

MRTS 4450/MRTS 5660 Women's Work in Hollywood
University of North Texas, Department of Media Arts
Fall 2024

Professor: Dr. Courtney Brannon Donoghue (she/her)

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Office: RTFP 234

Office Hours: Monday 11:30 am to 12:30 pm, or by appointment

Class Meetings: Monday 1:00 to 3:50 pm

Classroom: RTFP 264

Course Description (3 credits):

This course explores gendered studio cultures, labor, and creative work in Hollywood. Utilizing an intersectional feminist and media industry studies approach, we will explore structural and industrial barriers to the employment, career advancement, and mobility of women working behind the camera. The first part of the course takes a historical look at women working in Hollywood during the 20th century. The second part of the course is framed by current debates around gender equity, diversity, and inclusion and explores the contemporary barriers or “gaps” for women working in the historically male-dominated film industry. Using a variety of research methods, students will identify and analyze key industrial factors contributing to gender disparities and explore alternatives for future change.

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) To explore the history of women's work in the Hollywood studio system and the ways power, access, and privilege shape how this history is told.
- 2) To develop a working knowledge of contemporary debates and industry discourse surrounding gender inequity and filmmaking using an intersectional feminist lens.
- 3) To survey a variety of historical, critical, and methodological approaches for understanding gendered work and division of labor in the Hollywood film industry.

Required Readings:

- Courtney Brannon Donoghue, *The Value Gap: Female-Driven Films from Pitch to Premiere* (UT Press, 2023) – print & audiobook available
- Additional required readings are available on Canvas under the weekly schedule.
- Students will be asked to review excerpts from the open access textbook [*Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies*](#) (WGSS) by Miliann Kang, Donovan Lessard, Laura Heston, and Sonny Nordmarken as a supplement to required readings.

Required Screenings:

- Screenings are a central *and required* part of this course. Unless stated in the syllabus, screenings will be completed on your own outside of class before the scheduled class day.
- Please refer to Canvas for where screenings are available to stream. Available DVDs will also be on reserve at the UNT Media Library.

Communication Expectations:

- Please check Canvas announcements for weekly reminders and any changes to the schedule.
- Canvas or email is the best way to contact Dr. CBD. Please allow 24 hours for a response.
- All assignment guidelines will be posted to Canvas and discussed during class meetings.

Assessment:

Class Participation/Attendance	20 pts.
Perusall Reading Exercise	15 pts.
In-class Screening Responses	15 pts.
Trailblazer Presentation	15 pts.
Annotated Bibliography	10 pts.
<u>Industry Initiatives – Group Report & Presentation</u>	<u>25 pts.</u>
	100 points total

Grades and Late Policy:

Grades on course requirements are based on your ability to follow directions, execute the assignment, interpret and comprehend the overall rationale for the course by reading materials. Your projects must be turned in by the due date and time. Please contact me prior to the due date if you have an emergency or situation where you need flexibility with a deadline. *All late assignments will lose points for each day late.*

Letter grades indicate the following levels of performance:

A (90-100) = Outstanding work

B (80-89) = Good work

C (70-79) = Fair work

D (60-69) = Passing work

F (0-59) = Failing work

CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend class regularly. Participation means regular attendance as well as working on in-class exercises and contributing ideas during class discussions. Your participation grade is made up of the following: regular attendance, class discussion, small group activities and written exercises, visiting office hours, etc.

Classmate contact info:

Name/Info: _____

Name/Info: _____

PERUSALL READING EXERCISE

In an effort to engage in close reading prior to our weekly class discussion, students will complete a Perusall assignment in Canvas. This assignment will allow students to comment, collaborate, and talk to one another within the PDF text of one or two specified readings each week. For the weekly readings designated for the Perusall assignment, each student must add **at least two comments** (these can be observations, challenges, questions, or responses) for each PDF. The deadline to add your responses to Perusall each week is Sunday by 11:59 pm. Note: Even if Perusall lets you post after the deadline, I will NOT look back at this assignment, so you must post on time to receive credit.

IN-CLASS SCREENING RESPONSES

To help us process and start to think about the weekly screening(s), students will complete a screening response or reflection at the beginning of class each week. This is your opportunity to write down initial reactions, observations, thoughts, questions, etc. you have about the required screening. You may use any notes you have taken while watching the week's assigned film or TV screening(s). There are no makeups for screening responses. However, you will be granted a "pass week" over the semester to skip one in-class screening response AND still receive full credit. You are responsible for keeping up with your pass week. All you need to do is write "This is my pass week" as your response in class.

