

Women and Gender
Studies Institute
University of Toronto

GENDER AND POP CULTURE

WGS271 / SUMMER 2024 / SS1072

COURSE INSTRUCTOR:
Sam Dolores Sanchinel
(she/her)

EMAIL:
sam.sanchinel
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COURSE TIME:
Tuesdays, 2 - 4pm
Thursdays, 2 - 4pm
Location: SS1072
OFFICE HOURS:
TBD
And by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do stories matter? How do they shape our selves and the worlds we inhabit? How, in turn, do worldly conditions shape the stories we tell? And what does storytelling have to do with what we mean by “we”? This course introduces you to the intersections of feminism(s) and cultural studies. Throughout this course we will learn about key cultural studies concepts and the questions they prompt about how stories circulate, why representation matters, and what audiences and critics do with popular media. We will explore these concepts and questions through a variety of forms and genres, including music, comics, photography, and films. By emphasizing that culture is a terrain of struggle and focusing on how texts and images do what they do, this course helps you acquire the skills to creatively engage with pop cultural storytelling.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop analytical skills for critically engaging with popular culture in a variety of media
- Work with key cultural studies concepts that allow you to understand and talk about how stories, histories, and political movements inform each other
- Identify some of the ways formal choices and genre conventions shape the stories we tell
- Develop writing and communication skills, including: making clear points, building coherent paragraphs, engaging your reader(s), and expressing complex ideas in plain language.

(Adapted from Prof. T, and Prof. Fazekas course Syllabi)



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We [I] would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for over 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island.

- Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives)

"It's one thing to say, "Hey, we're on the territory of the Mississaugas or the Anishinaabek and the Haudenosaunee." It's another thing to say, "We're on the territory of the Anishinaabek and the Haudenosaunee and here's what that compels me to do." – Hayden King

Many of us work, live, and grew up on this land as uninvited settlers. Many of us go through school and university not knowing much about the histories and present realities of indigenous peoples. As such, in including this land acknowledgement, I am further compelled to include indigenous perspectives and decolonial frameworks in this course which finds many of its *academic roots* in a white-colonial academia. I am further compelled to learn more about the history of this land, and work towards becoming a better ally.

Further resources to check out (that have helped me in thinking through this land acknowledgement) check out Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgement (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>), "For Settlers who say that they support Decolonization ... But wish it weren't so hard" by Sheri M McConnell (https://www.casw-acts.ca/files/webinars/For_settlers_-_McConnell_-_March_2018.pdf), and the Indigenous U of T website (which includes many resources on learning indigenous histories as well) (<https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/about/land-acknowledgement/>)

As well as my own thoughts on Land Acknowledgements:

<https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/08/18/land-acknowledgements-and-trans-philosophy-what-are-we-compelled-to-do/>



Androgyny by Norval Morrisseau 2017

COURSE POLICIES

Course Instructor: Sam Dolores Sanchinel (she/her)

Email: sam.sanchinel@mail.utoronto.ca

Sam Office Hours: TBD

Lecture (in-person): Tuesdays and Thursdays 2pm-4pm (EST)

TA: Reese Carr (they/them) reese.carr@mail.utoronto.ca

Travis York (he/they): travis.york@mail.utoronto.ca

CLASS ACCOUNTABILITY

What I sincerely hope for us in this course is for it to become a place where we feel comfortable, and confident in sharing our thoughts.

As in any classroom, I expect participation in class to be done with mutual respect, curiosity, and generosity. Please do not hesitate in contacting me if you're finding it difficult to navigate or participate in our online community.

The topics we will be covering often are explicit, sensitive, upsetting, or polarizing. In order to allow everyone to actively engage with and think through this course we must support an inclusive learning environment. It is important that students respect and appreciate others' opinions, views, and experiences. **Critical engagement and discussion are encouraged but disrespectful and hateful remarks will not be tolerated.** If any student has concerns about material or behavior in class, they are encouraged to speak with me. If you ever feel uncomfortable about a topic or a selected reading, contact me and we can figure it out.

If this happens in class, please feel empowered to bring it up and we can confront the situation. Of course, you might not feel comfortable with this, so you can email me privately, or you are welcome to take a break from lecture as well. I'll try my best to be attune to the class environment.

