



Psy 196: Social Identities & The Media

Instructor:

Sarah E. Gaither, PhD Candidate

Class Details:

Mondays, 6:30-9:00pm, Psychology, Room 201

**Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm,
Or By Appointment
Room 226 Psychology**

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DESCRIPTION:

In this seminar we will explore how various types of social identities are represented in the media. We will also be examining how different social identities intersect and overlap with each other and how those intersections affect our own sense of identity as well as our perceptions and treatment of others. Whether we are interacting with our best friends or just glancing at someone passing by on the street, we as human beings are constantly navigating between different types of social identities and applying different learned stereotypes that affect how we behave and are perceived. Most people normally think only about race and gender when considering various types of social identities, but in this course we will be extending these commonly thought of categories and seeing how they intersect with things such as sexual orientation and religion, and more importantly, how these identities are portrayed both positively and negatively in the media. Throughout this course, we will investigate the ways that various types of social identities are formed and internalized by members of particular social groups using media examples as our guide to learn how different types of social perceptions shape not only who we are, but also influence our psychological perceptions and interactions with others. We will be investigating this issue through research articles, audio and video clips, and media critiques to examine both personal and societal views that contribute toward the intersectional nature of our social existence.

CLASS MATERIALS:

All readings and materials will be available via Trunk or the internet. No textbook is required.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Unlike most courses which generally focus on building knowledge and skills (although we will definitely still be learning), this course is designed to also increase self-awareness and to expand your knowledge of the various types of social groups that exist in our world while also examining how our life experiences and exposure through things such as the media may affect these perceptions.

To that end, this course will provide you with a greater:

- *understanding of what social identities are, how they develop, and the meaning they have in people's lives*
- *awareness of your own identities and an opportunity to critically examine their origins and how they affect your social interactions and behavior*

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- *knowledge concerning stereotypes of various groups, how they are formed, how they impact people's lives, and how they can be reduced*
 - *chance to engage in honest and meaningful dialogue with classmates across and within various social groups and identities*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course requires that you read a few articles and/or a few videos or audio clips and post two discussion questions every week. You are to come to class ready to participate in discussions. You can expect discussions to highlight important aspects of the assignments, but also to present some information not covered directly in the assignments. Each of you will also be assigned in pairs to lead one discussion during the semester. You will also have two short papers, one in-class presentation, and a final paper. There will not be a final exam in this class (hooray!).

I encourage you all to come and visit me during my office hours as well. I get pretty bored sitting there waiting to see if students want to chat, so come on by! ☺

GRADING:

The final grade for this course will be based on the total number of points you **earn** on participation, leading discussion, two papers, one presentation, and a final paper.

Your grade will be calculated using the scale below:

25 Points—*Discussion Leading*

50 Points—*Class Participation*

50 Points—*Paper 1*

50 Points—*Paper 2*

75 Points—*Presentation*

100 Points—*Final Paper*

350 Points Total

PARTICIPATION: (50 points) Students are expected to attend and actively participate in class. The quality of the discussions and, to some extent, the quality of this course, will depend in large part on your reading and processing of the assigned material prior to class and your willingness to engage with the course material in class discussions. To help with your preparation for the discussions, you will be asked to post two thought-provoking questions each week on Trunk by Sunday at 11:00am based on the assignments for that week. I will use these questions to help shape the class each week. You are also expected to verbally contribute in class, and your participation grade will be based off of your participation in both the online and in-class formats.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: I know that everyone is not comfortable talking about things such as race, but I do think it is really important for people to learn how to talk about these types of issues and topics, hence why I have this class ☺ For this reason, it is essential that our classroom be a place where everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts without fear of being judged. I expect all of my students to be respectful of the widely varied experiences and backgrounds presented in the classroom and you can definitely expect the same level of respect from me. Disrespect or discrimination on any basis, including but not limited to ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, class, religion, or value system, will simply not be tolerated, but since all of you signed up for this class, I'm guessing that shouldn't be a problem. That being said, if someone (even me!) says something that you find offensive, try to do your best to find a way to express how you feel in a constructive manner in class or set up a time with me outside of class.

