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.

• The influence of girls, youth and girlhood on contemporary femininity and popular and academic feminisms.

**Required Texts**

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


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>Component</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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<td>Paper 2 (6-8 pages):</td>
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<td>Final Paper (6-8 pages):</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.

**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 1/29: Course Introduction.
No readings assigned

Friday 2/5: Feminisms: Waves, Generations and Backlash
Screenings: Clips from Sex and the City, Bridget Jones’ Diary

Friday 2/12: Feminisms and Femininities
Screenings: Clips from Girls

TITLES FOR PAPER ONE POSTED ON NYU CLASSES

Friday 2/19: Femininity’s Historical and Social Contexts: Consumer Culture and Neoliberalism
Screenings: Clips from Confessions of a Shopaholic, Breaking Bad

Friday, 2/26: The Girl: Youth and Postfeminist Femininities
Screenings: Clips from New Girl, 30 Rock and others TBA

PAPER ONE DUE IN CLASS

Friday 3/4: Nostalgia, the Idealization of Domesticity and the Domestic Ideal
Screening: Clips from Mad Men, Downton Abbey
Friday 3/11: Work and Feminine Citizenship  
**Readings:** Negra, pp. 86-116, McRobbie, pp. 54-93, *Suzanne Leonard, “’I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here:’ Adultery, Boredom and the ‘Working Girl’ in Twenty-First Century American Cinema”  
**Screenings:** Clips from The Bletchley Circle, Scandal.

Friday 3/18: SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

Friday 3/25: Bodies I: Makeovers, Contingency and Neoliberal Citizenship  
**Screenings:** Clips from What Not To Wear  
**TITLES FOR ESSAY TWO ON NYU CLASSES**

Friday 4/1: NO CLASS: Moya is presenting at the SCMS conference in Atlanta

Friday 4/8: NO CLASS: Moya is giving a keynote address at a conference in Detroit

Friday 4/15: Bodies II: Fashion and the Female Gaze  
**Screening:** Clips from The Devil Wears Prada

Friday 4/22: Marriage  
**Screenings:** Clips from Say Yes to the Dress, Bride Wars  
**PAPER TWO DUE IN CLASS**

Friday 4/29: Motherhood  
**Screening:** Clips from American Horror Story  
**QUESTIONS FOR FINAL PAPER ON NYU CLASSES**

Friday, 5/6: Online Femininity: Self-Expression, Self-Help and the Project of the Self  

**PROVISIONAL DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER 5/14/16**