

**Writing 101: 20 & 24**  
**Gender and American Popular Culture**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Section 20: MWF 11:15am-12:20pm, ADMIN 200**  
**Section 24: MWF 9:15-10:20am, ADMIN 215**

**Instructor:** Prof. Jennifer A. Smith, Ph.D.

**Office:** Harstad 113

**Office Hours:** W 2:00-5:00pm & R 1:00-3:00pm and by appt.

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**Required Texts & Materials:**

Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon, eds. *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. (SOL)

Lunsford, Andrea A. *The St. Martin's Handbook*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.

E-reserve Coursepack (all of these readings must be printed out and collected in a folder or binder no later than Friday, Sept. 19) – From the library's homepage (<http://www.plu.edu/~libr/>), click on "Course Reserves" from the horizontal menu at the top of the page. Next, select my name: Smith, J, the department: WRIT, and course: WRIT 101, Gender and American Popular Culture from the drop-down menus.

A general interest magazine geared to a specific gender (for example, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *GQ*, *FHM*, or *Maxim*)

Two-pocket folder for final portfolio

**First-Year Experience Program:** WRIT 101 is part of PLU's First-Year Experience Program, a program that assists students making the transition to college by emphasizing **literacy, community and critical thinking**. This program cultivates an environment that supports your transition to a new community, introduces you to the heightened expectations for academic performance, and exposes you to new perspectives on culture and knowledge. To this end, seminars that are part of the First-Year Experience Program develop your abilities as a student, teach you skills you will need to participate actively in educated discourse, and encourage you to become a productive and thoughtful citizen by helping you understand your place and purpose in society. The First-Year Experience Program strives to provide you with a firm foundation for such heady tasks.

**Course Description:** Specifically, Writing Seminars are intended to hone the skills that you will need to read and write successfully throughout your time in college. As such, they emphasize writing as an **on-going process, a thoughtful and motivated response, and a mode of learning, discovering and organizing ideas**. This course will rigorously exercise your critical reading and writing skills as you ask pointed and thoughtful questions of not only your own writing but also the writing of your peers and others, evaluate multiple perspectives on a variety of issues, and reflect on and clearly articulate your own position on these issues. The workload – both reading and writing – will be challenging, and our pace will be quick. You should be prepared to rise to the occasion.

In this particular seminar, we will use writing to describe, investigate and analyze those aspects of our culture that surround our everyday lives, particularly advertisements, reality television and films. We will refuse to take pop culture at face value – as mindless entertainment – and, instead, dig under its façade in order to uncover how it not only influences our attitudes, beliefs and values about gender and sexuality but can actually *create* our gender identities. We will read and discuss a plethora of texts that approach gender and pop culture from a variety of perspectives. Most importantly, you will

write—a lot. You will write and revise four essays, compose sequence assignments leading up to each essay, and conduct workshop critiques of your classmates' work. By critically questioning—through writing and discussion—how our pop culture represents images of men, women and sexuality, we will come to read ads, reality television programs and films as political texts that inform our choices and that **socialize and discipline** us even as they **entertain**.

### Course Objectives:

By the conclusion of this course, you will

- ◆ Understand writing as an on-going process with various steps and stages
- ◆ Write with consideration, intent and deliberation in a number of genres and contexts
- ◆ Construct writing that establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus
- ◆ Evaluate your own writing and revise it in a substantive manner
- ◆ Summarize and discuss issues, arguments and main points raised by a text
- ◆ Ask probing, thoughtful questions and use writing as a way to think through your responses to those questions
- ◆ Provide other writers with constructive feedback
- ◆ Participate actively in a community of learners, contributing to conversations in meaningful ways and responding to others with respect

### Course Requirements:

*Assignments:*

- ◆ Four essays: The purpose of the essays assigned in this course is to build your writing, interpretation and critical thinking skills within different situations, each with its own unique conventions and expectations. In the first essay, you will analyze yourself as a gendered individual. The second and third essays will analyze advertisements and reality television dating programs. To conclude the semester, you will write an extended analysis/argument on either teen films or romantic comedies.

**The first three essays will be 5 to 6 pages while the final essay will be 7 to 9 pages in-length.** You will write at least two drafts of each paper, and the grades you earn on these essays will be a culmination of a review of the first draft, revision, final draft and overall willingness to improve. **These essays and any other assignment will not be accepted late nor will any assignment be accepted via email.**

- ◆ Portfolio: This will be the final portion of work that you turn in for the semester. Your portfolio will consist of the most significant writing that you produce during the semester. The portfolio will be fronted with a **4 page reflective letter**. More directions will be distributed later, but for now, you should save EVERY piece of writing that you produce for class—in-class writing, notes, different versions of papers, peer reviews, etc.

