

# Summer 2003 **Studies in Film: Women Filmmakers** English 345

**Instructor:** Kimberlee Gillis-Bridges

**Meeting Times:** Monday through Thursday, 12:00-2:10 p.m.

**Location:** More Hall 225

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**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday, 11:00-11:50 a.m., and by appointment

**Web Page:** <http://faculty.washington.edu/kgb/femfilm>

## Course Description

This course examines the work of female directors from the silent to the contemporary era, concentrating on the work of filmmakers from the U.S., Germany, and France. An exploration of women directors' work not only allows us to analyze film form, but also provides a unique perspective on the ideologies at work in films and the film industry. Throughout the term, we will address the following questions:

- What, if anything, unites the work of women directors? Are there particular stylistic or narrative strategies that characterize films directed by women?
- How does an investigation of women directors change our conception of film history?
- How does feminist film criticism help us to interpret films made by women? What challenges do particular directors pose to critics?
- How do historical, cultural, and industrial factors shape the work of women directors?

As we explore these questions, we will discuss films produced both within and outside the mainstream film industry, films made by lesbian and heterosexual women, and films by white women and women of color.

## Course Goals and Methodology

Students in the course work toward several goals: learning how to conduct formal, theoretical, and ideological film analyses and developing as critical thinkers and writers. Course activities promote active learning, with most class sessions including a mix of mini-lectures, discussion, short writing exercises, and group work. My role is to provide the tools and resources you will need to advance your own thinking and writing. I will pose questions, design activities to help you think through these questions, and respond to your ideas. Your role is to do the hard work—the critical reading, discussion, and writing. You will analyze films, generate ideas in electronic and face-to-face discussions, develop presentations with your peers, construct written arguments, and revise those arguments.

## Requirements

### Class Participation

Class discussion constitutes one key method of developing your analytical skills. Thus, I expect prompt, regular attendance and active participation in discussions of films and supplemental readings. You should come prepared for each class session, with assigned reading completed. You should also plan to ask questions, make comments, summarize critical arguments, analyze clips, paraphrase your electronic postings, or contribute to small-group discussions. Like all skills, speaking in class becomes easier with practice. I do not expect fully polished analyses in class discussion; rather, your contributions represent ideas for further development.

### Electronic Postings

Students will use the class discussion board to post responses to each film. To facilitate discussion, I will post questions to which I want you to respond. Your posting should provide a 200- to 250-word response to a selected question; you may also address your classmates' ideas as you respond to the question. The electronic discussion site allows us to extend class discussion and to raise issues for in-class discussions. Your postings receive points on a credit/no credit basis, with full points granted to on-time postings that meet the length requirement and demonstrate serious engagement with the discussion questions. Occasionally, I will give you the opportunity to do optional postings in which you respond to your classmates or develop an idea only partially explicated in class. These postings will also receive full points for length and genuine engagement.

To access the electronic discussion board, go to the course web site, click on "Discuss," and follow the instructions. I have divided the class into three groups to keep the discussion manageable:

- Group One: Students with last names A-I
- Group Two: Students with last names J-M
- Group Three: Students with last names N-Z

### Midterm

During the first week of class, students will complete a take-home essay exam in which they analyze selected clips from class films.

### Group Presentation

Students will work together in groups of two or three to create a 15- to 20-minute analysis of a selected clip from a course film. The presentation should focus on the formal, thematic, or ideological significance of the clip. Presenters will use visual aids (PowerPoint, film clip, images, transparencies, handouts) to structure their remarks and underscore key points. Groups should conclude their presentations with two or three questions for class discussion. Because oral presentations and film analysis can prove challenging, groups should meet with me to discuss their ideas before the presentation date.

### Essays

You will complete two essays on assigned topics, a 3- to 4-page essay on a single film and a 5- to 6-page comparative analysis of two films. Reader Stefanie Martin and I will be available to discuss ideas-in-progress and drafts, should you wish to meet with us. You can also seek feedback from consultants at the English Department Writing Center, located in Padelford B-12.

