NON-GENERAL EDUCATION PROCESS A

*DEADLINES: Deadline dates for 2001/2002 submissions: Regular proposals: October 19, 2001 to be implemented in Fall 2002; Short-Term proposals: December 7, 2001 to be implemented in Fall, 2002; Regular proposals February 15, 2002 to be implemented in Spring, 2003; March 22, 2002 for short-term courses to be implemented in Spring 2003.

PROPOSAL TITLE: IMAGES OF GENDER IN POPULAR CULTURE

SPONSOR(S): JULIE HAYNES AND CINDY COLLISON

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNICATION STUDIES

COLLEGE: COMMUNICATION

IF LAS CHECK ONE: ___ History/Humanities ___ Math/Sciences ___ Social/Behavioral Sciences

Check one: ✓ Undergraduate ___ Graduate

THE ATTACHED NON-GEN-ED PROPOSAL IS BEST DESCRIBED BY THE ITEM(S) CHECKED.

✓ New non-gen-ed course

___ Short-term non-gen-ed course

___ Minor curricular changes (fewer than three) to:

___ existing non-gen-ed course

___ non-gen-ed degree requirements

___ major

___ minor, specialization, concentration, track, certificate program

DEPARTMENT
(Signature indicates approval)

Cynthia L. Lane 10/11/01

Dept. Curriculum Chair / Date

Cynthia L. Lane 10/15/01

Dept. Chairperson / Date

ACADEMIC DEAN

Approved ___ Not Approved ___ Comments:

Dean’s Signature/Date 10/18/01
6. Course Description:

Communication Studies
Prerequisite: Composition II (1501.112)
This course examines the concept of gender as it is rhetorically constructed in contemporary popular culture. Students will analyze how various cultural texts (such as advertisements, popular songs, television shows, or video games) communicate what it means to be masculine and feminine in U.S. culture. The course will examine how these images have changed historically and how depictions of race, class, and sexual identity also contribute to our understandings of gender in popular culture.
Course Proposal

1. Details:

a) Course Title: Images of Gender in Popular Culture

b) Sponsor: Julie Haynes and Cindy Corison, Department of Communication Studies, College of Communication

c) Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

d) Course Level: 300 level undergraduate

e) Curricular Effect: Recommended course as part of the Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism track in the Communication Studies specialization. Students in related majors may take the course.

f) Prerequisites: Composition II

(g) Suggested Time/
   Scale of Implementation: Fall 2002/one section

h) Resources: Current faculty are available to teach the course. Additionally, anticipated new hires in the next several years will provide further staff to teach the class. No new computer equipment or facilities will be necessary. Additional library acquisitions may be needed in the coming years.

2. Rationale:

The Department of Communication Studies is in the process of restructuring its curriculum, including the institution of two areas of emphasis: Interpersonal and Organizational Communication and Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism. Including a course on Images of Gender in Popular Culture is important to the development of the Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism emphasis.

Attention to the scholarly significance of popular culture and academic interest in the construction of gender are both relatively new areas of inquiry in the Academy. Yet for the past thirty years, both research agendas have earned a respected place next to the more traditional canons of knowledge. In particular, scholars in a variety of fields have realized the important role popular culture plays in the development of national, group, and individual identity and how the construction of gender is often influenced by these popular cultural texts. Researchers in Communication Studies are especially well suited
to offer insights into how popular culture influences—and is influenced by—notions of gender given their expertise in the systematic analysis of messages. Specifically, the areas of rhetoric and cultural studies provide unique contributions for understanding social constructions of masculinity and femininity.

During the past two years, three sections of the Senior Seminar in Communication Studies at Rowan have focused on Images of Gender in Popular Culture. Students have noted that the material has particular relevance to their lives, not only as Communication Studies majors, but also as consumers of popular culture and as men and women. Changing the course to a 300 level elective would allow a variety of students to take the course, including Radio, Television, and Film majors and Composition and Rhetoric majors who have an interest in cultural critique. For these majors, the class would provide a broad look at the analysis of gender in a variety of media (and thus would complement rather than significantly overlap with courses such as Images of Women in Film). The course would also be suitable for Women’s Studies and American Studies majors and may be cross-listed with the approval of these programs. In particular, this course could provide an extension of the principles students learn in their introductory courses for these concentrations. Finally, majors in other liberal arts departments may benefit from the course.

3. Essence of the Course:

a) Objectives:

The proposed course has the following objectives:

(i) To develop students’ critical thinking and evaluation skills regarding the rhetorical construction of masculinity and femininity in popular cultural texts.

(ii) To facilitate student discussion and analysis of the ways in which images of gender in popular culture have changed historically and rhetorically.

(iii) To provide students with the opportunity to research and analyze the rhetorical construction of gender in specific popular cultural texts of their choosing.

(iv) To enable students to see the connections between rhetorical constructions of gender with depictions of race, class, and sexual identity.

b) Topical Outline:

The course includes the following:

(i) Course Introduction: Students will review basic principles and theories of mass
media, rhetorical criticism, and cultural criticism. The rhetorical construct of
gender will be defined and discussed.

(ii) Gender and Rhetorical Constructions of the Body: The course will discuss the
rhetorical construction of the male and female body in popular culture,
particularly as it is portrayed in advertisements.

(iii) Images of Motherhood and Fatherhood in Popular Culture: The course examines
the ways in which motherhood is connected with femininity in popular culture
and how texts portray “good” and “bad” mothers. The course explores the
changing rhetorical constructions of fatherhood in popular culture, examining
how fathers are linked to masculinity.

(iv) Gender and Romance: The course examines the rhetorical connections between
romance, masculinity, and femininity in cultural texts. It also explores the
importance afforded romance in popular culture, and if and how depictions of
romance and gender have changed historically.