*Other Assignments:*

- ◆ Peer Review Workshops: You will do two different kinds of workshops in this class: whole-class workshops in which each student will have one of his/her drafts reviewed by the entire class and small group workshops in which you will review each other's drafts in groups of three or four.

If you are being whole-class workshopped, it is your responsibility to bring enough copies of your rough draft to the class session before your workshop day. Everyone will read these drafts and prepare a **peer review** to give to the writer on the day his/her paper is workshopped. For small group workshops, you will need to bring enough copies of your draft for each member of your group as well as one copy for me (at least for the first two essays; for the third and fourth

essay, I will only be reviewing your thesis & outline). Either during class time or outside of class, you will read your peers' drafts and conduct a review for each person in your group.

- ◆ **Peer Teaching Day:** One of the most effective ways to learn anything is to teach it to others; therefore, you will have the opportunity to teach the assigned reading for one day of class. Plus, this activity allows you take more control over the direction of the course as well as varies our daily routine. Accordingly, you should think about making your teaching day as engaging as possible; this can be done through leading discussion, staging activities, incorporating various media, etc. Think about one of your favorite learning experiences/activities from the past and put it to use here. **You will be evaluated on how well you display a command of the reading assignment, the creativity with which you construct your teaching day, and how well you engage your classmates.** Please make an appointment with me to talk about strategies and activities before your peer teaching day, should you be in anyway confused or need help. You may choose your partner as well as the day on which you would like to present. **You must decide on a partner and/or teaching day by Monday, Sept. 15.**
- ◆ **Final Paper Presentation:** At the conclusion of the semester, you will be required to give a **presentation lasting 10 minutes about your final paper.** You will evaluate each other's presentations, and I will assign a grade accordingly. These presentations will take place during the last week of class and our final exam time.

*Essay Guidelines:* (These apply to each piece of writing you turn in.)

- ◆ Typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font.
- ◆ Your name, course number, my name and the date should appear in the upper-left corner of the first page. The title should appear below this information and centered above the text of the essay itself.
- ◆ Number each page in the upper-right corner.
- ◆ Proofread each paper for mistakes. Don't rely on spell- or grammar-check because they are frequently incorrect.
- ◆ All pages must be stapled together.
- ◆ Turned in on-time in hard copy.

**Attendance:** Attending class is the most basic requirement in any course, and you are expected to do so for every scheduled meeting. However, **you are allowed four absences** during the semester without penalty. These absences are intended for you to use when things like emergencies, illness, bad weather, a death in the family, etc. come up. If you use them early in the semester and then find yourself having to miss class later on, those absences still count. You do not need to bring in medical excuses, death notices, etc. because these four absences are intended to allow for such emergencies and personal choices—basically, if you're absent, you're absent. There is no such thing as excused vs. unexcused absences.

**Your entire semester grade will be lowered a whole letter grade for the fifth absence. A total of six absences will result automatically in an E for the course.**

*Note:* If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain any notes and handouts **from a classmate** and read them **BEFORE** the next class meeting. Do *not* ask me right before the start of class to summarize in two minutes what you missed.

**Tardiness:** Simply put—don't be late for class. It's rude and disruptive. If you are consistently late, your overall participation grade will be reduced. Also, if you are more than 20 minutes late or leave class 20 minutes early for any reason, it will be counted as an absence.

**Class Participation:** WRIT 101 is not a lecture course; rather, it is a forum in which ideas are shared and discussed. While I will facilitate discussions and steer the class, I'm not going to talk at you for the

majority of class time. Because we are all distinctive individuals with varying histories, personalities, and perspectives, we each will bring a unique viewpoint to discussions, and these viewpoints are *extremely* necessary to this class. Therefore, **you are expected to participate fully and regularly**. Class just won't work otherwise. Provide your analysis of a reading, ask a question when you don't understand something or would like someone to clarify his/her thoughts, draw connections between readings, etc., but resist the temptation to share personal stories – remember, we're looking for **quality, not just quantity**.

**Plagiarism:** PLU's expectation is that students will not cheat or plagiarize, and that they will not condone these behaviors or assist others who plagiarize. Academic misconduct not only jeopardizes the career of the individual student involved but also undermines the scholastic achievements of all PLU students and attacks the mission of this institution. Students are inherently responsible to do their own work, thereby insuring the integrity of their academic records.

