

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2016-2017 MLCS 475 A1: X-Rated Sex on Screen
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Dr. Victoria Ruetalo
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Time: T, R 12:30-1:50 pm
Place: TB 1-08
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:00pm
or by appointment
Course Website: <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca/portal/>

Course Prerequisite: 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 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.

At the end of the course successful students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a general knowledge of the issues surrounding sexually explicit material on screen.
- Engage with multiple cultural perspectives relating to such material.
- Evaluate ethical and social issues relating to the production, distribution, and exhibition of sexually explicit material.
- Debate and deconstruct underlying theories of sexuality and cinema relating to sex on screen.
- Demonstrate advanced critical research and writing skills.
- Conduct research of print, electronic, and visual texts using both primary and secondary sources.
- Analyze, argue, and communicate ideas in both written and oral formats.
- Formulate research questions and evaluate the appropriateness of using relevant theoretical and methodological approaches.
- Accept constructive feedback and revise work accordingly.
- Work collaboratively in a shared environment to achieve a common goal.

Texts:

Linda Williams, *Screening Sex*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008.

Secondary readings will be available on E-class. There you will find a list of both required and recommended readings for each class meeting.

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

10% Attendance and Participation

10% Weekly Response Dialogues (approximately 200 words/week online forum = total of 10, 1% per entry)

10% Short Midterm Paper: **October 13, 2016**

30% Group Presentations: **November 22 and 24, 2016** (sign up in E-class)

10% Abstract, Bibliography, and Outline: **November 3, 2016**

30% Final Paper: **December 8, 2016**

Total: 100%

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Attendance and Participation: 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 and participate in the day's lesson. As the course will be run in a seminar-style, its success depends 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.

Weekly Response Dialogues: Every Friday a new response dialogue will begin. These will be found in E-class on a weekly basis. There are ten dialogues in the semester. Students will be expected to contribute approximately 200 words in each response dialogue as a reaction to visual and written texts, and class discussions held during the week. These responses will make up a total of **10%** of the overall grade for the course.

Short Midterm Paper: Students will write a 2-3-page analysis midterm paper. This paper will be based on one of the posts from the weekly response dialogues. Students will revise one of these dialogues into an analysis paper. The paper must have a clear thesis and argument. It should not have any fluff or filler; the professor will be its intended reader, so there is no need to introduce the texts or summarize the plot. Outside sources are not necessary but students must support their interpretations with textual evidence. They are encouraged to develop and expand the original blog postings on these texts, but if their interpretation has changed significantly, students are welcome to completely revise their position. In any case, students must include the corresponding blog posts when they submit their paper worth **10%** of the final mark.

Group Presentations: Students are expected to present (**no more than 30 minutes**) on an example of sex on the small screen—either home movies, television, or the internet—each group will choose one example to present in relation to one of the topics discussed in the class. The groups will consist of 3-4 students. Students will receive a group mark for organization and overall presentation (including visual, i.e. Powerpoint) (**20%**), and an individual mark for the brief presentation of each member of the group (**10%**) for a total of **30%**.

Abstract, Bibliography, and Outline: In advance of writing a final paper, students will be asked to submit an abstract (examples will be given in class) that includes a clear thesis, a bibliography with **five (5)** sources you expect to use (MLA style), and a clear but brief outline. (5% for abstract/thesis, 2.5% for bibliography in proper MLA format, 2.5% for outline for a total of **10%**).

Final 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 the student's choice. Students are encouraged to discuss possible topics with the professor. The final paper makes up **30%** of the final grade.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) 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 that 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 that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy 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 direct 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 [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

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 content author(s) 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 [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) 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.

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 [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student’s level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82

<p>Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.</p>	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72
<p>Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.</p>	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
<p>Failure.</p>	F	0.0	0-59