This is going to be a process, but through it all if we share our thoughts and participate with generosity, we will all have a wonderful time, and gain some valuable insights not only from this course, but from each other.

(Adapted from Prof. T, and Prof. Alexopoulos course Syllabi)

ACCESSABILITY

We all learn in different ways and in different styles. My goal for this term is for everyone to be able to succeed and flourish in this course. Though given all our different abilities, I'm committed to accommodating anyone who needs to, in order to make sure we can all participate in this course to our best abilities.

If you require further accommodations due to a disability or other health concerns, please contact me or Accessibility services. Accessibility services is confidential and helps many students



in the university achieve their goals. And if you don't have a documented disability, there are still many resources (including myself!) that are here to support you in this course and your university journey. For a list of resources available to you check out the quercus page.

Your success in this course is my number one goal. I genuinely care about each of you, and I'm more than happy to chat with you about the course requirements and how to best reach those goals according to your needs.

(Inspired by Prof. T)

EMAIL AND CONSULTATION POLICY

Please include the course code [WGS271] in the subject line of any emails!

Please email the TAs according to your last name. Though, make sure to check the syllabus/assignment outlines/Quercus to see if the answer to your question is already there. In general, **we'll try my best to answer any emails within 48 hours (not including weekends) and will likely not answer any assignment-based questions less than 24 hours from the due date.**

There are a few reasons for this. For myself, and all you too, consider that burnout is real. With managing our respective screen time, setting up some time away is important.

My office hours start TBD. Otherwise you can email me to set up an appointment. I'm more than happy to chat whenever 😊



GRADING POLICIES EVALUATIONS + ASSIGNMENTS*

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
FIRST HALF WORK		Latest: July 1
Pop Culture Journey Map	15%	May 27
Curatorial Series	15%	June 17
SECOND HALF WORK		Latest: End of Term
Final Project Outline	15%	July 15
Final Project	25%	End of Term
PARTICIPATION		
Tutorial Participation (Discussion, Attendance)	15%	Ongoing

Lecture Attendance & In Class Activities	15%	Ongoing
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For each assignment a larger description will be provided, along with a detailed rubric outlining grade levels.

There is no final exam in this course. The final project is currently due at the end of term (August 10), however, submitting it within the exam period is ok (but make sure to discuss with the instructor).

Pop Culture Journey Map (Collaboratively Option – Co-Journey)

Due: May 27

Weight: 15%

In this assignment I'm asking you to consider your pop culture journey via a journey map! In short, this journey map should show your history and relationship with pop culture through various stages of your life (or whatever other method you want to organize it!). Ask yourself, what pop culture things (movies, shows, music, toys) impacted you the most through your life? And why?

Make a map highlighting at least 5 different things, and write a short paragraph for each explaining why it was impactful for you (each paragraph should be around 150-200 words). Examples (and time to start drafting) will be given in class.

Minimum 5 things, 750 words, 1 journey map.

NOTE: You can take a more creative approach as well. If you want to make a video it should be 4-6 minutes and make sure to submit a transcript. You can make an infographic, a playlist, whatever. The options are endless! We can chat further about other creative options in completing this assignment.

Curatorial Series (With Collaborative Option)

Due: Late June 17

Weight: 15%

Can be thought of a journey map, take 2! This assignment asks you to analyze a curated collection of five-seven aesthetic objects in a 750-1000 word essay. It may be a collection of a mixture of things including: photography, a fashion lookbook or a playlist, tv shows, books, toys whatever! This collection should be curated by you.

You must demonstrate a dialogue or conversation amongst at least 3 readings and your collection by engaging themes explored in this course!

More details in class!

(Adapted from Prof. Lahey's assignment!)

Final Project Outline (With Collaborative Option)

Due: July 15

Weight: 15%

This assignment will help you work through your ideas for the final research paper. The first part I'm asking you for is to write out a clear thesis that states what your paper will be about. This should be one to two short sentences.

The second part to this is for you to also write about what your inspiration is for the thesis (which leads into thinking about your paper). This section should be around a half a page (150 words). Try to delve into your motivations for writing the paper. If it's interesting to you, why? Is it something that's important? Is it personal? I'm interested in reading your thoughts, and I find that having an internal motivation really helps in the writing process.