Accordingly, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes copying or paraphrasing your classmates' homework; using altered wording, materials or ideas of others without properly identifying their source; or representing an idea or strategy that is significant in one's own work as one's own when it comes from someone else. Plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct will, at the very least, result in failure of the assignment and, usually, the course. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment. The university's policy on academic integrity can be found at <http://www.plu.edu/academics/integ.html>, and its procedures for dealing with academic misconduct can be found on-line at <http://www.plu.edu/print/handbook/code-of-conduct/academic-integrity.html>.

**Special Needs:** Students with medically recognized and documented disabilities and who are in need of special accommodation have an obligation to notify the University of their needs. Students in need of accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Support Services (x7206). If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

**The Writing Center:** Because the act of writing is complex, it can also be overwhelming. An additional resource besides myself and your classmates that you should utilize is PLU's Writing Center. The Writing Center is staffed with many excellent tutors who will work with you in one-on-one sessions on any aspect of your writing. It is located in Mortvedt Library 220; you can call them at (253) 535-8709 or send them an email at [writing@plu.edu](mailto:writing@plu.edu) to set up an appointment. One note: They do not proofread papers, but they will gladly work with you on any grammar issues you may be having.

**Basic Courtesies:** All **cell phones must be turned off** when you enter the room – not vibrate, not lights only – OFF. Also, no use of laptops, hand-held pda's, or MP3 players will be allowed, unless approved by me beforehand.

#### **Grade Distribution:**

Essays:	The Gendered Self	10%
	Advertisements	15%
	Reality Television Dating Shows	20%
	Teen Films/Romantic Comedies	25%
	Participation (sequence assignments, class discussions, peer reviews, portfolio letter, etc.)	10%
	Peer Teaching Day	10%
	Final Essay Presentation	10%

**Grading Scale**

100-93	A	89-87	B+	79-77	C+	69-67	D+	59-below	E
92-90	A-	86-83	B	76-73	C	66-63	D		
		82-80	B-	72-70	C-	62-60	D-		

**Course Schedule**  
(subject to change)

**Week One**

- W, Sept. 10 Introductions, complete student questionnaire & email contact sheet  
Review syllabus  
Discuss signing up for peer teaching day; **bring your top two dates to Monday's class**  
In-Class Freewrite: What is popular culture?
- F, Sept. 12 *What Is Popular Culture?*  
Read: "Popular Signs: Or, Everything You Always Knew about American Culture (but Nobody Asked)," SOL pgs. 1-19  
Compare our definition with those from text: What similarities and differences do you note? What did you find particularly interesting, confusing, surprising, etc.?

**Week Two**

- M, Sept. 15 Sign up for peer teaching day; review expectations and requirements  
Review In-Class: "Developing Ideas about Popular Culture," SOL pgs. 32-33 & "Drafting a Working Thesis," pgs. 61-2  
Review semiotic analysis – What is it? How can we read the signs in our room?
- W, Sept. 17 *Constructing Gender*  
Read: "We've Come a Long Way, Maybe: Gender Codes in American Culture," SOL pgs. 451-57  
Read: Devor, "Gender Role Behaviors and Attitudes," SOL pgs. 458-63
- F, Sept. 19 *Gender – Femininity*  
Read: Wolf, "The Beauty Myth," SOL pgs. 486-94 and Pozner "Dove's 'Real Beauty' Backlash" (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Due: Assignment 1A**  
*Note: You must have the entire coursepack printed off of e-reserve, organized in a binder or folder, and checked off by me no later than today.*

**Week Three**

- M, Sept. 22 *Gender – Masculinity*  
Read: Gibson, "Warrior Dreams," SOL pgs. 504-13  
In-Class Video: *Tough Guise*
- W, Sept. 24 *Gender – Masculinity (cont.)*  
Discuss *Tough Guise* and "Warrior Dreams"  
Review MLA Citation: Read-- SOL pgs. 59-62 & St. Martin's pgs. 300-306 (skim pgs. 307-347)  
**Due: Assignment 1B**

F, Sept. 26 Read: SOL pgs. 41-45 (Personal Experience)  
 Get 1 volunteer for whole-class workshop of rough draft on Monday & 3 for Wednesday  
 (bring enough copies for everyone and distribute on Monday)  
**Due: Thesis for Essay #1** – Workshop a few volunteers together on the board and then  
 in your peer review groups

#### Week Four

M, Sept. 29 **Due: Rough Draft of Essay #1** (Bring 3 copies to class: 2 for peer review group & 1 for  
 me)  
 Whole-Class Workshop volunteer #1 \_\_\_\_\_ (We'll take about 20 minutes  
 to read through and complete a peer review of this essay & then workshop it  
 as a class for about 15-20 minutes)  
 Get in peer review groups, exchange papers, and set up time to meet/discuss drafts  
 outside of class