Please submit essays on 8.5" by 11" paper, titled, paginated, typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins. In the upper left hand corner of the first page, include your name, the course number, the assignment, and the due date; this information should be single-spaced. You may use a 10- or 12-point Arial, Bookman, Century Schoolbook, or Times New Roman font for your papers. You may submit essays in hard copy or via the course E-submit tool. I will include a link to the E-submit space on the web version of each essay assignment.

## Policies

### Lateness Policy

I will not accept late electronic postings, presentations, or take-home midterms. Late essays will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends. I will not accept Essay 2 responses submitted after the last week of the term. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency. Technology glitches do not constitute valid excuses for lateness. To avoid computer problems, you should save frequently while working, and you should back up work saved to a hard drive on disk or your Dante account. Remember also to avoid storing floppy disks next to cellular phones. To avoid problems submitting essays and exams via E-Submit, make sure to save in Word or Rich Text format and to use only alphanumeric characters to name files; otherwise, the program will not accept your document. You should also give your files distinct names so that you do not upload the wrong paper to E-submit. If the posting board or E-Submit breaks down, email your work directly to me.

### Plagiarism Policy

In your electronic postings, essays, and take-home midterm, you may draw upon the ideas and words of other writers. However, you must make clear to your audience that you are incorporating another's work by placing quotation marks around exact words and citing the author's name whenever you quote, summarize or paraphrase. Failure to credit sources may result in a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or expulsion from the university. The course links page contains information on when and how to cite sources.

### Email and Access to Course Web Site

You must have a UW Net ID, a working email account and a way to access the course web site. I frequently upload schedule changes, film clips, assignment guidelines, and grading criteria to the course web site. The site also contains links and sample papers not distributed in class.

## films

All course films are on reserve at the Odegaard Media Library. Film titles followed by an asterisk are available compilation tapes or DVDs. While you may not check out reserve films, you may view them at the Media Library.

*The Blot* (Lois Weber, 1921, 80 minutes)  
*Blue Steel* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1990, 102 minutes)  
*Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, 1999, 118 minutes)  
*Christopher Strong* (Dorothy Arzner, 1933, 77 minutes)  
*Cléo from 5 to 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962, 90 minutes)  
*How Men Propose\** (Lois Weber, 1913, 6 minutes)  
*Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1982, 34 minutes)  
*Maedchen in Uniform* (Leontine Sagan, 1931, 88 minutes)  
*Marianne and Juliane* (Margarethe Von Trotta, 1981, 106 minutes)  
*Matrimony's Speed Limit\** (Alice Guy Blachè , 1913, 14 minutes)  
*Meshe of the Afternoon\** (Maya Deren, 1943, 18 minutes)  
*Not Wanted* (Lupino, 1949, 94 minutes)  
*The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996, 90 minutes)

## Textbooks

- Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2002.
- Gillis-Bridges, Kimberlee. *Reading Packet for English 345*. Available at Professional Copy N' Print on the northeast corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> and University.
- Available for checkout from Kimberlee: Kolker, Robert. *Film, Form, and Culture* (CD-ROM)

## Reserve Texts

I have placed a sizeable collection of books on three-day reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library. These books should prove valuable if you wish to seek additional information on course directors, films, or women in cinema. Go the course web page, click on "Texts," and follow the reserve texts link to view a complete list of reserve books.

## Evaluation

Grades in English 345 will be computed by points, with 400 points equaling a 4.0, 300 points a 3.0, and so on. If your total falls between grades, I will round up if you score one to five points below the higher grade and round down if you score one to four points above the lower grade. For example, 274 points equals a 2.7 and 275 points a 2.8. Students who score less than 65 points total will receive a 0 for the course, as the UW grading system does not scale grades lower than .7.

Apart from postings, which are graded on a credit/no credit basis, points for each assignment will be awarded based on quality of work submitted. I will distribute grading criteria for each assignment early in the term. Each component of the course is worth the following number of points:

- Class Participation: 60 points
- Electronic Postings: 80 points
- Essays: 160 points (60 points; 100 points)
- Presentation: 60 points
- Take-Home Midterm: 40 points

## Schedule

This schedule may be altered at any point in the term at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete readings by the dates listed. The symbol (P) indicates a reading from the course packet, with page numbers referring to the hand-drawn numbers at the bottom of each packet page.

