Fashion Forward? : Rhetorics of Misogyny in Fashion and Beauty
WRIT 391

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Office: Liberal Arts 220
Office Hours: Thursday 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. & 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Classroom: LA 205

Course Description:
The industries of beauty and fashion are often examined in tandem with one another particularly regarding discussions of misogyny. A central reason for this linkage is both beauty and fashion are focused on the adornment and alteration of the natural sense of self as in the naked human form. The prevalence of high heels, corsets, make-up, plastic surgery, sexualization of young women, and pornographic fetishes such as sadomasochism (S&M) in advertising and on fashion runways feature prominently in conversations on women’s status in America and globally. Evidence of misogyny in beauty and fashion encompass elements of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, as well as, social and cultural factors. Misogynistic messages are splashed across popular television programs, covers of prominent magazines, on social media feeds, and in storefronts across America. This trend represents a dangerous precedent regarding mainstream acceptance of damaging cultural norms targeted at women and girls.

Jillian Báez and Natalie Havlin note, “The politics of beauty have been heavily debated within feminist studies and LGBTQ studies. While some feminists critiqued beauty as an extension of patriarchal gender regimes (beauty as a site of systemic oppression), other feminists reconceptualized beauty as a form of play and expression of identity. At the same time, women of color feminists, particularly black and Chicana/Latina feminists, such as bell hooks, Amalia Mesa-Bains, and Maria Elena Cepeda, acknowledge the significance of beauty—not only as personal adornment but as a mode of survival. Moving away from white second wave feminists that dismissed beauty as mere compliance with patriarchal expectations, some women of color feminists embrace beauty as a site of agency. At the same time, LGBTQ studies and critical disability studies critique heteronormative beauty regimes and explore the potentials of non-gender-normative stylizations and more inclusive modes of recognition.”

Taking a cue from Báez and Havlin, this course will examine misogyny within the industries of beauty and fashion with particular focus on cultural forms including popular music, film, education, politics, and business. This course will illustrate the role both digital and social media play in amplifying misogyny and will serve as a site for response and action against misogyny. Students will assess proposals to confront and reduce such expressions of hatred taking into account historical evidence as well as current trends. This class is designed to provide students with the rhetorical knowledge and cultural perspectives necessary to be successful writers at the college level and more specifically within the fields of Rhetoric, Composition, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. This course emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, reading, and composing in an academic context. To do this, students will explore research practices within the fields of Rhetoric, Composition, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and related disciplines (such as feminist rhetorical practices) and successful composing methods to bring these insights to the page. Students will expand their purview by examining the literary, historical, national, and gender contexts for interpreting texts. The writing assignments in this course are aimed at increasingly students’ fluidity at composing literary criticism, rhetorical analysis, and literature reviews through a series of scaffolded, reflective writing inquiries. Students will learn to identify and enact key features of discipline specific writing such as summary, analysis, and argumentation by studying primary and secondary sources. Students will also focus on organization, clarity, and mechanics through a systematic series of revisions.
Learning Outcomes

• Sketch the basic principles that underpin concepts of misogyny within the industries of fashion and beauty.
• Classify key issues and historical events that shaped trends of misogyny in the industries of fashion and beauty (domestically and internationally).
• Synthesize social and cultural shifts as represented in generative fashion publications as related to misogyny.
• Identify and analyze the rhetorical strategies employed by rhetors resisting misogyny and those advancing misogynistic practices.
• Demonstrate habits of a successful reader (vocabulary, marginalia, annotations, questions).
• Integrate personal insight into academic writing.
• Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing.

WRIT 391 is an Approved Writing course. The university learning outcomes include:

• Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
• Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
• Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
• Revise written work based on constructive feedback
• Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
• Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
• Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

Participation in University Assessment

• All courses, including this one, that are approved writing courses participate in the University-wide Program-level Assessment (UPWA). Therefore, this course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a database. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

General Class Expectations:

• All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date.
• All writing assignments must be turned in on time.
• All major assignments must be typed. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, double-space, 1-inch margins on all sides, and stapled.
• Please use MLA 8th edition citation format.
• Attend class.
• Actively, vocally, and appropriately participate in class discussion.

Reasonable Program Modifications:
Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction for students with disabilities in collaboration with instructors and Disability Services for Students, which is located in Lommasson Center 154. The University does not permit fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications.

