

Spring 2002
WST 390

Race and Gender in Hollywood Film

Kelly Oliver

Mondays 2:15-5:20 in Harriman 214

Course Description:

In this course we will examine the intersections of race, gender, and class as they are portrayed in American films that deal with the issue of “passing,” particularly race or sex passing. We will use psychoanalytic theory and feminist theory to analyze the ways that racial, gender, and class passing challenges and/or solidifies notions of identity, particularly race or gender identity. We will discuss the implications of these discourses of passing on larger issues of identity and identity politics. We will read texts by Anne McClintock, Peggy Phelan, Rey Chow, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, Marjorie Garber, Valerie Smith, Gayle Wald and Judith Butler, among others. Some of the films that we will analyze include Stahl’s “Imitation of Life,” Kazan’s “Pinky,” McGehee & Seigel’s “Suture,” and Cronenberg’s “M Butterfly.”

Required Reading :

There is a reading packet available at Budget Print on 25A across from the train station. Please call in advance to order your packet; they make them up individually. The packet contains selections from Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather*, Kalpana Seshadri-Crook’s *Desiring Whiteness*, Elaine Ginsberg (ed) *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, Rey Chow’s *Ethics after Idealism*, Naomi Zack (ed) *Race/sex*, Valerie Smith’s *not just race, not just gender*, and Gayle Wald’s *Crossing the Line*.

Films:

Stahl’s *Imitation of Life* (1936), Sirk’s *Imitation of Life* (1959), Kazan’s *Pinky* (1949), McGehee & Siegel’s *Suture* (1993), Cronenberg’s *M Butterfly* (1993), Jordan’s *Crying Game* (1992), Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999)

Method of Evaluation:

Each seminar participant will give one in-class presentation, which s/he will turn in as a paper the week after the presentation. One final paper is due at the end of the semester. Participation in class discussions is essential.