W, Oct. 1 Whole-Class Workshop of volunteers #2 \_\_\_\_\_, #3 \_\_\_\_\_ &  
 #4 \_\_\_\_\_ (come to class having read and completed a peer review  
 for each essay)  
 Review St. Martin's pgs. 337-347 (model MLA paper)

F, Oct. 3 *Advertising*  
 Read: "Brought to You B(u)y: The Signs of Advertising," SOL pgs. 141-50  
 Read: St. Martin's "Developing Paragraphs" pgs. 110-125  
**Bring to class a general interest magazine that targets one gender** (for example *GQ*,  
*Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Jane*, *FHM*, etc.)  
 Discuss Body Paragraphs & Topic Sentences

#### Week Five

M, Oct. 6 **Due: Essay #1** (also turn in the rough draft with my comments, the rough drafts read by  
 your peers and & all peer review sheets)  
 Review SOL pgs. 35-37 (Questions to ask of an image)  
 Semiotic analysis of ad as a class

W, Oct. 8 *Advertising & Sexuality*  
 Read: Reichert & Lambiase, "How to Get 'Kissably Close': Examining How Advertisers  
 Appeal to Consumers' Sexual Needs and Desires" (e-reserve)  
 Bring back to class the magazines used on Friday, Oct. 3

F, Oct. 10 *Advertising & Women*  
 Read: Kilbourne, "'The More You Subtract, The More You Add': Cutting Girls Down  
 to Size" from *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes The Way We Think  
 And Feel* (e-reserve)

**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Due: Assignment 2A**

#### Week Six

M, Oct. 13 *Advertising & Men*  
 Read: Pompper, Soto, & Piel, "Male Body Image and Magazine Standards: Considering  
 Dimensions of Age and Ethnicity" (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
 Read: St. Martin's "Opening Paragraphs" & "Concluding Paragraphs" pgs. 132-36

- W, Oct. 15 **Due: Assignment 2B**  
 Discuss the Quote Sandwich (Bring St. Martin's Handbook to class; we will be looking at pgs. 270-77 in class)  
 Get 1 volunteer for whole-class workshop on Friday & 3 for Monday (bring enough copies of draft for everyone and distribute on Friday)
- F, Oct. 17 **Due: Rough Draft Due of Essay #2** (Bring 3 copies to class: 2 for peer review group & 1 for me)  
 Whole-Class Workshop volunteer #5 \_\_\_\_\_ (We'll take about 20 minutes to read through and complete a peer review of this essay & workshop it as a class for about 15-20 minutes)  
 Get in peer review groups, exchange papers, and set up time to meet/discuss drafts outside of class
- Week Seven**
- M, Oct. 20 Whole-Class Workshop volunteers #6 \_\_\_\_\_, #7 \_\_\_\_\_ & #8 \_\_\_\_\_ (come to class having read and completed a peer review for each essay)
- W, Oct. 22 *The Appeal of Reality TV Dating Shows*  
 Read: "Video Dreams: Television, Music, and Cultural Forms," SOL pgs. 209-218  
 Read: Samuels, "Keeping It Real: Why We Like to Watch Reality Dating Television Shows" (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**
- F, Oct. 24 **Mid-Semester Break (No Class)**
- Week Eight**
- M, Oct. 27 **Due: Essay #2** (also turn in the rough draft with my comments, the rough drafts read by your peers, & all peer review sheets)  
 Discuss elements of television programs for analysis  
 Take Dr. Love's Quiz in-class  
 Watch/analyze episode of *The Bachelor*
- W, Oct. 29 *The "Reality" of Reality TV Dating Shows*  
 Read: Pozner, "The Unreal World" (e-reserve), Halberstam, "Pimp My Bride" (e-reserve) & Orenstein, "Fairy Tales and a Dose of Reality" (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
 Review In-Class: St. Martin's "Planning," pgs. 70-72  
**Due: Assignment 3A**
- F, Oct. 31 *Gender and Reality TV Dating Shows*  
 Read: Brophy-Baerman, "True Love on TV: A Gendered Analysis of Reality-Romance Television" (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Due: Assignment 3B**
- Week Nine**
- M, Nov. 3 *Romantic Myths & Reality TV Dating Shows*  
 Read: Glebatis, "'Real' Love Myths and Magnified Media Effects of *The Bachelorette*" (e-reserve)
- W, Nov. 5 **Due: Thesis and Outline for Essay #3** (Bring 3 copies to class: 2 for peer review group & 1 for me)

Thesis Workshop – few volunteers on board and the rest in small groups  
Get 3 volunteers for whole-class workshop on Monday (bring enough copies for whole class and distribute on Friday)

