

## New Course Proposal

### I. Details

- a) Course Title: Beyond Face Value: Critical Analysis of Texts and Images
- b) Sponsor: Susan Bowman, Department of Art  
Dr. Lee Talley, Department of English
- c) Credit Hours: 3 credit hours
- d) Course level: Freshman Rowan Seminar/Undergraduate  
Gen Ed. Banks: History, Humanities, Languages and Art
- e) Curricular Effect: This course will be one of the required freshman Rowan Seminar series courses on Diversity and Democracy.
- f) Prerequisites: none
- g) Suggested Time and Scale of Implementation:  
Effective Fall 04.
- h) Resources: Present faculty is adequate. Both of the faculty members sponsoring this course have the expertise to teach the material, and will team-teach the course, requiring 3 credit hours each. Library resources are minimally adequate, but in need of considerable improvement. We hope that in the future additional materials will be purchased for the Campbell Library.
- I) Short-term Evaluation: N/A

### II. Rationale

There is a need to increase the number of interdisciplinary courses offered for freshman seminars, in particular those addressing issues of diversity and democracy. This course is designed to help students think about their identity as it is mediated through popular culture, thus enabling them to think critically about the stories that American culture has scripted about their race, ethnicity, gender and class. This knowledge will make them better critical thinkers and, ideally, more thoughtful citizens as they learn how not to take things at face value.

### III. Essence of the Course

*a. Course overview:* This is an interdisciplinary course that addresses the social construction of identity from three interconnected, disciplinary perspectives: literature, art and gender studies. This class will teach students how to read stories and images critically in order to uncover the often hidden ways certain aspects of lived identity are presented and/or experienced as "natural" when they, in fact, are constructed by the society in which we live.

Students will learn how their identities are informed by often invisible narratives and complex visual codes that structure how they perceive themselves and others. The selected readings, variety

of assignments and discussions will help students "see" how these codes work and then think critically about the ways their race, class, ethnicity and gender are presented to and experienced by them. Ultimately students will learn how to read stories, advertisements, photography and film to interrogate and redefine the ways our culture constructs identity.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this course, students' critical thinking skills will be assessed through written work, oral presentations on texts and images, collage, and a final mixed media project.

*b. Course Objectives:*

To understand how to read literary texts and visual images critically for meaning

To learn how to marshal both textual and visual evidence to support their own arguments

To learn how to articulate beliefs clearly in writing, speech and images

To gain a more critical understanding of identity politics and how aspects of identity can become intellectual categories of analysis

To expose and challenge stereotypes about race, class, gender and sexuality

To see how language and images do not merely reflect but create the world

To appreciate the vital importance of intellectual work on issues that affect everyday, lived experience

To develop more responsible, thoughtful citizens by having them understand how looking/reading can be political

*c. Sample Topical Outline/Content:*

WEEK #1 Words: Once Upon a Time

INTRODUCTION: "I Am From" Poems, Importance of Diversity

SEMESTER LONG PROJECT: Participate at least twice a week on WEB CT engaging with other students in a critical dialogue. Topics for discussion will be posted periodically.

READINGS AND DISCUSSION: "Cinderella," Perrault; "Beauty and the Beast," Beaumont; "The Tale of the Rose," "The Tale of the Shoe" from *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*, Donoghue, Emma.

KEY CONCEPT: Issues of narrative: gender and role models in fairy tales

GROUP PROJECT: Groups of students will analyze the Disney stories with which they are most familiar. Each team will discuss and present how Disney's version/vision of story X shaped their play as children, their imaginative worlds, and how they may have expected different social groups to act or institutions (such as marriage) to be. Each team's conclusion will address Disney's effect on children's perception of the world in which we live.

WEEK #2 Words and Images: Scripting Lives

KEY CONCEPT: Stereotypes and life narratives

View: Mickey Mouse Monopoly

Discuss: Mickey Mouse Monopoly

WEEK #3 Words and Images: Scripting Lives (cont'd)

KEY CONCEPT: Crafting new narratives

**KEY SKILL:** Using evidence to support an argument

**GROUP ACTIVITY:** Discuss and present analysis of Disney film not discussed in class to examine how it presents race, gender, class and/or role modeling

**VIEW:** Animated children's film clips that solve race, gender, role model issues and are less stereotypical

**PAPER #1:** Write a 1-2 page revision of a Disney scene that gives the viewer more expansive ways of contemplating race, gender, class, ethnicity or nationality.

**WEEK #4 Images: The Gaze and Western Art History**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Understanding the male spectator and the female spectacle in European painting

**READINGS:** Ways of Seeing, John Berger: Chapters One through Four

**WEEK #5 Images: The Gaze and Western Art History (cont'd)**

**READINGS:** Ways of Seeing, John Berger: Chapters Five through Seven

**ACTIVITY:** Writing Workshop: Argument and evidence

**WEEK #6 Gender: American Constructions of Manhood**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Contemporary constructs of masculinity

**VIEW and DISCUSS:** Tough Guise

**WEEK #7 Gender: American Constructions of Manhood (cont'd)**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Continued exploration of contemporary constructs of masculinity

**PAPER #2:** Write a 1-2 page essay on a print advertisement analyzing the message being conveyed about the man (or men) in the image and text. Be sure to take audience into account. An advertisement for cologne will be pitched very differently for readers of Ebony, GQ, The New Yorker, or People respectively.

**DISCUSS:** Male images presented by students

**READINGS:** Selections from Manhood in America: A Cultural History, M. Kimmel.

**WEEK #8 Gender: American Constructions of Manhood (cont'd)**

**READINGS:** Selections from Manhood in America: A Cultural History, M. Kimmel.

**Gender: Femininity and the Female Body**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Contemporary constructs of femininity

**VIEW and DISCUSS:** Killing Us Softly

**WEEK #9 Gender: Femininity and the Female Body (cont'd)**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Continued exploration of contemporary constructs of femininity

**READINGS:** "Hunger as Ideology," "The Body and Reproduction," and "Reading the Slender Body," Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body, Susan Bordo

**DISCUSS:** Female images presented by students

**WEEK #10 Articulating the Self: Gender, Ethnicity, and Narrative**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Telling different stories and articulating identities

**READING:** The House on Mango Street

**WEEK #11 Contemporary Design: Words, Images and Responsibility**

**KEY CONCEPT:** Exploring issues of social, professional, and artistic responsibility in a global and multicultural world

**PAPER #3:** Analysis of *The House on Mango Street* (Topics to be distributed in class at the beginning of Week 10.)

**WEEK #12** Going Global: Good Citizenship through Words and Images

**KEY CONCEPT:** Contemporary design practices including issues of sustainability

**WORKSHOP:** Collage techniques and basic graphic design principles

**WEEK #13** Articulating the Self

**ACTIVITY:** Book Making Workshop

**WEEK #14** The Design Practice

**ACTIVITY:** In-class studio time

**WEEK #15** Final Project

Presentations of students' "Identity Books"

The identity project will allow students to demonstrate creatively what they've learned about the cultural construction of identity in a global environment, and how they can use their creative and analytical skills to challenge old structures and create new narrative and visual paradigms that more comfortably and accurately accommodate the variety and multiplicity of an individual's social experience. It can be about the student personally, or it can be an examination of the stereotypes that surrounds a group of which the student is a part: gender X, Ethnicity Y, Class Q, Race C, Sexuality Z. Each student's book will incorporate text to explain the visual or textual narrative his/her project is analyzing. The "Identity Books" can be text only or a combination of text and images.

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Prerequisite: None

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