Feminist Research of Popular Culture and the Media

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4 credits / 8 ECTS

2019/2020 Winter term

Course description:
This course is an introduction to the materiality and discursivity of power relations of gender/sexuality in and through popular culture in general, and in various genres in the media in particular, mostly related to television, advertising and the new media. The course is an exploration of the emergence and the subsequent reconfigurations of ‘popular culture’ as a distinct area of representation. The focus of discussion is on the impact of gender/sexuality relations on popular cultural products themselves as well as their effects on the changes of the discipline of cultural and media studies. It is an intersectional approach that will inform the discussions of the texts chosen throughout the semester. The course is designed to encourage students to reread the weekly papers in the context of their own cultural contexts and locate the recent developments in the field while pursuing the genealogies of the relevant disciplinary and cultural changes. In the course of developing critical reflections the focus will be on how to read the recent claims to ‘post-feminism’. Ultimately, we would need to consider the differences between academic and popular cultural discourses of post-feminism and their political stakes. The classes will be divided into two parts: a collective discussion of the key theoretical points in the weekly readings; followed by a class that is conducted by students who bring along relevant examples of their choosing to deploy and probe the limits of the concepts in them.

Learning Outcome:
Successful students will become familiar with the different issues, approaches and concepts developed from the late 1980s on in feminist popular culture a media research. They will be introduced to the contribution of feminist scholarship to the debate on the difference between adding ‘women/gender’ to ‘culture’ and integrating gender/sexuality relations to the formation of culture; between ‘gender and’ versus ‘gender in the media/popular culture’; and post-feminist discourses in feminist scholarship and popular culture. They will gain a clear understanding of the ideology critique that entails the acknowledgement that gender/sexuality are not the only or necessarily always already the most relevant distinction and power relation in culture and its studies. They will also learn how to apply the concepts and test their relevance in their own social/cultural context.

Assessment & requirements:
- Summary of the central argument in one of the readings (250-300 words) on a weekly basis in teams of two – the choice will depend on students’ interests/familiarity with the given concepts/approach. Delivery on time and quality of summary will put the assessment of the paper one notch up or down the scale. Late submission policy: No papers are accepted if submitted later than the class when the text is discussed. In exceptional cases (such as illness) the
instructor should be notified in an e-mail ahead of time (at least the previous day).

- A short analysis (1800-2300 words) of some chosen media event, or that of tendencies of media research in the country of the student’s origin. Date of submission to be negotiated in class.

Weekly Readings:

1. **The Politics of Cultural Exclusion: Mass or popular culture/high culture or art distinction and gendering**

2. **The relevance of class and gender distinctions for the researcher**

3. **Consumer Culture and Gender Relations: experience/sign versus lived experience**

4. **Institutional Strategies of Culturally Mediated power**

5. **Representation of Women in and through Media Images and their contestations**

6. **Genre and Gender: Feminization**

7. **(Im)possibility of participation: Feminism on TV and Film**

8. **Cultural Citizenship and the Media**

10. **Contesting Post-feminism: Global capitalism**

11. **Disorders and Body Image**

12. **Feminism and the Internet: Activism and Rape Culture**
   Mendes, Kaitlynn: “SlutWalk is misguided or opposed” in *SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media*. Palgrave, 2015.