TRAILBLAZER PRESENTATION

Students will sign up for one female film industry professional on the list between weeks 5 and 8 (see Canvas). Incorporating both course readings and outside additional research, each student will give a 7-8-minute presentation about the career and contributions of your film industry professional. See Canvas for assignment instructions and where to sign-up. ***Trailblazer Presentations begin in Week 5 on Monday, September 16.***

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For this project, students will conduct research on a professional role or job category in the film industry. You may focus on any area of filmmaking or the film business. For example, you can choose a role in physical production, either below-the-line or above-the-line, post-production, distribution, marketing, studio management or executive level, etc. You will gather primary and secondary sources, including scholarly and industry sources, related to this job category or role and write short summaries addressing how the source relates to/contributes to our conversations about women's work in Hollywood. A detailed assignment sheet will be passed out closer to the due date.

INDUSTRY INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUITY

Students will work in small groups to research, development, and present an initiative that addresses gender inequity in the film industry. Your idea may grow out of class discussions and materials or be inspired by recent news or events. The project will produce an in-class presentation and a group report based on your research and proposed plan. Specific guidelines will be passed out closer to the due date.

Writing and Research Resources

For assignments, you can use either Chicago or MLA Style. For more information about style guides, see the UNT Library site. Since this course relies on research and writing skills, you are encouraged to look for outside resources and support. I strongly recommend that you contact the UNT Writing Lab. Tutors are available to work with undergraduates and graduates. Learn more about the Writing Lab by visiting their website (<https://writinglab.unt.edu>), calling them at 940-565-2563, or by visiting their office in Sage Hall, room 152.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is of central importance in education, and academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this class. It is the responsibility of all UNT students to know and adhere to the Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003), which can be found at: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>. If you have any questions concerning this policy or about documentation of sources in work you produce in this course, please meet with Dr. Brannon Donoghue.

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) are not permitted in this class. Any use of AI tools for work in this class is not authorized and will be classified as a violation. According to the Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003), any form of “unauthorized assistance” constitutes cheating and requires official reporting. If use of a generative AI tool is confirmed, the student will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and given a zero on the assignment. The learning process and examination of the media industries is YOUR journey, and I want to know what YOU think. Your voice is an important one and unique only to you, so please use it.

Class Community Guidelines

Our class is a community and a space for intellectual exploration and expression. Many of the topics we discuss may be emotionally charged. All students must attend class, show up on time and stay the entire time, keep up on readings, turn in assignments on time, and actively participate in discussion. But just as important, the success of this class as a whole depends on each one of us supporting, encouraging, and respecting each other people in the class. Every student is responsible for adding value to our classroom experience.

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. I will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. Even though there may be times when students disagree, it is expected that all students in this classroom treat each other with respect. You are asked to respect your instructor and classmates during all discussions and group assignments. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave group meetings and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Triggers and Warnings

Potentially sensitive topics may arise from screenings or during class. Please see me immediately if you feel that you will have difficulties attending class or completing the assignments. It is your responsibility to notify me if you become triggered by readings, films, and/or discussions.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Students with Disabilities

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of

Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Course Materials and Recordings

- Students are not allowed to record class sessions, unless the Office of Disability Access has informed your instructor that a particular student has an approved accommodation that requires recording.
- All class materials are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. Lecture recordings or other materials should not be shared outside the class in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Contacting Dr. Brannon Donoghue

Please take advantage of my office hours. I will be available before and after class to answer questions. If you would like to meet via Zoom, please email me for an appointment time. Only use email or Canvas to contact me for quick questions and *please allow at least 24 hours for an email response*. Depending on your question, I may request that you see me during office hours. Your success in this course is important to me. I am willing to make appropriate accommodations for any student who experiences problems understanding the material or meeting course requirements as long as they demonstrate a genuine desire to learn and takes the initiative to seek my help. If you are having difficulties, you should see me ASAP. I look forward to getting to know each of you during this semester!

Course Schedule

Please complete all readings, screenings, and any other assigned course materials before class by the date listed.

(P) = Perusall reading assignment

(WGSS) = open access textbook [Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies](#) by Miliann Kang, Donovan Lessard, Laura Heston, and Sonny Nordmarken

Week 1

M 8/19 Course Introduction

Review: Unit 1, “An Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies: Grounding Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts,” pp. 3-22 (WGSS)

Week 2 Early Hollywood & Silent Filmmaking (1900s-1920s)

M 8/26

Read: Mahar, “True Womanhood in Hollywood: Gendered Business Strategies and the Rise and Fall of the Woman Filmmaker, 1896-1928” (P)

Morgan & Dixon, [“African-American Women in the Silent Film Industry”](#)

Review: Unit V, “Introduction to Feminist Movements” & “19th Century Feminist Movements” pp. 87-91 (WGSS)

Listen: “Mabel Normand” (Fake News: Fact Checking Hollywood Babylon, [Episode 5](#), July 30, 2018, *You Must Remember This* episode)

Screen: Selection of silent films [screen in class]

Week 3 Labor Day

M 9/2 UNT closed – Class will not meet

Week 4 Classical Hollywood Studio System, part 1 (1930s – 1960s)