(v) Images of Domestic Violence in Popular Culture: Students will discuss how
images of violence in relationships are portrayed. The course will also explore
how certain texts work as rhetorical protest to challenge domestic abuse.

(vi) Gender and Work in Popular Culture: The course examines if and how work is
rhetorically constructed as “male” or “female” in popular culture texts.

(vii) Gender and the Politics of Friendship: Rhetorical constructions of same-sex and
opposite-sex friendships in popular culture are explored.

c) Course Assignments:

Course assignments are designed to aid in the development of students’ critical
awareness and evaluation skills. Assignments include:

(i) Three analysis papers in which students analyze different forms of popular
culture in terms of its construction of gender. One essay examining a print
advertisement, one essay examining a children’s media text, and one essay
analyzing some form of music or music video.

(ii) An extended research/analysis paper, completed in stages, in which students
research, survey literature, and provide an original analysis of a media text
as it relates to the cultural construction of gender.

(iii) Classroom activities and oral presentations that help foster participation and
active learning.
d) Sample Course Outline:

Week 1  Introduction to course; review syllabus. Discuss principles and theories of mass media, rhetorical criticism, and cultural criticism. Discuss what gender “means.”

Week 2  Examine advertising and rhetorical constructions of gender. Explore how the body (such as shape, size, and color) is rhetorically constructed in advertisements.

Week 3  Describe as a class the “ideal” man and woman according to current popular culture. Discuss how this image has or has not changed historically.

Week 4  Explore media depictions of motherhood and what constitutes a “good” or “bad” mother.

Week 5  Discuss changing images of fatherhood. Watch relevant films (such as the Terminator films) to explore constructions of femininity/motherhood and masculinity/fatherhood.

Week 6  Continue discussions of films. Discuss Gender and Romance in Popular Culture.

Week 7  Continue exploration of gender and romance. Watch romantic comedy, such as Sleepless in Seattle or His Girl Friday

Week 8  Examine rhetorical constructions of romance “gone awry.” Discuss what makes potential mates unsuitable (such as different political beliefs, classes, or races).

Week 9  Explore the issue of domestic violence in popular culture. Watch appropriate music videos as case studies.

Week 10  Discuss media depictions of work and work issues related to gender (as well as race and class).

Week 11  Explore media portrayals of sexual harassment.

Week 12  Examine how same-sex friendships are constructed in popular culture.
Week 13  Discuss how opposite-sex friendships are depicted in popular culture. Analyze relevant examples from situational comedies such as *Friends* or *Will and Grace.*

Week 14  Discuss mainstream images of homosexuality.

Week 15  Students give their final presentations.

c) Evaluation and Grading Procedures:

Faculty will evaluate final course grades based upon students’ performance throughout the duration of the class. Faculty will assess written work in the form of analysis papers, the semester-long research/analysis paper, and the quality of participation during class discussions, oral presentations, and in-class activities.

f) Course Evaluation:

The course will be evaluated using the College of Communication’s student evaluation forms to obtain feedback on course content, course texts and assignments, and teaching effectiveness. The Department of Communication Studies will continue to evaluate the course through faculty peer observations and on-going discussions of the Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism track.

4. Results of Consultations:

a) Consultants:
  Janet Moore Lindman, Coordinator, Women’s Studies  
  Ned Eckhardt, Chair, Radio/Television/Film  
  Dianne Ashton, Director of Advising for American Studies

b) Consultant’s Statements:  See attached documents

5. Additional Supporting Materials:

a) Recommended Texts:


Jhally, Sut, *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity,*
(Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2000). [video]


b) Supplemental Texts:


October 12, 2001

TO: Members of Curriculum Committee

FROM: Janet Moore Lindman, Coordinator, Women’s Studies

SUBJECT: New Course Proposal, "Images of Gender in Popular Culture"

I am writing in support of the course proposal, "Images of Gender in Popular Culture." As part of the curricular restructuring in the Department of Communication Studies, this course will be an essential and compelling part of the Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism specialization. This course offers an in-depth and substantive look at the rhetorical construction of gender in popular culture and the uses of gender in a variety of mass media. As such, it will provide students with fundamental tools to critically analyze the multivalence of social constructs such as gender as well as other indices including race, class, and sexuality identity. "Images of Gender in Popular Culture" will be a valuable addition to the core courses in the Women's Studies concentration. I heartily endorse the approval of this course by the Curriculum Committee.
To: Cindy Corison, Chair Department of Communications Studies and Julie Haynes
From: Ned Eckhardt, Chair Department of Radio/Television/Film
Subject: New Course: Images of Gender in Popular Culture
Date: October 16, 2001

Dear Cindy and Julie,

I’ve had a chance to read your proposal for a new course: “Images of Gender in Popular Culture.” The course looks exciting and academically sound. It clearly fits into your new specialization in Rhetoric and Cultural Criticism. I also think it compliments but in no way infringes academically on our Radio/TV/Film course, “Images of Women in Film.”

Good luck with this new course.

Ned Eckhardt
October 17, 2001

Dear Julie,

I have just read your proposal for the course, Images of Gender in Popular Culture. It is clear from the proposal that you mean American popular culture, and the course itself looks to be a fine addition to our approved list for American Studies students. I am pleased that it will be a 300 level course as the conceptual level is fairly sophisticated and complex. It promises to further student’s ability to critique American culture and to become educated citizens. It will sharpen their written and oral communication skills.

For all those reasons, I am happy to support this proposal and I look forward to recommending it to our students.

Best of luck with your endeavor.

Sincerely,

Dianne Ashton, Professor
Coordinator of Liberal Studies
Director of Advising for American Studies