Course Description

Postfeminism is an ambiguous and often contradictory term whose very indeterminacy speaks to the difficulties in understanding contemporary relationships between feminism, femininity, citizenship and identity. Positioned simultaneously as a backlash against feminism, a testament to achieved gender equality, as reclamation of traditional feminine values and a sign of female success, postfeminism’s significance is widely felt even as its specific meanings and cultural effects appear unclear.

This class will examine postfeminism’s relationship to feminism and femininity, situating all three as historically and culturally significant manifestations of the female self. Closely linked to the development of neoliberalism with its emphasis on self-reliance, choice and privatization, postfeminism is largely a product of consumer culture and mass media and as such has particular consequences for feminine identities and gender relations. This course will look at popular women’s media from the makeover show, to fashion magazines and blogs, chick films and television drama to explore how they manage tradition and promote a more privatized and commercial feminine self, negotiating the relationship between family responsibilities and more laissez faire ideas of female success and self-actualization.

Course Objectives/Learning Goals

At the end of the class, you should have a deeper understanding of the following:

- The historically contingent nature of feminism and femininity and the implications for popular understanding of sexuality, gender and sexual difference.
- The relationship between femininity, feminism and the marketplace, particularly in terms of their relationships to neoliberalism and consumer culture.
- How culture and media establish inherently contradictory gender ideals that provoke further introspection and concepts of the feminine self as a continual work in progress.
• Why and how feminism is positioned as both common sense and a repressive discourse in much popular culture.

• The major features of postfeminism and their relationship to feminism, femininity, consumer culture, neoliberalism and globalization.

• The significance of individuality for postfeminism and neoliberalism and its political, social and cultural implications as well as its ramifications for media and consumer culture.

**Required Texts**

The following books are required and are available at the NYU Book Center:

Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (eds.), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*

Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*


Other required readings are marked with an asterisk (*). These will be available on NYU Classes.

*Readings are listed for the week they will be discussed in class—ensure you have completed them by these dates.*

**Course Requirements**

You will be evaluated on participation and the following written assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation, Attendance:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1 (5-7 pages):</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2 (6-8 pages):</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (6-8 pages):</td>
<td>30%</td>
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All assignments should all be typed, double-spaced in an acceptable 12-point font (Times, Palatino) with 1-inch margins.
Presentations

Each week, two-three students will give brief presentations on the readings (either one reading of your choice or a presentation about the issues the readings bring up). You should also bring in three questions for class discussion. These presentations are worth 10% of your grade.

Participation/Discussion and Attendance Policies

Participation and Discussion are required. Although I will give a short lecture each day, this is not a lecture class as such, so you should come to class having studied the readings and be prepared to contribute to class. Classes include material not covered in the readings, screenings, video clips, discussion and in-class exercises.

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY and will be taken at the beginning of class. Not attending class will severely damage your grade unless you have a well-documented reason for your absence such as religious holidays/observations, sickness or health-related appointments, bereavement, family problems.

More than TWO late arrivals during the semester will affect your participation grade.

No cell phone or internet use during class, including screenings unless it is for class related materials—like searching for relevant information online.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves presenting somebody else’s work as your own. It is extremely serious: a form of theft, fraud and deception.

Plagiarism includes—but is not limited to:
- Downloading a paper from the internet.
- Copying material from the internet, from a book or some other source and presenting it as your own.
- Asking someone to write a paper for you (or writing one for someone else).
- Collaborating on an assignment in such a way that you and your friend both have the same paper or answers.
- Poor citation protocol.
- Confusion about the way you reference someone else’s ideas.

There will be no tolerance for plagiarism in this class. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please speak to me or email me. If in doubt, cite your source—whether it is a website, a book, an article or something said in class. Please familiarize yourself with NYU and Gallatin’s policies on this very important matter.
Late Papers

Late work will only be accepted if you have contacted me in advance and have a valid reason like a religious holiday, sickness, family problems or other unexpected disasters. Please let me know when you will be able to complete the work and keep in touch with me should any eventuality prevent you from completing work on time or coming to class.

Incompletes

As with late work, incompletes will be given only to students who have contacted me in advance (where possible) and have valid reasons for not completing the course work on time (illness, family problems, unexpected disasters). Students taking incompletes should also contact me to discuss a reasonable schedule for finishing the course. Please consult the Gallatin website for the school’s policy on Incompletes for more information.

Use of Laptops/Tablets

Laptops are permitted in class but ONLY for course-related activities like taking notes and looking up relevant examples online. They must NOT be used for google chat, IM, email, Facebook, shopping, game playing, etc.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Friday 9/5: Course Introduction.
No readings assigned

Friday 9/12: Feminisms: Waves, Generations and Backlash
Screenings: Clips from Sex and the City, Bridget Jones’ Diary

Friday 9/19: Feminisms and Femininities
Readings: Gill and Scharff, pp. 1-20, 117-133, 279-292, McRobbie, pp. 24-53
Screenings: Clips from Girls, Bachelorette

Friday 9/26: TITLES FOR PAPER ONE POSTED ON NYU CLASSES

Friday, 10/3: Femininity’s Historical and Social Contexts: Consumer Culture and Neoliberalism
Screenings: Clips from Confessions of a Shopaholic, American Horror Story: Murder House, Breaking Bad

Friday 10/10: The Girl: Youth and Postfeminist Femininities
Screenings: Clips from LOL, New Girl
PAPER ONE DUE IN CLASS

Friday/17: Nostalgia and the Domestic Ideal
Screening: Clips from Mad Men, Downton Abbey

Friday 10/24: Work and Feminine Citizenship
Screenings: Clips from The Bletchley Circle, Scandal,
Friday 10/31: Bodies I: Makeovers, Contingency and Neoliberal Citizenship
Readings: McRobbie, pp. 124-149, **Inna Arzumanova, “Faking Femininity: Masquerade and Epic Theatre in Fashion TV’s Lesson,” *Valerie Walkerdine and Jessica Ringrose, “Regulating the Abject: The TV Makeover as Site of Neo-Liberal Reinvention Towards Bourgeois Femininity”
Screenings: Clips from What Not To Wear
TITLES FOR ESSAY TWO ON NYU CLASSES

Friday 11/7: Bodies II: Fashion and the Female Gaze
Screening: Clips from The Devil Wears Prada

Friday 11/14: Marriage and Motherhood
Readings: Negra, pp. 15-46, Gill and Scharff, pp. 21-36, 68-82
Screening: Clips from Say Yes to the Dress, American Horror Story
PAPER TWO DUE IN CLASS

Friday, 11/21: Postfeminism, Female Sexuality and the Mainstreaming of Porn
Screenings: Clips from The Girls Next Door, The Secret Diary of a Call Girl

Friday 11/28: No Class—Thanksgiving Break

Friday, 12/5: Online Femininity: Self-Expression, Self-Help and the Project of the Self

Friday 12/12: Chick Flicks and Romance
Screenings: TBA

PROVISIONAL DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER 12/19