F, Nov. 7 **Due: Rough Draft of Essay #3** (Bring 2 copies for peer review group to class)  
Workshop rough drafts in peer review groups (if unable to complete in class, finish outside of class)

### Week Ten

M, Nov. 10 Whole-Class Workshop of volunteers #9 \_\_\_\_\_, #10 \_\_\_\_\_  
& #11 \_\_\_\_\_ (come to class having read and completed a peer review for each essay)

W, Nov. 12 *The Teen Film*  
Read: “The Hollywood Sign: The Culture of American Film,” SOL pgs. 299-306  
Read: Denby, “High School Confidential,” SOL pgs. 343-349  
Discuss elements of film for analysis  
**Due: Assignment 4A**

F, Nov. 14 *The Teen Film* (cont.)  
**Due: Essay #3** (also turn in outline with my comment, rough drafts read by peers, & all peer review sheets)  
Read: Stern, “Self-Absorbed, Dangerous, and Disengaged: What Popular Films Tell Us About Teenagers” (e-reserve)

### Week Eleven

M, Nov. 17 *The Romantic Comedy*  
Read: Johnson, “Unrealistic Portrayals of Sex, Love and Romance in Popular Wedding Films” (e-reserve) & Conclusion from Rubinfeld’s *Bound to Bond: Gender, Genre, and the Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**

W, Nov. 19 *The Romantic Comedy* (cont.)  
Read: Denby, “A Fine Romance: The New Comedy of the Sexes” (e-reserve) & O’Rourke, “Katherine Heigl’s *Knocked Up*: The Demise of the Female Slacker” (e-reserve)  
**Peer Teaching Day w/ \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Due: Assignment 4B**

F, Nov. 21 Library Day – Meet in Lobby of Mortvedt Library

### Week Twelve

M, Nov. 24 **Due: Thesis and Outline for Essay #4** (Bring 3 copies to class: 2 for peer review group & 1 for me)  
Thesis workshop – few volunteers on board and then rest in small groups  
Get 2 volunteers for whole-class workshop on Wednesday and 3 for Friday (bring enough copies for whole class on Monday and distribute to class)

W, Nov. 26 **Thanksgiving Break (No Class)**

F, Nov. 28 **Thanksgiving Break (No Class)**

### Week Thirteen

M, Dec. 1 **Due: Rough draft of Essay #4** (bring 2 copies for peer review group to class)

Workshop rough drafts in peer review groups (if unable to complete in-class, finish outside of class)

W, Dec. 3 Workshop volunteers #12 \_\_\_\_\_ & #13 \_\_\_\_\_ (come to class having read and completed a peer review for each essay)  
Discuss Presentation Requirements, Portfolio and Reflective Letter

F, Dec. 5 Workshop volunteers #14 \_\_\_\_\_, #15 \_\_\_\_\_ & #16 \_\_\_\_\_ (come to class having read and completed a peer review for each essay)

#### **Week Fourteen**

M, Dec. 8 Presentations (4)

W, Dec. 10 Presentations (4)

F, Dec. 12 Presentations (4)

#### **Week Fifteen – Final Exam Week**

##### **Scheduled Final Exam Time**

**Section 24 (9:15am class): Tuesday, Dec. 16@ 8:00-9:50am:** Complete Presentations (4)

**Section 20 (11:15am class): Wednesday, Dec. 17 @ 10:00-11:50am:** Complete Presentations (4)

**Due at the Beginning of Exam Time: Portfolio, including Essay #4** (also turn in outline with my comments, rough drafts read by peers & all peer review sheets)

**Cover Letter**

*(To be typed and attached to the rough draft you give to me for essays #1 and #2)*

- ◆ Name:
- ◆ Title of Essay (make it original, creative and snappy):
- ◆ Thesis Topic: What's the topic of your paper?
- ◆ Thesis Comment: What's the comment you're making about this topic?
- ◆ Name the element of your essay that you like the most. In other words, what specific element works well and why?
- ◆ Name at least two higher-order elements of your essay you would like me to concentrate on. Name one lower-order element. Specifically describe what you think is wrong with each of these elements, pointing out examples from within the essay itself to illustrate these problems.

**Self-Evaluation Letter**

*(To be typed and attached to the final drafts of all four essays)*

- ◆ Name:
- ◆ Creative, Snappy Title of Essay:
- ◆ Thesis Topic:
- ◆ Thesis Comment:
- ◆ Describe your revision process. What, specifically, have you done to your initial draft?
- ◆ What's this essay's greatest strength?
- ◆ What's this essay's greatest weakness? Is this something that appears in other examples of your writing?
- ◆ What would you do to improve your essay if you had more time?