repeated lateness or leaving class early will also hurt this aspect of your grade. Pursuant to college policy, you must notify faculty within the first three weeks of the semester if you anticipate missing any classes due to religious observance.

2. **Class Participation:** 15%

This class will be focused on discussion – not lecturing. Active participation is expected. Students are expected to meaningfully participating in at least two discussions during the course of each class. Preparing for class by completing reading assignments is imperative. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, talk to me early in the semester so we can discuss strategies to help you become an active class participant.

3. **Pop Culture Observation Report:** 5%

Each student will be placed in pairs and assigned a day to give a team presentation on a current pop culture current event. This event must be relevant to the material covered in this class and take place within the past 2 weeks. One student will summarize the event and the other will lead a class discussion with critical thinking questions. Students will also submit one 2 page analysis per team of their observations the day that their report is assigned via Moodle.

4. **Critical Analysis Papers (CAPs):** 50%

Please see the detailed descriptions regarding the requirements of the various CAPs provided below. Grading is as follows:
• Three short essays: 8% of your final grade each for a total of 24% of your final grade.
• One research paper: 26% of your final grade.

5. Course Enrichment Component (CEC): 10%

Each course will include a minimum of 5 hours of unmonitored, appropriate experience outside of the classroom to enhance student learning. Only events listed in this syllabus or events that are pre-approved by the professor prior to attending the event will be accepted. Students will complete their 5 hours and submit a 5 page paper by 12/13/13 describing how the experiences you participated in relate to the course and how they expanded your understanding of course topics.

6. Final Paper Presentation: 10%

Each student will give a 4-5 minute class presentation on his or her final paper. Each presentation will be graded on the delivery as well as content. Details to follow.

**GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Academic Achievement</th>
<th>Grade Points Per Credit</th>
<th>Credit Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(94-100)</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(90-93)</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(87-89)</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(83-86)</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(80-82)</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>(77-79)</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(73-76)</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>(70-72)</td>
<td>Well Below Average</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(60-69)</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0-59)</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

First Day of Classes: September 2nd
Last day for Schedule Adjustments (on the Web): September 9th
Last day to withdraw from courses with “W” grade: November 13th
Thanksgiving Recess: Nov 25th – 29th
Reading Day (no classes): December 15th
Final Exam Week: December 16th – 22nd
Common Finals: December 19th  
Last day to request “I” grades: December 22nd  
Final Exam Snow Make-Up Day: December 23rd

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**September 1st - Opening Convocation**

Phil Klay, author of *Redeployment*

**Remaining Class Schedule TBD. Topics include:**

- Pop Culture 101
- Historical Influence of Media
- Contemporary Influence of Media
- Developing a Critical Analysis of Pop Culture
- Media Literacy
- Consumerism
- Masculinity
- Femininity
- Sex Sells
- Sexual Identity and the Queer Community
- Deconstructing Advertisements
- Representations of Race and Ethnicity

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPERS**

Throughout the semester students are required to complete 4 of the 5 Critical Analysis Papers (CAPs) described below. Please see each individual CAP for the due date and description. Three of the four CAPs will be in short essay form. Short essays should be three pages each (somewhere between 900 and 1200 words). **CAP 4 is mandatory:** it is an eight page research paper which will be followed by an in class presentation on your findings.

Your objective in writing shorter CAPs is to provide a sharp and focused examination of the essay topic. Unlike ordinary conversation and classroom discussion, short essay writing demands tight organization and control of each idea expressed. Every word and every sentence is valuable when you have such little room to express your thoughts. Your short essay must have a central idea (thesis), it must have several paragraphs that grow systematically out of the central idea, and its contents must directly relate and contribute to the reader’s understanding of that central idea. Whenever possible you should support your critical analysis with material from our readings and classroom discussion. Individual paragraphs should be formatted in the same fashion: the first or second sentence should contain the central idea of the paragraph, and all sentences following should support that central idea. Introductions and conclusions should be very brief in short essays (if included at all).
In contrast, the eight page paper allows for a deeper analysis of your topic. The same general format (central idea → support for this idea), used in the short essays should be used in the eight page paper and through each paragraph. More substantial sections of your paper dedicated to an introduction and conclusion are appropriate for this longer paper.