M 9/9

Read: Hill, “Studio Tours: Feminized Labor in the Studio System” (P)

Smyth, “Designing Women” (P)

Hatch, [“Cutting Women: Margaret Booth and Hollywood’s Pioneering Female Film Editors”](#)

Screen: *Dance, Girl, Dance* (1940, dir. Dorothy Arzner) [UNT Swank]

The Women (1939, dir. George Cukor) [UNT Swank]

Week 5 Classical Hollywood Cinema and the Studio System, part 2 (1930s – 1960s)

M 9/16

Read: Carman, “1930s Hollywood: The Golden Age for Talent” (P)

Lenker, [“How Marilyn Monroe Founded Her Own Production Company”](#)

Screen: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953, dir. Howard Hawks) [screen excerpts in class]

Listen: “The Many Loves of Ida Lupino” (The Many Loves of Howard Hughes, [Part 2](#), July 10, 2014, *You Must Remember This* podcast)

Week 6	New Hollywood and the Women's Movement (1967-1980)
M 9/23	
Read:	Smukler, "Feminist Reform Comes to Hollywood" (P)
Review:	Unit V, "Early to Late 20th Century Feminist Movements" pp. 92-96 (WGSS)
Screen:	<i>Wanda</i> (1970, dir. Barbara Loden) [UNT Kanopy]
Listen:	"A Star is Born" (Polly Platt, <i>The Invisible Woman</i> , Episode 5 , June 22, 2020, <i>You Must Remember This</i> episode)

Week 7	The Mid-budget Studio Movie & Women Directors (1980s-1990s)
M 9/30	
Read:	Smukler, "Epilogue" (P)
Review:	Unit V, "Third Wave and Queer Feminist Movements" pp. 97-102 (WGSS)
Screen:	<i>Smithereens</i> (1982, dir. Susan Seidelman) [UNT Kanopy] <i>A League of Their Own</i> (1992, dir. Penny Marshall) [UNT Swank] <i>A League of Their Own</i> , "Batter Up" (Season 1/Episode 1, 2022) [screen in class]

Week 8	Employment and Hollywood Studio Cultures
M 10/7	
Read:	Henderson, "The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers' Room" (P) <i>The Value Gap</i> , Introduction & Chapter 1
Review:	Lauzen, "The Celluloid Ceiling Report: Employment of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top Grossing U.S. Films in 2023"
Resource:	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> "Guide to Entertainment Industry Careers"
Screen:	<i>Half the Picture</i> (2018, dir. Amy Adrion) [UNT Kanopy]

Week 9	Rom Coms and Chick Flicks
M 10/14	
Read:	San Fillipo, "Love Actually: Romantic Comedy Since the Aughts" (P) <i>The Value Gap</i> , Chapter 2
Screen:	<i>The Lost City</i> (2022, dir. Adam Nee & Aaron Nee) [screen in class]

Week 10	Independent Filmmaking, Gatekeepers, & Film Festivals
M 10/21	
Read:	Lane, "Just Another Girl Outside the Neo-Indie" (P) <i>The Value Gap</i> , Chapter 4 Vary, "I'm Not Going Away, People."
Screen:	<i>Girlfight</i> (2000, dir. Karyn Kusama) [UNT Swank] <i>Past Lives</i> (2023, dir. Celine Song) [UNT Kanopy]

Week 11 **Production Cultures and Above-the-Line Work**
M 10/28
DUE: Annotated Bibliography
Read: *The Value Gap*, Chapter 3
 Keegan, [“Viola Davis and Gina Prince-Bythewood on the Battle to Get *The Woman King* Made”](#)
 Canfield, [“Christine Vachon, Hollywood’s Greatest Anomaly”](#)
Screen: *The Woman King* (2022, dir. Gina Prince-Bythewood) [UNT Swank]

Week 12 **Audiences and Gendered Bankability**
M 11/4
Read: Warner, “The Pleasure Principle of *Magic Mike XXL*: Sonic Visibility Toward Female Audiences” (P)
 The Value Gap, Chapter 5
Screen: *Magic Mike XXL* (2015, dir. Gregory Jacobs) [screen in class]

Week 13 **Hollywood after #MeToo and the Streaming Wars**
M 11/11
Read: *The Value Gap*, Conclusion
 Warner, [“Blue Skies Again: Streamers and the Impossible Promise of Diversity”](#) (P)
Screen: *The Assistant* (2019, dir. Kitty Green) [UNT Kanopy]
 TBD television episodes [screen in class]

Week 14 **Group Presentation Week**
M 11/18
DUE: Industry Initiatives – Group Presentation

****Thanksgiving Break: November 25-29****

Week 15 **Course Wrap-up**
M 12/2
DUE: Industry Initiatives – Group Report