DISCUSSION LEADING: (25 points) You will work in pairs and lead one discussion session during the semester based on the assignments and theme for that week. You and your partner will need to find supporting media examples to support your discussion questions and to spark group conversation in the class.

PAPERS: (50 points each) There will be two personal essays due during the semester, one concerning your gender identity and one concerning your racial/ethnic identity. These essays are a chance for you to reflect on those social identities while also giving you a chance to think about other alternative perspectives. These essays will be 4-5 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins) and should be well-written and integrate some of our assignments and/or class discussions. Any paper turned in after the deadline will be penalized 2 points per day that it is late. There will be no extensions.

PRESENTATION: (75 points) Working in pairs, you will create a presentation using whatever media formats of your choosing (ads, commercials, newspapers, music, videos, social media, etc.) and come up with a unique theme regarding how media affects some type of social perception. Please prepare a 20 minute presentation and there will be a 5 minute question and answers session afterwards. You will need to approve your topic with me in advance to ensure groups do not overlap too much.

Here are some sample themes to get you thinking:

Positive Effects Stemming from the Media, Children's Media and Its Effects on Gender Socialization, Music and Racial Stereotypes, Images of Women in the Media, How The World Perceives Americans Through Our Media, Political Advertisements During Elections, How the News Affects Views of Religious Groups, How Ads Are Changed to Target Specific Groups, etc.

FINAL PAPER: (100 points) This will be a written version of the presentation you give in class to explain in writing your analysis or critique of the media theme of your choosing. This will be turned in individually and will be due by Friday, December 13th at 5:00pm via Trunk. This paper should be 8-10 pages long (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins) and include at least 5 references outside of assigned class materials to support your claims.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Plagiarism occurs more often than people think. It is not merely submitting someone else's work as your own or copying off someone else in the class. It also happens when you do not use proper citation. If you are unsure about proper citation procedures please ask. Anyone suspected of cheating or plagiarism will be subject to a failing grade as well as further administrative sanction.

ABSENCES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangements. Additionally, please show up to class on time. If I am on time then you should be too. We are all busy people. It is never really okay to leave class early or skip class especially since participation is a part of your grade, but that being said, since this class is small, please let me know if you will be leaving early or will be absent since that is just the nice thing to do 😊

LEARNING DISABILITIES:

If you have a diagnosed condition or disability that causes difficulty with learning in the classroom or completing assignments please see me as soon as possible and provide documentation if it is available. I will do whatever I can to accommodate your needs. According to University policy, it is the student's responsibility to notify me of any special needs and all information regarding disability will be kept strictly confidential.

CALENDAR OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1—INTRODUCTION TO CLASS, DISCUSSION DATE SELECTIONS

Monday, September 9th

WEEK 2—INTRO TO MEDIA ANALYSIS

Monday, September 16th — Paper Assignment #1 Discussed

Read: Media Literacy Project: Introduction to Media Literacy.

Watch: Blakley, J. (2010). Social media and the end of gender. TED Talk. And read viewer comments.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/johanna blakley social media and the end of gender.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/johanna_blakley_social_media_and_the_end_of_gender.html)

Read: Questions for Media

And find one form of media and answer each question from that handout. Bring those answers to class and a print out of the media or have the link accessible for us to use in class.

WEEK 3—POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA

Monday, September 23rd

Read: Miller, C.C. (2010). Social networking a lifeline for the chronically ill. *New York Times*.

Read: Kraidy, U.S. (2002). Sunny days on Sesame Street? Multiculturalism and resistance postmodernism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 26, 9-25.

Read: Levs, J. (2012). No more dumb old dad: Changing the bumbling stereotype. *CNN*.

See images of dads in media here: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/12/living/dumb-dad-stereotype>

Read: Duck, J.M., Terry, D.J., & Hogg, M.A. (1995). The perceived influence of AIDS advertising: Third-person effects in the context of positive media content. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 17, 305-325.

