

## SEXUAL POLITICS ON FILM

English 101Q-01  
Spring 2004  
MWF 8:30/Tu 7-9  
ECLG 405

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Office hours: Mon. 2-5,  
or by appointment

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Blum, Deborah	<i>Sex on the Brain</i>
Green, Philip	<i>Cracks in the Pedestal</i>
Kolker, Robert	<i>Film, form, and Culture</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. including CD-Roms 1.0.3
Tavris, Carol	<i>Mismeasure of Woman</i>

Reserve readings, handouts  
14 feature films

### DESCRIPTION and GOALS

This course focuses on key issues in two different areas: film craft (both technical and narrative) and current sexual politics (e.g., those ideas about men and women which have been so hotly debated in the USA for the past 30 years). **The first and most important goal in the course is to learn how to "read" the film medium and better understand its conscious and unconscious effects.** Kolker and possibly Green will help in this regard. **The second goal is to learn something about warring perspectives on men and women in contemporary society and then to see how these issues are represented on the screen.** Blum and Tavris will provide biological and cultural perspectives on gender issues, and Green, along with some handouts, will offer an ideological interpretation of recent American films which focus on men and women. **The third goal is to learn something about how film, ideologically and psychologically, both reinforces and challenges social and cultural understandings of sexual politics.** Here, Green, with some help from Kolker and several handouts, will be central to our study.

Our most important texts, however, will be the films themselves. Videotapes or DVDs of these works will be shown on Tuesday nights (7-9:00 p.m. in ECLG 405) and discussed in Wednesday and Friday classes. Reading assignments, rather heavy at certain times, will normally be discussed on Mondays and sometimes on Fridays, though the concepts therein will, I hope, appear in later discussions of films as well. **Given this modus operandi, attendance at the film and at film discussions on Wednesday, stretching often to Friday, is virtually mandatory.** However, films on video and DVD can be seen in the library before the

general weekly showing or by renting relevant tapes and DVDs at local video stores.) At the end of this course, I expect that you will be more sophisticated cinemaphiles, movie-watchers with active visual acuities. I also hope that you will have learned enough about sexual politics to help bring some understanding to the current wars between the sexes in personal, social, and political arenas.

Finally, the general shape of the course, suggested in the schedule below, is as follows: (1) five weeks on film techniques and narratives, using one contemporary and four classic films reflective of early and middle decades in 20<sup>th</sup>-century America; (2) nine weeks studying issues on sexual politics and analyzing films from the last two decades or so which comment on these issues in various ways.

#### SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Activity</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Jan. 26	Introduction	None
28	Discussion: <i>Pretty Woman</i> (1990)	See <i>PW</i> .
30	Formal Properties of Film 1: Image and Reality	Kolker, xv-26; CD-Rom: Intro., mise-en-scene, camera, long take, lighting.
Feb. 2	Formal Properties of Film 2: Classical Hollywood Cinema	Kolker, 26-65; CD-Rom: Continuity editing, montage, pt. of view, sound and music.
4	Discussion: <i>Blonde Venus</i> (1932)	See <i>BV</i> .
6	Formal Properties of Film 3: Film Criticism	Rhetoric of Film Handout <b>Exercise: Clip Analysis</b>
9	Film Stories, Ideology, and Collaboration	Kolker, 66-87.
11	Discussion: <i>Casablanca</i> (1942)	See <i>Casa</i> .

	13	Class and Gender on Film	Green, 1-31.
	16	Patriarchy on Film: Theory	Green, 32-47; Mulvey (handout)
	18	Discussion: <i>Pillow Talk</i> (1959)	See <i>PT</i> .
	20	The Patriarchal Metatext	Green, 48-76. <b>Exercise: Ideological Analysis</b>
	23	Ideological Complexities: Recuperation and Fantasy	Green, 77-116.
	25	Discussion: <i>Looking for Mr. Goodbar</i> (1977)	See <i>LFMG</i> .
	27	Sexual Politics: Essentialism versus Social Constructivism	Blum, 1-35; Tavis, 15- 56.
Mar.	1	Male Brains and Hormones	Blum, 36-93, 158-88;
	3	Discussion: <i>Die Hard</i> (1988)	See <i>DH</i> .
	5	Cultural Practice: Theory and Analysis	Kolker, 115-52.
	8	<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>	Review reading and films
	10	Discussion: <i>Working Girl</i> (1988)	See <i>WG</i> .
	12	Ideological Ambiguities	Green, 139-56.
	15-19	SPRING VACATION	None
	22	Female Difference	Tavis, 93-130.
	24	Discussion: <i>Silence of the Lambs</i> (1991)	See <i>SOTL</i> .
	26	Female Biology	Blum, 189-219
	29	Sex and Violence: Lust, Love,	

and Myth Blum, 220-52; Tavis, 208-45

31 Discussion: *Basic Instinct* (1991) See *BI*.

Apr. 2 Film Noir/Femme Fatale Green, 189-211; Kolker, 153-61, 185-96.

5 Women: Not the Other, but the Better? Tavis, 57-92, 246-86.

7 Discussion: *Thelma and Louise* (1991) See *T&L*.

9 No class due p.m. **TERM PAPERS** (4-6 pp.) at ECLG 307 by 5:00

12 Monogamy Blum, 94-126.

14 Discussion: *Jungle Fever* (1991) See *JF*.

16 Racial Issues Reserve readings.

19 Sexual Orientations Blum, 127-57.

21 Discussion: *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) See *BDC*.

23 Sexual Preferences Reserve readings.

26 Sexual Politics in Millennial America 1 Blum, 253-83.

28 Discussion: *The Secretary* (2002) See *TS*.

30 Sexual Politics in Millennial America 2 Tavis, 287-333.

May 3 Male and Female Auteurs Kolker, 84-114.

5 Discussion: Class Selection See film.

7 Conclusion Review Study Guide

May 10 **FINAL EXAMINATION** (9:00 a.m.) Review readings and films.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. Attend classes regularly, participate actively, and be sure to view the films before they are to be discussed. A record of absences and non-participation will adversely affect the class participation component of your final grade. **Four (4) or more unexcused absences will result in an automatic failure in the class participation component of your grade.** I take attendance in both obvious and invisible ways. Finally, quizzes and other exercises are included in the class-participation component of your grade.

2. Complete the two exercises, take the mid-term and final exams when given, and produce the term paper when required. **Failure to complete any of these exercises in a timely manner will result in a failing grade in the course.** (If the exercises or term paper are late but eventually handed in by May 7 at 5:00 p.m., they will receive a failing grade but you can still pass the course. There is no slack on the exams.)

## GRADES

Final grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

Class attendance/participation	25%
Mid-term examination	20%
Term paper	25%
Final examination	30%

Final grades will take into account your progress or regress throughout the semester.

## PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

These offenses are defined for you in the current Dickinson Student Handbook. I shall enforce these definitions.