In the third part of this assignment I'm asking you to provide a roadmap for your paper. Include your thesis again, major arguments (no need to go into detail, just state them in a sentence), main points in your arguments, and prospective sources for each section.

Aim to have at least 3 sections with 1-3 subpoints in each (classic essay model). Writing in bullet points is fine (if not encouraged!)

There should be at least 3 sources from class and 2 sources from outside of class. The outside sources don't need to be academic but be critical in your usage.

The total length of this assignment should be 3-4 pages. An example will be given in class along with a rubric.

NOTE: This assignment could be done collaboratively. You all have the option of teaming up with one other person for the final paper. More on this in class! *This is still needed if you do another type of creative final project.

Final Project (Individual 6-8 Pages, Collaborative 7-9 Pages)

Due: End of Term

Weight: 25%

In this assignment you'll build on the previous assignments (reflections, proposal with thesis) to write a 6-8 page research essay.

You can write on any topic as long as it's related to Gender and Pop Culture! Make sure to include at least 3 sources from the class and at least 2 sources outside of course content. For this paper, what I'm really looking for is reading your perspective. So, what is your viewpoint? How do you use the research to craft an argument?

NOTE: You're welcome to work collaboratively in this assignment as well (as a continuation from the proposal). If you choose this collaborative option, the word limit increases a bit.

I will provide a longer description in a separate document! Also, different creative options possible!

PARTICIPATION

The participation grade is 30% of your total grade. The grading for the participation has a few parts to it.

LECTURE-BASED

1. Synchronous Lecture Attendance (10%):

Lecture attendance is highly encouraged! During lecture will be the time where we meet

up together, discuss important points of the required texts, and share our thoughts with each other. There are 24 lectures this year. If you attend 20 then you get the 10%. If you're unable to attend lecture for whatever reason, the 5% can be gained through a short seminar presentation. We can chat about this further!

2. Lecture Activities (5%)

During some lectures (dates will be released) we will do some activities that will help with the assignments, understanding concepts or just to have fun! Complete 5 of these for 5% total. If you take it seriously, you'll get the full grade!

TUTORIAL-BASED

1. Tutorial Attendance (10%)

Tutorials will be the place where you discuss class, ask questions, and see how course context could be related to real world applications. Also! This will be the place where you can practice writing skills and prepare for assignments. There will be x may tutorials this year on x days

2. Tutorial Activities (5%)

During (some) of the tutorials there will be various activities to do. Complete 5 different ones (while taking them seriously) and get the full grade!

LATE POLICY

There are **no deductions** for handing in assignments late. This is something I'm taking from a previous prof who I really appreciated.

The due dates are designed to be ethical. As such, the deadlines are **flexible**. If you submit late then: the TA may not leave ample feedback. There is no need for doctors' notes or any other reasons. Just fill out the late extension form (will be provided), and all's well.

First half of the term work needs to be submitted by July 1. End of term work by the end of term!

If you're finding difficulty staying on track, we can chat and figure something out. I'm here to help you learn and get past obstacles, not make new ones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (& GENERATIVE AI)

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and in ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, UofT treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously.

(UTM Syllabus Statement - <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/academic-integrity/facultystaff/syllabus-statement>)

For more resources on what constitutes academic integrity misconduct check out:

<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity/academic-misconduct>

If you're concerned or have any questions about academic integrity for an assignment, don't hesitate to contact me. Sometimes citations are finicky, and you might not be sure about something. Email me! I'm here to help.

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is strictly prohibited in all course

assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course or in an assignment outline. This includes:

ChatGPT, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is an academic offense.

- There will be some instances we use it, but I will first talk about it!

If you're super struggling with everything and feel deadlines and the world ending, PLEASE reach out to the instructor (me: Sam!) I am here to support you!

Other important info

Important Dates

Full List: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/dates-deadlines/academic-dates#academic-dates-deadlines-accordion-4>

First day of classes	May 7
Last day to enroll in Summer Courses	May 12
Last day to drop courses	June 3
Summer Break (for us)	June 4 - 13
Last Day of Our Class	August 8

UofT gives you free access to a bunch of movies. Check them out here:

Audio Cine: <https://streaming-acf-film-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/audiocine>

Kanopy: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/utoronto>

Criterion on Demand: <https://www.criterionondemand-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/>

And more: <https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/streaming-video>

COURSE SCHEDULE (READINGS)*

*All the readings and videos will be posted on our course site on Quercus.