WEEK 4—GENDERED MEDIA

Monday, September 30th —PAPER #1 DUE VIA TRUNK BY 5:00pm

Watch: Miss Representation Trailer: <http://vimeo.com/28066212>

Read: Brooks, D.E., & Hébert, L.P. (2006). Gender, race and media representation. In B. Dow & J. T. Wood (Eds.), *Handbook of gender and communication* (pp. 297–317). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Read: Coltrane, C., & Messineo, M. (2000). The perpetuation of subtle prejudice: Race and gender imagery in the 1990s television advertising. *Sex Roles*, 42, 363-388.

Read: Culp, R. (2013). How the mainstream media exploits “science” to reinforce gender stereotypes. ThinkProgress.com

WEEK 5—PORTRAYALS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Monday, October 7th

Read: Peplau, L.A., & Garnets, L. (2000). A new paradigm for understanding women’s sexuality and sexual orientation. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 329-350

Read: France, D. (2007). The science of gaydar. *The New Yorker*.

Watch: Wright, T.. (2012). Fifty shades of gay. TED Talk. And read viewer comments.
http://www.ted.com/talks/io_tillett_wright_fifty_shades_of_gay.html

Read: Stelter, B. (2012). Gay on TV: It's all in the family. *New York Times*. (and read through the reader comments) <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/business/media/gay-on-tv-its-all-in-the-family.html>

Read: Levina, M., Waldo, C.R., & Fitzgerald, L.F. (2000). We're here, we're queer, we're on TV: The effects of visual media on heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30, 738-358.

WEEK 6—THE ROLE OF RACE IN THE MEDIA

Tuesday, October 15th (MONDAY SCHEDULE)—Paper Assignment #2 Discussed

Read: Monk-Turner, E., et al. (2010). The portrayal of racial minorities on prime time television: A replication of the Maestro and Greenberg study a decade later. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 32, 101-114.

Read: Sommers, S.R., Apfelbaum, E.P., Dukes, K.N., Toosi, N., & Wang, E.J. (2006). Race and media coverage of Hurricane Katrina: analysis, implications, and future research directions. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 6, 1-17.

Read: Vittrup, B., & Holden, G.W. (2011). Exploring the Impact of Educational Television and Parent–Child Discussions on Children's Racial Attitudes. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 11, 82-104.

Listen to: Podcast: Does the media cause racism, or does it simply report it?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9_woWgbBF0

WEEK 7—BEING MULTIRACIAL IN AMERICA

Monday, October 21st

Read: Saulny, S. (2011). Black? White? Asian? More young Americans choose all of the above. *New York Times*.

Read: Shih, M., & Sanchez, D.T. (2009). When race becomes even more complex: Toward understanding the landscape of multiracial identity and experiences. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 1-11.

Read: Thornton, M. C. (2009). Policing the Borderlands: White-and Black-American Newspaper Perceptions of Multiracial Heritage and the Idea of Race, 1996–2006. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1), 105-127.

Listen to and read: Roth, A. (2013). Checking more than one box: A growing multiracial nation, *NPR*. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/05/12/183430945/checking-more-than-one-box-a-growing-multiracial-nation>

Read: Elliot, S. (2013). Vitriol online for cheerios ad with interracial family. *New York Times*.
And Watch: Kids react to controversial cheerios commercial.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VifdBfp5pnw>

WEEK 8—HOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IS PERCEIVED

Monday, October 28th— PAPER #2 DUE VIA TRUNK BY 5:00pm

Read: Bullock, H.E., Fraser Wyche, K., & Williams, W.R. (2001). Media images of the poor. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 229-246.

Read: Krizay, Lauren M. (2011). Begging for change: A comparative analysis of how the media frames domestic and international poverty. *Student Pulse*, 3, 1-12.

Read: Woods, T.A., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Rowley, S.J. (2005). The development of stereotypes about the rich and poor: Age, race, and family income differences in beliefs. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34, 437-445.

Watch: What Would You Do? Helping a Homeless Man.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lhGSCC3LII>

WEEK 9—RELIGION REPRESENTATIONS

Monday, November 4th

Read: Toosi, N., & Ambady, N. (2011). Ratings of essentialism for eight religious identities. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 1, 17-29.