Attendance Policy:
http://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures/

Students who know they will be absent should contact the instructor in advance.
Students in the National Guard or Reserves are permitted excused absences due to military training. Students must submit their military training schedule to their instructor at the beginning of the semester. Students must also make arrangements with the instructor to make up course work for absences due to military service.

More than three absences from a Tuesday/Thursday (TR) class will compromise your grade. 6 or more absences from a TR class will result in a failing grade. Here's the breakdown.

4th absence: final grade drops one letter grade  
5th absence: final grade drops one letter grade  
6th absence: final grade is an F

Here's the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your professor and classmates. As Adrienne Rich noted in her 1977 Convocation of Douglass College, “The first thing I want to say to you who are students, is that you cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education: you will do much better to think of being here to claim one.” Take an active role in your education. Be on time, be present, and be ready to contribute, listen, and learn.

If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes. Being absent does not excuse you from the responsibility of meeting due dates and deadlines; it also does not excuse you from knowing the material presented in class that day.

Personal situations inevitably arise that make it impossible for you to make it to class. Remember, however, that’s why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

Grading Policy

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Ground Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and Critique Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial Memo</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Students enrolled in WRIT 391 are graded by traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F.

Major Assignments

Common Ground Presentation (1 page): On specific dates (listed in the daily schedule below) individual students, will begin our conversation on the assigned reading by offering commentary and guiding discussion questions for the class to grapple with. Presenters will be asked to consider the literary, historical, national, and/or gender contexts needed for us to understand the texts assigned for the day. Presenters should prepare a handout with a brief outline detailing the relevant research, textual support from the assigned reading, and the discussion questions.
Critique Assignment (4-6 pages): To accompany the texts we will be reading this semester, we will also be watching films and television advertisements that offer insight into the thematic strands at the crux of our inquiry. For our purposes in WRIT 391, a critique is an analytical essay on a misogynistic trend observed in the industries of beauty and fashion. To inspire your inquiry it is necessary to explore advertisements, promotional materials, social media feeds, etc. You will be asked to assert a claim, bolster your position with textual evidence, and demonstrate the reasons for your stance. Do not limit yourself to reacting to the trend (“I hated it!”) and avoid generic terms like “incredible,” “terrible,” “awful,” etc. The critique assignment will receive formal, written feedback and students are required to revise this essay.

Annotated Bibliography (3-4 pages): The annotated bibliography must include a minimum of five, scholarly sources discovered in the process of your own research. Your annotated bibliography will include a brief summary of the source, analysis of the source (credibility, etc.), and a rationale for how you intend to use this source in your editorial memo. You are welcome to choose any topic related to the course and we will have ample time to discuss and conference your ideas as they develop. This assignment will receive formal, written feedback from me and you are required to revise your annotated bibliography.

Editorial Memo (8-10 pages): The crowning jewel of the semester is 8-10 page editorial memo. For the scope of this assignment, you are welcome to focus on a topic of your choosing related to the course content; please pay particular attention to the political, literary, historical, national, and/or gender contexts of the texts we studied this semester. Using the research methods practiced all semester, this paper should highlight a critical awareness of your topic through the incorporation of diverse sources. During the last two weeks of the semester all students must meet with me to conference their work-in-progress editorial memo. During our individual conferences, I will offer each writer strategies for revision, additional sources of research, and content analysis.

Plagiarism Policy
If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:
- I alert the student of areas of the text that are suspicious
- the student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to him/her to prove that he/she turned in original work
- each student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research she/he used in writing the paper
- if the student cannot provide documentation of her/his research, the student will fail the paper
*these measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student brings his/her research to me I use the time to talk with them about citation and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future. In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of his/her original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized his/her work:
- the student will automatically fail the given assignment
- the student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- the student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure. In this instance, all conditions must be met. I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time.
- all other previously established conditions in the class (i.e. attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course
- in the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue a University Citation of Plagiarism
Required Texts
Jeffreys, Shelia. Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West
Lunsford, Andrea. Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women In The Rhetorical Tradition
Molloy, John T. The Woman’s Dress for Success Book

Additional Course Materials (available in class, on reserve in Mansfield library, or on Moodle)
Please note this is not an exhaustive list.


Golgowski, Nina. 2013. “Bones so frail it would be impossible to walk and room for only half a liver: shocking research reveals what life would be like if a REAL woman had Barbie's body,” Daily Mail.


