

critical theories of pornography

MC0297 ~ independent research

Brown University Humanities Center Working Group

Spring 2005 ~ Mondays 1-3 p.m. / 82 Waterman ~ (screen) Wednesdays 5:30 p.m. / 155 George

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textbooks: For everyone's convenience, the majority of readings have been selected from these anthologies. We plan to make most additional required essays available electronically on our webct site.

Pamela Church Gibson. More Dirty Looks: Gender, Pornography, and Power. London: British Film Institute, 2004. [MDL]

An expansion of Dirty Looks (1993), this excellent anthology is a diverse, theoretically-oriented overview of the field. It includes essays by renowned thinkers like Linda Williams, Lynda Nead, Laura Kipnis, and Richard Dyer, as well as timely and provocative new work.

Linda Williams. Porn Studies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. [PS]

All previously unpublished work, much of it by past participants in Linda Williams' graduate seminar on pornography (plus herself, Constance Penley, Eric Schaefer, Tom Waugh, and others). Also contains an invaluable annotated bibliography.

Drucilla Cornell. Feminism and Pornography. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. [F&P]

THE anthology on pornography and the culture wars as well as its broader intersections with issues of gender, imperialism/globalization, civil rights, etc. Includes primary sources (much Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin) and criticism and prose by greats such as Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Rey Chow, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker.

principle of selection: The overall structure of this course is geared to breadth rather than depth, touching on key topics across the emerging (even, apparently, trendy) discipline of porn studies. Almost any week or two here, that is, could be expanded into a course in its own right. Given the wealth of material available, we have resisted the temptation to make this syllabus into a comprehensive bibliography, and have instead focused on selecting a limited and feasible amount of readings intended to stimulate thought and discussion rather than provide full coverage. For some weeks, we have also listed supplementary works, but have tried to restrict these to core theoretical perspectives that we'd like to keep in the orbit of this project (rather than inventorying more similar essays). We may add to the supplemental portion of the syllabus as our ideas develop.

This syllabus is subject to collaborative revision as the semester progresses.

screen and web: A similarly miniscule fraction of the vast amount of available material, these selections are again intended primarily to provide common ground for discussion. Note that, because of the way meetings are scheduled, the screenings on any given week generally relate to the readings/web for the following week (though the connections are not always so exact).

writing requirements (for credit): Weekly responses to the readings and a final paper.

companion blog: <http://scopophile.livejournal.com>

working group guests: We are inviting several experts to join us for special sessions, and will announce the final schedule separately.

readings:

I. DESIRE and DISCIPLINE

1/31 ~ histories of pornography

- Lynn Hunt, "Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800" [F&P] (21)
- Andrea Friedman, "Sadists and Sissies: Anti-Pornography Campaigns in Cold War America" *Gender & History*, Vol. 15 Issue 2 (Aug. 2003), pp. 201-228.
- Carolyn Dean, "Sexuality, Obscenity Law, and Violence in the United States, 1950-1994" in *Sexuality and Modern Western Culture*

supplementary:

- Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, "Contextualizing the Sexuality Debates: A Chronology" and "Censorship in the Name of Feminism" in *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1995.

screen:

- *Behind the Green Door* (1972, 71 min.)
- *Deep Throat* (1972, 62 min.)

web: deltaofvenus.com, retrolaunch.com

2/7 ~ porn studies?

- Jennifer Wicke, "Through a Gaze Darkly: Pornography's Academic Market" [MDL] (12)
- Linda Williams, "Porn Studies: Proliferating Pornographies On/Scene: An Introduction" [PS] (21)
- Pamela Church Gibson, "Preface: Porn Again? Or Why the Editor Might Have Misgivings" [MDL] (5)
- Linda Williams, "Second Thoughts on *Hard Core*: American Obscenity Law and the Scapegoating of Deviance" [MDL] (9)

screen:

- *Belladonna: The Connoisseur* [sic] (or other Belladonna-directed film) *
- Belladonna segment on *Dateline @*

web: juliamovies.com

2/14 ~ **Hard Core**

- Linda Williams, “Speaking Sex: ‘The Indiscreet Jewels’” and “Prehistory: The ‘Frenzy of the Visible’” [first two chapters of Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”] (55)
- Freud, “A Child is Being Beaten”

supplementary:

- Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality
- Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1
- more of Hard Core (specific chapters are recommended in subsequent weeks)

screen:

- *The Adventures of Buttman* (1989, 120 min.) * +
- Breillat film (TBA -- Genie)

web: cyborganize.livejournal.com/friends

2/21 ~ **desire and knowledge**

[holiday weekend; no classes M-T]

- Paul Willemen, “For a Pornoscape” [MDL] (15)
- Gertrud Koch, “The Body’s Shadow Realm” [MDL] (14)
- Drucilla Cornell, “Pornography’s Temptation” [F&P] (16)
- Ara Osterweil, “Andy Warhol’s *Blow Job*: Toward the Recognition of a Pornographic Avant Garde” [PS] (21)

supplementary:

- Arnold I. Davidson, “Foucault, Psychoanalysis, and Pleasure” [in Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis]
- Laplanche, Essays on Otherness
- Linda Williams, “Fetishism and Hard Core: Marx, Freud, and the ‘Money Shot’” [Hard Core]
- Marx on commodity fetishism

screen:

- *Let Me Tellya ‘bout White Chicks* (Dark Bros.) #
- *Jack’s Digital Playground* + (or other mainstream porn)

web: google.com/search?q=porn

2/28 ~ **power and perversion**

- Nguyen Tan Hoang, “The Resurrection of Brandon Lee: The Making of a Gay Asian American Porn Star” [PS] (32)
- Linda Williams, “Skin Flicks on the Racial Border: Pornography, Exploitation, and Interracial Lust” [PS] (32)
- Anne McClintock, “Maid to Order: Commercial S/M and Gender Power” [MDL] (13)

- Laura Kipnis, “She-Male Fantasies and the Aesthetics of Pornography” [MDL] (9)

supplementary:

- Linda Williams, “Power, Pleasure, and Perversion: Sadomasochistic Film Pornography” [[Hard Core](#)]
- Kobena Mercer, “Just Looking for Trouble: Robert Mapplethorpe and Fantasies of Race” [F&P] (referenced in Williams above)

screen:

- *Not a Love Story* (documentary)
- *Inside Deep Throat* (documentary, 2005)

web: bdsmcafe.com

II. FEMINISM, RIGHTS, IDENTITY

3/7 ~ anti-porn feminism

- Andrea Dworkin, “Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality” [F&P] (20)
- Catharine A. McKinnon, “Only Words” [F&P] (21)
- Gloria Steinem, “The Real Linda Lovelace” in Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography (Diana E.H. Russell) Teachers College Press, 1993

supplementary:

- Catharine A. McKinnon, “Not a Moral Issue” [F&P]
- Diana E. H. Russell, “Pornography and Rape: A Causal Model” [F&P]

screen:

- *Girls Gone Wild...*
- *Pam and Tommy Lee: Hardcore and Uncensored #*

web: ultrapasswords.com

3/14 ~ responses to anti-porn feminism

- Wendy Brown, “The Mirror of Pornography” [F&P] (18)
- Judith Butler, “The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess” [F&P] (18)
- Lynne Segal, “Only the Literal: The Contradictions of Anti-Pornography Feminism” [MDL] (10)
- Gayle Rubin, “Misguided, Dangerous, and Wrong” in Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures (Alison Assiter, Avedon Carol) Pluto Press, 1993

supplementary:

- Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”
- Linda Williams, “Conclusion” [[Hard Core](#)]
- Nadine Strossen, “Posing for Pornography: Coercion or Consent?” in Defending Pornography

screen:

- *All About Steve*, Chi-Chi LaRue *
- *Sugar High, Glitter City*, Sir Video (2001, 70 min.) @

web: janesguide.com, counterpunch.org/hartley02022005.html

3/21 ~ **queer porn**

- Heather Butler, “What Do You Call a Lesbian with Long Fingers? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography” [PS] (25)
- Richard Dyer, “Idol Thoughts: Orgasm and Self-Reflexivity in Gay Pornography” [MDL] (8)
- Rich Cante and Angelo Restivo, “The Cultural-Aesthetic Specificities of All-male Moving Image Pornography” [PS] (22)
- Tim Dean, chapter on barebacking porn

supplementary:

- Becki L. Ross, “It’s Merely Designed for Sexual Arousal’: Interrogating the Indefensibility of Lesbian Smut” [F&P] (42)
- Pat Califia, Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex

screen:

- *Three Daughters*, Femme (1986) *
- Tristan Taormino’s *Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women* @ * +

web: cyber-dyke.net, altporn.net

[SPRING BREAK]

week of 4/4 ~ **feminist pornographers**

- Rebecca Schneider, The Explicit Body in Performance (selections TBA)
 - Chris Straayer, “The Seduction of Boundaries: Feminist Fluidity in Annie Sprinkle’s Art/Education/Sex” [MDL] (10)
 - Candida Royalle, “Porn in the USA” [F&P] (10)
 - Tristan Taormino, “On Being a Buttgirl,” “I’m a Porn Star” and “Why I Love Porn” in True Lust (15)
- in Jill Nagle, Whores and Other Feminists (New York: Routledge, 1997):
- Nina Hartley, “In the Flesh: A Porn Star’s Journey” (8)
 - Jill Nagle, “First Ladies of Feminist Porn: A Conversation with Candida Royalle and Debi Sundahl” (10)

supplementary:

- Linda Williams, “Sequels and Re-Visions: ‘A Desire of One’s Own’” [Hard Core]

• Coming Attractions: The Making of an X-Rated Video and Porn: Myths for the Twentieth Century: interviews compiled by Robert Stoller, a psychoanalyst cum ethnographer

screen: Tristan Taormino lecture, no screening

web: puckerup.com, pornblography.com

III. POSTMODERN PORN

week of 4/11 ~ **the domestication of porn**

- Jane Juffer, “Introduction: From the Profane to the Mundane” in At Home with Pornography: Women, Sex, and Everyday Life (31)
- Constance Penley, “Crackers and Whackers: The White Trashing of Porn” [PS] (20)
- Chuck Kleinhans, “Virtual Child Porn: The Law and the Semiotics of the Image” [MDL] (9)
- Minette Hillyer, “Sex in the Suburban: Porn, Home Movies, and the Live Action Performance of Love in *Pam and Tommy Lee: Hardcore and Uncensored*” [PS] (21)

supplementary:

- more of At Home with Pornography
- Linda Williams, “Generic Pleasures: Number and Narrative” [Hard Core] (comparison of porn and movie musicals)

screen:

- *Barely Legal, Naughty College School Girls*
- *Frontline* on porn

web: pervscan.com, perverted-justice.com

week of 4/18 ~ **surveillance, simulacra, cyborgs**

- Franklin Melendez, “Video Pornography, Visual Pleasure, and the Return of the Sublime” [PS] (20)
- Amy Villarejo, “Defycategory.com, or the Place of Categories in Intermedia” [MDL] (7)
- Jane Gaines, “Machines That Make the Body Do Things” [MDL] (10)

supplementary:

- Jodi Dean, “Celebrity’s Drive” in Publicity’s Secret
- Ursula Frohne, “‘Screen Tests’: Media Narcissism, Theatricality, and the Internalized Observer” (and various other articles) in CTRL [SPACE]

screen:

- *Shock*, Michael Ninn (1995, 120 min.) # * +

web: isabellacam.com, selfpics.org

week of 4/25 ~ **cyberporn and the cybersubject**

- Zabet Patterson, “Going On-Line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era” [PS] (17)
- Stacy Gillis, “Cybersex” [MDL] (7)
- Wendy Chun, “Screening Pornography” in Control and Freedom (forthcoming)

supplementary:

- Frederick S. Lane III, Obscene Profits: The Entrepreneurs of Pornography in the Cyber Age
- Laurence O’Toole, Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire
- essays in “Part One: The Communications Decency Act” in Pornography: Private Right or Public Menace (Baird & Rosenbaum) Prometheus Books, 1998

screen: (anime)

- *Cool Devices 1-4 @*
- various @

web: porn-a-licious.com

[final exam period ends 5.20]