Read: Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as identity: Toward an understanding of religion from a social identity perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14, 60-71.

Read: Hoover, S. (2008). Media and religion. The Center for Media, Religion and Culture. University of Colorado, Boulder, 1-20.

Listen to: Cox, T. (2010). Black atheists say non-belief means cultural outsider, *NPR*.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127239913>

WEEK 10—OTHER STIGMATIZED SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE MEDIA

Monday, November 18th

Read: Haller, B., Dorries, B., & Rahn, J. (2006). Media labeling versus the US disability community identity: a study of shifting cultural language. *Disability & Society*, 21, 61-75.

Listen to: Cohen, A. (2011). Big, fat stereotypes play out on the small screen, *NPR*.
<http://www.npr.org/2011/08/08/138958386/big-fat-stereotypes-play-out-on-the-small-screen>

Read and Watch: Dwarf family combats stereotypes. *The Today Show*.
http://www.today.com/id/18020547/ns/today-today_books/t/dwarf-family-combats-stereotypes/#.Uhq4ApLVCS0

Read: Wiseman, D.B. (2010). Perceptions of a tattooed college instructor. *Psychological reports*, 106, 845-850.

WEEK 13—CLASS TBD

Monday, November 25th

WEEK 14 & 15—STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (3-4 Groups Each Day)

Monday, December 2nd & Monday December 9th

Friday, December 13th: FINAL PAPER DUE VIA TRUNK BY 5PM

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY SAMPLE

Activity: Intersectionality of Race and Gender

Purpose: This activity will be used as a way to get students to learn about how various identities such as race and gender can overlap, intersect or influence each other. This could be used in a variety of classes to help make students aware of the thoughts they have about various types of groups or identities, but for the purpose of this class, this task will be used as a transition activity from our focus on racial identities to gender identities.

Task: Pre-print out on small pieces of paper the words “Black People,” “Black Women,” and “Black Men.” Depending on how large your class is, divide the class into three groups, and give each group one of the pre-printed pieces of paper and tell them not to open it until you tell them to. It is important that the other groups do not know what all of the pre-printed pieces of paper say—they should only know what their group has been assigned. If your class is larger, you should print extra copies of the words and just make sure there are an even number of groups representing each of the three options.

Next, you will tell the class that each group has a piece of paper of a different group of people and that they will have 5 minutes to come up with a list of traits that you think that group possesses. Be sure to tell them that is okay to include stereotyped traits to ease any students who may feel uncomfortable by saying this task is trying to come up with lists that most people think of when they think of the following groups.

After time is up, ask for a representative from each group to write up on the board the terms that their group came up with. This is when the class will find out that the three topics only differed by the word people, women, or men. Once the lists are put up on the board, then guide the students through a discussion looking at the similarities and differences between the three

lists. Hopefully what you should find is that a lot of the traits listed in the Black People and Black Men list should be similar and the Black Women should differ the most from the other two, which would show to students that often times the default identity we think of when thinking of racial groups is actually men.

Possible discussion questions to use during this task:

- What similarities and differences do you see between these three lists?
- What do you think caused these similarities and differences to appear?
- Have any of you thought about men being the default gender group before?
- Do you think that this trend would work with same way with all racial groups? Why or why not?
- Do you think that if we did this task in groups that were segregated by gender we would get different results? Why or why not?
- What does this task show us about the importance of gender as it relates or intersects with race?
- Are there ever moments when race and gender don't intersect? Or do you think that this intersectionality works differently based on whether you are a man or a woman?
- Have any of you ever experienced a time in which you felt your gender and race overlapped with each other?

BLACK PEOPLE

BLACK WOMEN

BLACK MEN

Leading Discussion Guidelines

Across the semester, each of you will work in pairs and lead one discussion session based on the assignments and theme for that week. You should prepare a **1 minute summary** of each of the assigned materials for that week to present to the rest of the class. This should NOT be an in depth, regurgitated summary of the assigned materials since everyone in the class needs to be reading these assignments on their own as well. Your participation grade is separate from your discussion leading grade for this exact reason—to ensure you do all spend time with the assigned materials and come to class prepared to participate in discussions led by your peers.