WEEK 1 May 7 & 9 – Introduction

1. May 7 – Intro Intro Intro

No Readings / No Class

Read the syllabus!

2. May 9

What is Pop Culture? What is Gender?

Storey, John. "What is Popular Culture?" *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 2001. p. 1-2, 5, 6, 8-11, 13-14. [10 pages]

Butler, Judith. "Berkeley professor explains gender theory | Judith Butler" *Big Think*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD9IOllUR4k&ab_channel=BigThink
 [13mins23sec]

Sylvia Wynter, "'No Humans Involved': An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Voices of the African Diaspora Newsletter*. University of Michigan, 1992. 13-16. [4 pages]

Watch/Listen to: "16 Carriages" by Beyoncé

Watch/Listen to: "The Prophecy" by Taylor Swift

WEEK 2 May 14 & 16 – What's in a Story? Who's Story?

3. May 14

Hegemonic, Ideological GUEST LECTURE

Lull, James. "Ideology." *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. 2000. 13-16. [4 pages]

Lull, James. "Hegemony." *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. 2000. 48-52. [5 pages]

Listen/Watch: "Institutionalized" by Suicidal Tendencies

In Class Viewing: In class Viewing: Bachelor Fantake. "The Most Dramatic Show on Netflix Returns With More CHAOS – The Ultimatum Season 2 RECAP (Ep. 1 - 3)"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwVaVtHGo-k&ab_channel=BachelorFantake

4. May 16: **Racialization and Looking Back**

hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze." in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992. [13 pages]

Mulvey, Laura. "Pleasure in Looking/ Fascination with Human Form" and "Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look" Selection pp 806-809. [4 pages]

Barlibo. "Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model but it's easier to understand".
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3ThZumdcV0&ab_channel=barlibo [12mins]

In-class viewing: Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*, Episode 2 (1972)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1GI8mNU5Sg&ab_channel=tw19751

WEEK 3 May 21 & 23 – Neoliberal Futures and Identities: Self-Branding and AI

5. May 21

Neoliberalism – GUEST LECTURE

Harvey, "Introduction" and excerpt from "Freedom's Just Another Word..." *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 1-4 and 5-7. Oxford UP, 2005. [7 pages]

Khamis, Susie; Ang, Lawrence & Welling, Raymond. "Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers." *Celebrity Studies*. 2017. 191-208. [15 pages]

Watch/Listen to: "Work Bitch" – Britney Spears

6. May 23

Cyborgs, AI, and Futures

Springer, Claudia. "The Pleasure of the Interface" [4 pages]

Silvio, Carl. "Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*" *Science Fiction Studies*. 1999 [16 pages]

Watch: *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) <https://streaming-acf-film-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/audiocine/play/000ebc783ff9f703?referrer=marc>

Watch/Listen to: "Pynk" – Janelle Monáe

In Class Viewing: *The Circle* S06E04: "Spot The Bot" (2024)

WEEK 4 May 28 & 30 – Making Monsters, Being Monstrous

7. May 28

Makin' Monsters

Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Pp.3-20 [17 pages]

Watch/Listen: "This is America" – Childish Gambino

In Class Viewing: *Reel Bad Arabs* (2006)
<https://kanopy.com/en/utoronto/video/41566>

8. May 30

Being Monstrous

Trimble, "A Demon-Girl's Guide to Life" *It Came from the Closet: Queer Reflections on Horror*. [5 pages]

Machado, Carmen Maria. "Both Ways: Jennifer's Body" *It Came from the Closet: Queer Reflections on Horror*. [4 pages]

June 4 & 6 – BREAK

June 4 BREAK

June 6 BREAK

June 11 & 13 – BREAK

June 11 : BREAK

June 13: BREAK

WEEK 5 June 18 & 20 – (Re) Telling/Turning a Story

June 18

9. *Returning to a Story* GUEST LECTURE

Dian Million, "There's a River in Me"

Riceboy Sleeps (2022)

10. June 20 [TUTORIAL DAY]

Re-Telling a Story

Fall, Isabell, "I sexually identify as an attack helicopter" *Clarkes World*. [13 pages]