Date	Activity	Reading	Due
6/23	Course introduction  Screening: <i>The Blot</i> (Weber, 1921)		Posting on <i>The Blot</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
6/24	Screening: <i>How Men Propose</i> (Weber, 1913), and <i>Matrimony's Speed Limit</i> (Guy Blaché, 1913)  Discuss films of Alice Guy Blaché and Lois Weber	Giannetti, 1-22; Parchesky, "Lois Weber's <i>The Blot</i> ," 1-26 (P)	Optional response posting due by 10:00 p.m.
6/25	Screening and discussion: <i>Christopher Strong</i> (Arzner, 1933)	Giannetti, 43-65, 311-332	Posting on <i>Christopher Strong</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
6/26	Discuss <i>Christopher Strong</i>	Johnston, "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies," 27-31 (P); Mayne, "Odd Couples," 32-37 (P)	
6/27			Take-home midterm due by noon in hard copy at Padelford A305 or via E-Submit
6/30	Screening and discussion: <i>Maedchen in Uniform</i> (Sagan, 1931)	Giannetti, 66-89	Posting on <i>Maedchen in Uniform</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/1	Discuss <i>Maedchen in Uniform</i>  Student presentations	Rich, "From Repressive Tolerance to Erotic Liberation," 38-56 (P)	
7/2	Screening and discussion: <i>Not Wanted</i> (Lupino, 1949)	Giannetti, 333-361, 393-405	Posting on <i>Not Wanted</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/3	Screening: <i>Meshes of the Afternoon</i> (Deren, 1943)  Discuss <i>Not Wanted</i> and <i>Meshes of the Afternoon</i>  Student presentations	Waldman, " <i>Not Wanted</i> ," 57-70 (P); Rabinovitz, "Maya Deren and an American Avant-garde Cinema," 71-82 (P)	Optional response posting due by 10:00 p.m.
7/7	Screening and discussion: <i>Marianne and Juliane</i> (Von Trotta, 1981)	Giannetti, 133-154, 168-180	Posting on <i>Marianne and Juliane</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/8	Discuss <i>Marianne and Juliane</i>  Student presentations	Linville, "Retrieving History," 83-95 (P)	

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Due</b>
7/9	Screening and discussion: <i>Cléo de 5 à 7</i> (Varda, 1962)	Giannetti, 112-132	Posting on <i>Cléo de 5 à 7</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/10	Discuss <i>Cléo de 5 à 7</i> Student presentations	Flitterman-Lewis, "From Déesse to Idée," 96-104 (P)	
7/11			Essay 1 due by noon in hard copy at Padelford A305 or via E-Submit
7/14	Screening and discussion: <i>Blue Steel</i> (Bigelow, 1990)		Posting on <i>Blue Steel</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/15	Discuss <i>Blue Steel</i> and women in contemporary Hollywood	Kaplan, "Dirty Harriet/ <i>Blue Steel</i> ," 105-115 (P)	
7/16	Screening and discussion: <i>The Watermelon Woman</i> (Dunye, 1996)	Sullivan, "Chasing Fae," 116-128 (P)	Posting on <i>The Watermelon Woman</i> due by 10:00 p.m.
7/17	Screening: <i>Illusions</i> (Dash, 1982) Discuss <i>Illusions</i> and <i>The Watermelon Woman</i>	Giannetti, 207-226; hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze," 129-142 (P); Foster, "Julie Dash," 143-145	Optional response posting due by 10:00 p.m.
7/18-7/20	Screen on own: <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> (Peirce, 1999)		Postings on <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> and film connections due by 10:00 p.m. on 7/20
7/21	Discuss <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> Course wrap-up and evaluation	The <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> Debate: Aaron, "Pass/Fail," 146-150 (P); Pidduck, "Risk and Queer Spectatorship," 151-156 (P); White, "Girls Still Cry," 157-161 (P); Halberstam, "The Transgender Gaze in <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> ," 162-166 (P)	
7/22	Class cancelled for essay conferences		
7/23	Class cancelled		Essay 2 due by noon in hard copy at Padelford A305 or via E-Submit