Additionally, you and your partner will need to find supporting media examples (i.e., movies, music, news, social media, commercial, print ads, etc.) to support your discussion questions and to spark group conversation in the class. These media examples need to be related to the assigned materials for that week, highlighting some of the assigned materials in media format. In other words, your job is to touch on each of assigned materials and/or themes in some way using media examples so that the class can see how these different identities and perceptions are portrayed in the media itself.

The discussion you lead will be worth 25 points of your grade, and the length of these discussions will vary week by week based on the assigned materials and media exemplars you all find. But be prepared to lead a 20-30 minute discussion at a minimum. Longer discussions are of course strongly encouraged and Powerpoint is not required but a projector will be available if needed.



Paper 1: How Does Gender Sway Your Perceptions of Media?



STEP 1: Your first task for this paper is to find two media examples associated with your gender. One of these examples should promote positive associations or stereotypes about your gender while the other example should promote negative associations or stereotypes about your gender. Write down some notes, initial thoughts, etc.

STEP 2: Next, imagine that you were born the of the gender opposite to what you are now. Looking back at your childhood, your teen years, and however many adults years you have now, in what ways do you think your life would have been different? Different friend choices? Different school or work choices? Different identification choices? Different life goals?

STEP 3: With this perspective in mind, re-examine the same two media examples you found from that gender's perspective. Your paper will therefore be a comparison piece about how you first viewed these media examples from your gender's perspective to how they may have changed thinking from the opposite gender's perspective. I have provided a list of possible questions for you to consider, but these are only suggestions and you are not limited to them. Your paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font and it will be worth 50 points of your overall grade. You should turn in your paper via Trunk, electronically only.

Questions to consider:

Are your views from the male and female perspective the same? Different? How so?

Did your view of those media examples change when thinking from the opposite gender's perspective? How so?

Did you feel more comfortable viewing the media examples from one perspective more than the other?

What types of stereotypes did you apply when viewing the media samples and did that vary by gender perspective?

Do you think that all people from your gender ingroup would view those media samples in the same manner?

Did thinking from the opposite gender change your perceptions of yourself or your own gender identification at all while viewing the media samples?

How difficult was it to think from the opposite gender's perspective? And do you think you possibly applied your own stereotypes of that opposite gender when thinking about how your life might be or when viewing the media samples?

Paper 2: Racial and/or Ethnic Autobiography



Race and ethnicity are largely represented in the media, but what does race and ethnicity mean to you? How do you identify with it? How does that identification affect your views, behavior and treatment?

In your second paper, I would like you to explore your own racial and/or ethnic identity. True, your racial and ethnic identity may be intertwined with each other or you may think that you have one and not the other, and these may also overlap with other identities you may have. That is why I have given you the option to write about either your racial and/or ethnic identity. There is no right or wrong answer. I know that this assignment may be harder for some of you than others, so please feel free to come and speak with me if you would like any guidance at all. I have provided a list of suggested topics you could address in your paper, but these are only suggestions and you are not limited to them. Your paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font and it is worth 50 points of your overall grade. You should turn in your paper via Trunk electronically only.

Suggested Topics to Include in your Racial/Ethnic Exploration Paper:

What does the word race or ethnicity mean to you?

When did you first notice your own race or ethnicity?

How do others respond to your skin color or other phenotypical traits?

Are there aspects of your racial or ethnic identity that you think others are unaware of?

How has your racial or ethnic identification affected your life?

Have you had any experiences with racism, prejudice, stereotypes, or discrimination?

How have your friendships both within and outside of your racial or ethnic group affected your life?

How identified are you with your race/ethnicity? Or you may also feel you do not identify with a race/ethnicity?

Has your family contributed to your racial or ethnic identity?

Has your racial or ethnic identity changed across your life? Yes or no, and when and how?

Is there anything that you like or don't like about your racial or ethnic group?

Has contexts such as friends, the media, school, workplaces, etc. affected your view of your racial or ethnic identity?

