

VIS 369: Gender, Sexuality & Media

Guidelines for Final Projects

Overview:

Your Research Project will center on a particular archetype that relates to representations of gender and/or sexuality, and which generated significant media coverage and cultural anxiety. This character-type can be from any time period, including the present, and does not need to be U.S. based. But your case study should be rooted in a particular location and historical period. Examples could include 1920s flappers, 1930s “mannish” women, 1960s Cosmo Girls, 1980s “welfare mothers,” HIV+ gay men in the 1990s, 1990s gangsta rappers or Latino/a/x “gang-bangers,” 2000s Afropunkers, contemporary “angry white men,” “Social Justice Warriors,” and “Manic-Pixie Dream Girls” in the US, and many others

Your project will consist of two parts: 1. A multi-media “dossier,” presenting media examples and other primary & secondary sources related to your archetype, alongside a summary of your research and thesis related to this media phenomenon. 2. An 8-10 page paper contextualizing this archetype within its historical moment, using a variety of primary and secondary sources. Your objective is to explain why and how this character-type emerged at that particular moment, and how certain anxieties about gender identity and sexuality might be reflected in representations of these figures.

Objectives:

- To present and analyze a gender archetype that has emerged in popular culture, contextualized within the specific time and place when it circulated.
- To prepare a rich and diverse set of primary sources, including popular culture representations of and responses to this archetype.
- To assemble a set of scholarly sources that aid you in analyzing the historical context for this case study, as well as texts that help you to understand the ways in which gender and sexuality are understood in relation to this archetype.
- To develop a thesis that suggests the possible function this archetype served for the culture from which it emerged.
- To seek out examples of either self-representations or critiques of this archetype from those who were closely impacted by these representations.

Components:

- A detailed description & analysis of the characteristics of your archetype and the historical/geographical context in which it appears
- A thesis that suggests possible functions that this archetype plays for the various members of the culture that produced it.
- A diverse set of primary sources. These documents should be gathered from the time and location of your study (the tighter the focus here the better). While you may throw a wide net in terms of the range of items you bring together, each document should shed light on your final argument. Your job in this project is to weave these threads together to tell us something about the gender politics of this moment. Examples here include advertisements, video clips, newspaper or magazine articles, songs, fashion spreads, manifestos, films, reviews, fan writing, interviews, magazine covers, recipes, music videos, trade press, etc.
- Scholarly and theoretical readings. These can be drawn from any time period so long as they provide you with a means of discussing the representational strategies and power

dynamics of the period you are researching. Your goal is not just to quote or list these sources, but to engage in a meaningful dialogue with their ideas.

- An annotated bibliography of scholarly sources (a draft of this must be included in the proposal)
- Examples of self-representation (from someone who identifies with this archetype, or who has been labeled as part of this group against their wishes) or critiques from people who are closely impacted by the archetype.
- A consideration of how theses critiques or self-representations challenge the meaning of the archetype.

Pitch:

Submit a paragraph describing the archetype you have chosen. Be sure to specify the historical and geographical context you will be focusing on. The more information you can share about source and/or possible arguments you might build, the more feedback I can provide.

Proposal:

Your proposal will present the scope of your research in progress. Include: 1. A detailed overview of your project with a draft of your thesis statement. 2. An outline of the key elements of your project 3. A list of primary sources to be analyzed and 4. An annotated bibliography of your scholarly sources so far.

Dossier:

Imagine that you are leading a campus event or teaching your fellow students about this gender archetype. You'll need to explain the characteristics of the character-type, the time and context in which it appears, and present a range of media examples. Your online dossier will be a page on our WordPress site, introducing your topic and providing links to the "constellation" of sources and ideas that have contributed to this project. This page will include a brief synopsis of your analysis, a link to your final paper, your annotated bibliography, and links/clips to media examples, images, and other primary and secondary sources.

Paper: Building on your presentation, write an 8-10 page analysis of this archetype. I'll be evaluating this based on several criteria:

- Your main argument: do you present a clear, original argument about your topic that is supported by adequate evidence? An A paper will ask us to think differently about the subject at hand. A thesis can be nuanced and open to multiple perspectives, but it should be presented with confidence and clarity.
- Use of primary and secondary materials: did you gather a rich set of resources to build your argument? Do those resources contribute in a meaningful way to the ideas presented?
- Mastery of basic gender theory: Does your paper draw on, and reflect a basic understanding of, the major texts, concepts, and movements related to gender and media studies covered in the class? Are you, as an author, engaging in relevant debates in the field?
- Style: Is the paper convincingly written and structured in a logical way, with few grammatical errors? An A paper will go beyond basic "proficiency" to pay attention to craft, using language as a tool to draw the reader in and to build a stronger, deeper thesis. An A paper will go beyond basic familiarity with existing literature to take risks, engage in debates with contemporary thinkers, and present original ideas in an original voice. Creative expression and thoughtful presentation can be important tools for good scholarship.