Many CAPs require specific examples from class readings or additional sources: please see Hacker’s Rules for Writers (listed in our syllabus), for citation information. If you use films, broadcast media, television shows, internet sources etc. these must also be cited and include retrieval date.

The general grading rubric for these assignments is:

- The number of course issues, concepts, discussions, and readings (or films or other materials) you incorporate. 20%
- The degree to which you demonstrate an understanding of these issues by applying them to the CAP topic. 25%
- Your ability to provide a quality and in depth critical analysis (i.e. of history or gender theory). 20%
- Compliance with formatting requirements. (page requirements, submitted via Moodle, double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins) 15%
- Basics like paper organization, clarity, logic, and writing mechanics (proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) 20%

CAP 1: Due TBA

This is your chance to submit a pop culture item for class viewing and discussion. This item must be something that can be viewed and discussed by the class in one hour or less. It should also be free or very inexpensive to attain. Clips from movies, tv shows, music videos, and online videos are good sources of viewable material. One to three submissions will be selected for viewing in class and the authors of the submissions will provide an introduction for their item. Students whose submissions are selected for class viewing will receive one point added to their final class grade. Please provide the following information for this CAP paper to submit an item:

- What is the item? When was it released? Who does it feature?
- How does this item relate to a topic in our syllabus?
- Please provide a critical analysis of this item using frameworks from the 9/25/12 class readings.
- Why are you interested in sharing this item?
- What do you hope your classmates will learn from this viewing?

CAP 2: Due TBA

The class material we have covered so far includes an analysis of gender roles and the socialization of men and women in our society. Please go to the blog Microaggressions (www.microaggressions.com), and take notes on posts related to gender and sexual identify. Apply specific examples from class material (readings and discussions), to provide a critical gender analysis of 4-8 posts from this blog. The quality of your analysis and your ability to apply the material you have learned is more important then the number of posts you discuss.
CAP 3: Due TBA

Go to the blog Sociological Images (www.thesocietypages.org/socimages), and select an advertisement that you believe uses sex, race, gender, family roles, or sexuality (alone or in combination). Use specific examples from class material (readings and discussions) to answer the following questions about the ad you selected:

1. What social group(s) does the ad target? What social group(s) are represented in the ad? (Hint: The answers are not always the same.)

2. Does the advertisement reinforce or violate cultural norms? If it violates them, what purpose do you think the violation serves?

3. In addition to the product, what else is the ad selling? (Hint: Consider things like love, marriage, sex, individuality, freedom, sophistication, leisure and other desirables.)

CAP 4-Research Paper: Due TBA

In this 8 page research paper you will apply gender theory examined in the course to a pop culture topic of your own choosing. Given the breadth of subjects that can be considered part of popular culture it is not difficult to find a topic, but you should be sure to find a topic that can be examined within 8 pages (up to 10 pages maximum). For example, “men in television shows of the 1990’s” is too broad for a paper of this length, but “an analysis on masculine gender norms on Full House” is more appropriate.

The paper must satisfy the following basic requirements:

1. Your paper must have a research question. This central question clearly states what you are seeking to discover and why you want to investigate this topic or issue. (For example “How do the male lead figures of Full House conform to or reject societal gender norms?”) It should also state your research methodology, or how you will go about examining this question. (For example you watched 5 hours of Full House to chart gender representations and compared this to our class discussions of masculinity.)

2. Your paper must have a conclusion that summarizes what you have discovered. It must clearly state what you found out in the course of your research and be supported with numerous relevant examples to illustrate why you reached this conclusion.

3. A bibliography is required. It must include every single source you consulted, including readings, class discussions, music videos, websites, etc. You must include at least 10 sources for this paper which you researched for your paper proposal. For internet resources, your bibliography must include a complete and accessible URL address.

4. The final paper must be written in either MLA or APA citation style. You may use either one as long as you are consistent in style. Please consult the Rules for Writers handbook for details or see: http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/hacker/papers.htm

Examples of possible subjects:

• A Gendered Analysis of Superbowl Commercials
- Star Wars and Representations of Male Relationships
- 80's Music Videos: Rise of the Video Vixen and Implications for Female Artists
- MTV, Sexuality, and Masculinity
- Gendered Implications of 90's Children’s Toys

**CAP 7: Due TBA**

Respond to each of the 5 questions below. List the question you are responding to first, and then write your answer.