Susan Stryker. "Transgender Rage"

WEEK 6 June 25 & 27 – Fanfiction – Creating Responses

11. June 25

Fanfiction

Fazekas, Angie & Vena, Dan. "'What were we—idiots?':

Re-evaluating Female Spectatorship and the New Horror Heroine with Catherine Hardwicke's *Twilight*." In *Final Girls, Feminism, and Popular Culture*, 2020. [13 pages]

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy*. Selection [6 pages]

WATCH: *Twilight*

12. June 27

Zines and Participatory Culture : GUEST LECTURE

Watch: Jenkins, Henry. "Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture: Big Thinkers"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gPm-c1wRsQ&ab_channel=Edutopia

Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts" *Small Axe*. 2008.

WEEK 7 July 2 & 4 – Special Topics: Music Mashups – Cowboy Carter

13. July 2 [TUTORIAL DAY] **Beyoncé & Janelle Monáe**

Choose one:

Bey

Omise'eke Tinsley, "Introduction" Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism. University of Texas Press, 2018. 1-19.

Lemonade. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHYwerZbMS4&t=1s>

OR

Monáe

Clarkson, Alonge O. "DIRTY COMPUTER: An Afrocentric Analysis of Janelle Monáe's Emotion Picture" *Afrocentricity and Afrofuturism*. [15 pages]

Monáe, Janelle - *Dirty Computer* [Emotion Picture]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdH2Sy-BINE&ab_channel=JanelleMon%C3%A1e

14. July 4

Mini-Panel????

WEEK 8 July 9 & 11 – Heroes: Super-(Crip)

15. July 9 [GUEST LECTURE]

21. Super – Hero

Landis, Winona. "Diasporic (dis)identification: the participatory fandom of Ms. Marvel." *South Asian Popular Culture*. 14(1-2). 2016. 33-47. [14 pages]

Ahmed, Saladin. *Miles Morales: Spider-man* Vol. 1 (2018) [on hoopla]

16. July 11

Super Crip" GUEST LECTURE

Readings TBD

WEEK 9 July 16 & July 18 – Pop Cultural Fusions

17. July 16 [Writing TUTORIAL]

Food, Wonderful Food

Narayan, Uma. "Eating Cultures: incorporation, identity, and Indian Food." in *Dislocating Cultures, Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminisms*. New York: Routledge, 1997. [20 pages]

"Celebrity chef's 'chili crunch' trademark sparks debate over food and culture" *PBS NewsHour* [7 mins]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tM1ORokdlpA&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

18. July 18 [GUEST LECTURE]

Excessive Identities

Hernandez, Jillian. "Introduction" *Aesthetics of Excess*. Pp. 1-26 [26 pages]

Watch/Listen to: "WAP" Cardi B. feat. Megan thee Stallion

OPTIONAL: *Bride and Prejudice* <https://media3-criterionpic-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/htbin/wwform/006?t=AL078265>

WEEK 10 July 23 & 25 – Monsters Take 2: Zombies

19. July 23:

Zombies and Blackness

Brown, Sherronda. "'Listen to the ancestors, run!' Get Out, Zombification, and Pathologizing Escape from the Plantation." *Racebaitr*. March 7, 2017.

Mariani, Mike. "The Tragic, Forgotten History of Zombies." *The Atlantic*. October 28, 2015.

In Class Viewing: *Get Out* <https://streaming-acf-film-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/audiocine/play/479263b4e3b6bdbd?referrer=marc>

20. July 25: [TUTORIAL]

In Class Viewing: *Savage* dir. Lisa Jackson: <https://lisajackson.ca/filter/fiction/Savage>

WEEK 11 July 30 & August 1 –End of the World(s) [~ Pages]

July 30 [WRITING WORKSHOP]

Indigifutures – GUEST LECTURE

Dimaline, Cherie. *Marrow Thieves*. First Half

August 1

Indigifutures II –

WEEK 12 August 6 & 8 – LAST CLASS – Pop Culture Futures [~ Pages]**23. Who's Story is it anyways?[TUTORIAL]**

Thom, Kai Cheng. *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir*.

24. What story are we telling?

In Class Viewing: *Everything Everywhere all at Once*

<https://media3-criterionpic-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/htbin/wwform/006?T=111055E>