

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**  
www.mlcs.ualberta.ca

**2015-2016 MLCS 475 A1: X-Rated: Sex on Screen**  
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Smith-Prei

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Personal Website: <http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/feminism/>

Time: T R 12:30-1:50

Place: HC L 4 (Lab BUS 3 10)

Office Hours: T 10-12,  
or by appointment

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**Course Prerequisite:** Recommended that you have taken at least one senior-level literary, film, or cultural analysis course OR consent of department

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

- Yes       No, not needed, no such projects approved.

**Community Service Learning** component

- Required     Optional     None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

- Exam registry – Students' Union  
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

- Yes       No

**Course Description and Objectives:**

Pornographic, obscene, exploitative, provocative, titillating, raunchy, offensive, dirty – just some of the positively and negatively coded adjectives that might describe the visual representation of the sex act. There is little else that elicits such a strong reaction from an audience – often demands a strong reaction – than sex on screen, and little else is so dependent on and often breaks national, cultural, ethical, racial, and gendered expectations or boundaries. This course considers the representation of the sex act captured on film, video, and other forms of moving pictures. Of particular interest will be the relationship between aesthetic construction, pleasure, and performativity when sex becomes central to the visual narrative. In addition, we will examine contextual

issues such as the national and ethical approach to the taboo, cultural and political implications of the changing shape of censorship, the line between pornography and art house cinema, the manner in which new medias democratize access to the means of production, and how race, gender, and class help to shape the representation and dissemination of sex on screen. Through our examination of such ‘dirty’ pictures we will access and interrogate notions of acceptability, the popular, high art, exploitation, and industry machinery. This semester, the focus will be on notions of desire, marginality, selfhood, and provocation in the representation, production, and consumption of the sex act on screen. We will also interrogate medium (film, Super 8, digital camera phone) and language, including aesthetic language, of the objects at hand.

**Texts:**

Secondary reading will be available on reserve in the library or on Moodle, list distributed on the first day of class. It is the student’s responsibility to copy the relevant essays.

Primary material will be screened during the “lab” portion of the course. If you cannot attend the lab, it is the student’s responsibility to arrange for screening the films on their own time.

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

10 % attendance and participation

10% weekly response dialogues (approx. 200 words) on online forum: ongoing

10% short midterm paper (may be inspired by one response journal or class discussion):

**October 15**

30% group presentations (10% group mark, 10% individual, 10% write-up): **November 17, 19, 24**

10% bibliography, abstract, outline for term paper (5% abstract/thesis, 2.5% bibliography including correct MLA style, 2.5% outline): **Thursday, November 26**

30% term paper: **Friday, December 11**

**Explanatory Notes on Assignments:**

*Response dialogue:* Students will be expected to respond in to the texts and discussions held during the week in the form of an informal response journal. Each Friday a new discussion will begin on the online discussion forums. You are expected to contribute approximately 200 words per week. Every Friday the previous week’s discussion will close so if you answer late this will not count.

*Short paper:* Students will write a short midterm reaction paper (2-3 pages) discussing a detail from a film, a theoretical text, or from class or online discussions. The paper must have a clear thesis and have an argument. You do not need to use outside sources, but you do need to refer to one source used in the class.

*Group Presentations:* You will be expected to present (**no more than 30 minutes**) on aspect of sex on the small screen—home movies, television, or internet—and you should choose one example to discuss in detail. You will do these in small groups. You will receive a group mark (for organization, powerpoint), an individual mark (for your brief presentation), and a mark for your write up, which is due the day of the presentation. Signup sheet in the second week of

class, and further directions to be discussed in class.

*Abstract (including thesis), bibliography, outline:* In advance of writing the paper, you will be asked to submit an abstract (examples in class) that includes a clear thesis, a bibliography of the sources you expect to use (at least five, MLA style—if you do not own the guide, you can refer to <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>), and a clear but brief outline.

*Term paper:* Students will write a research paper (roughly 9 pages excluding title page and bibliography), including **five secondary sources**, on one of the texts discussed throughout the semester (including literary, nonliterary, and filmic texts) or on a further text or topic of your choosing. While the thesis should be the student's own, possible topics will be discussed in class.

### **Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

### ***Academic Integrity:***

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx> ) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

### ***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that directs discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

***Academic Honesty:***

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

**Students involved in language courses and translation courses** should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

**In this course**, attendance, preparation, and regular participation go hand in hand; students will not only be expected to attend each session, but they are expected to come prepared for the day’s lesson and participate in that day’s lesson. As the course will be run in seminar-style, the success of the course is dependent on informed and lively discussions driven by student engagement. It is therefore vital that each student complete the required readings, film screenings, or written exercises assigned for the scheduled class. Attendance, preparation, and regular participation will count for 10% of the overall grade for the course.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

Students who consult in advance with the instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, late assignments with no prior arrangement will receive a 5%-per-class-day penalty for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

***Student Accessibility Services:***

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca); Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB [www.ssds.ualberta.ca](http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca) ).

***Grading:***

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Letter	%	Pts	Descriptor
A+	95-100%	4.0	<b>Outstanding:</b> Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of the subject matter far exceeding expectations.
A	90-94%	4.0	<b>Excellent:</b> Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	86-89%	3.7	<b>Very good:</b> Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.
B+	82-85%	3.3	<b>Very good</b>
B	75-81%	3.0	<b>Good:</b> average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
B-	70-74%	2.7	<b>Good</b>
C+	66-69%	2.3	<b>Satisfactory:</b> Basic understanding of the subject matter
C	61-65%	2.0	<b>Satisfactory</b>
C-	58-60%	1.7	<b>Satisfactory</b>
D+	55-57%	1.3	<b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
D	50-54%	1.0	<b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
F	0-49%	0.0	<b>Fail:</b> Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.