1. What did you expect to learn from this course and how does this compare to what you actually learned?
2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
4. How, when, and where will you use what you have learned?
5. How can you apply what you've learned about this topic to make a difference in your life, relationships, or community?

**POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All members of the Ramapo community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. Since violations of academic integrity erode community confidence and undermine the pursuit of truth and knowledge at the College, academic dishonesty must be avoided.

**Procedures**

The Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has the responsibility for the oversight and enforcement of the academic integrity policy and for making the policy an institutional priority. The Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs is also responsible for publishing the policy and for educating both faculty and students about the policy.

Faculty members play a crucial role in the academic integrity policy. They are responsible for educating their students about the importance of academic integrity and for communicating to students their expectations with respect to academic integrity in course work. Students have the responsibility to understand the College academic integrity policy and to comply with the policy in all their academic work.

**Criteria**

There are four broad forms of academic dishonesty:

1. **Cheating**
   Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents his or her mastery of material on a test or other academic exercise. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:
   - copying from another student's work;
   - allowing another student to copy his/her work;
• using unauthorized materials such as a textbook, notebook or electronic devices during an examination;
• using specifically prepared materials such as notes written on clothing or other unauthorized notes, formula lists, etc., during an examination;
• collaborating with another person during an examination by giving or receiving information without authority;
• taking a test for another person or asking or allowing another to take the student’s own test.

2. Plagiarism
Plagiarism occurs when a person represents someone else’s words, ideas, phrases, sentences, or data as one’s own work. When a student submits work that includes such material, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific footnote references; additionally, verbatim statements must be acknowledged through quotation marks. Examples of standard citation formats can be found on the Ramapo College Library Website.

To avoid a charge of plagiarism, a student should be sure to include an acknowledgment of indebtedness:
• whenever he or she quotes another person’s words directly;
• whenever he or she uses another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories, even if they have been completely paraphrased in one’s own words;
• whenever he or she allows another individual to contribute to the work in some significant fashion (for instance, through editing, or sharing of ideas);
• whenever he or she uses facts, statistics, or other illustrative material taken from a source, unless the information is common knowledge.

3. Academic Misconduct
Academic Misconduct includes the alteration of grades, involvement in the acquisition or distribution of unadministered tests, and the unauthorized submission of student work in more than one class. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:
• changing, altering, falsifying, or being the accessory to the changing, altering, or falsifying of a grade report or form or other academic record, or entering any computer system, College office or building for that purpose;
• stealing, buying, selling, giving way, or otherwise obtaining all or part of any unadministered test or entering any computer system, College office or building, for the purpose of obtaining an unadministered test;
• submitting written work (in whole or in significant part) to fulfill the requirements of more than one course without the explicit permission of both instructors;
• disregarding policies governing the use of human subjects or animals in research;
• sabotaging another student’s work through actions designed to prevent the student from successfully completing an assignment;
• knowingly facilitating a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy by another person.

4. Fabrication
Fabrication refers to the deliberate use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples of fabrication include, but are not limited to:
• citation of information not taken from the source indicated;
• listing of sources in a “works cited” that were not used in that project;
• altering, stealing and/or falsifying research data used in research reports, theses, or dissertations;
• submission as one’s own of any academic work prepared in whole or in part by others, including the use of another’s identity;
• falsifying information or signatures on registration, withdrawal, or other academic forms and records.

More on academic integrity can be found here: http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog-2015-2016/academic-policies/

**COURSE ENRICHMENT COMPONENT (CEC) OPTIONS:**

Students will be provided with a list of approved CEC events which will be accepted for the 5 hours required in this course. Additional events may be attended for CEC hours, but only with the professor’s written approval (via email) PRIOR to attending the event. Students can earn their 5 hours by attending any combination of events (ie, attending one 5-hour conference, attending five 1-hour events, etc.) Students will complete their 5 hours and submit a 5 page paper describing how the experiences you participated in relate to the course and how they expanded your understanding of course topics.