

HS 2019 – M.A. Seminar
Feminine Pursuits of Happiness
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen
Thursdays, 16:15 – 18:00

(1) **Sept. 19** Introduction

(2) **Sept 26** Group work audio-visual essay

New Women of the Victorian Age

(3) **Oct 3** *Sister Carrie*. Theodore Dreiser (1900)

(4) **Oct 10** *The Custom of the Country*. Edith Wharton (1913)

(5) **Oct 17** *The Song of the Lark*. Willa Cather (1915)

Feminine Emancipation and the Two World Wars

(6) **Oct 24** *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Anita Loos (1925)

(7) **Oct 31** *Passing*. Nella Larsen (1929)

(8) **Nov 7** SPECIAL SESSION: How to write the seminar paper
Prepare a thesis for this session. You can still change your mind for the final paper.

(9) **Nov 14** *Christopher Strong*. Dorothy Arzner (RKO 1933)

Melodrama and its Revisions

(10) **Nov 21** *Hard, Fast and Beautiful*. Ida Lupino (RKO 1951)

(11) **Nov 28** *Mildred Pierce*. Todd Haynes (HBO 2011)

(12) **Dec 5** *Big Little Lies*. David E. Kelley, Season 1 (Warner Bros. 2017).

(13) **Dec 12** *Paradise*. Toni Morrison (1997)

Wrap up: New Images of New Women

(14) **Dec 19** *Girls*. Lena Dunham, Season 1 & 2 (HBO 2012)

Course Requirements

Portfolio

Thesis Papers

All students must prepare **a preliminary discussion for 10 of the seminar sessions** (500 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. Their purpose is for you to prepare for each session, so that you can actively participate in the class discussion. They will also help you draw connections between the sessions and help you prepare for the final paper. And they are a place for you to test your ideas. These thesis papers should – as the title says – entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments or associations. Each should present an argument; indeed, help you practice your skills at argumentation. At the same time, given that they are also the place for you to raise questions you would like us to engage with in the seminar, they will facilitate class discussion and allow us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for each session. The thesis paper will also count towards your portfolio and, thus, is compulsory. Since these thesis papers are part of your portfolio, not handing each in **on time** will mean it will not be counted and this, in turn, lowers your portfolio grade. For the **last session**, please **compile all your thesis statements using the template provided on OLAT** and hand them in as one document. If you want to edit them, to reflect the class discussion, the discussion in the tutorial and the thinking it has provoked, you are allowed to do so. It is this set of papers that will be graded.

Audio-Visual Project

The goal of the audio-visual project is to reflect on photographic, cinematic, and textual material and formulate arguments in audio-visual rather than textual form in order to contextualize the subject for your fellow students. When creating your essay, consider how editing and reconfiguring image and sound opens up avenues of critique, deconstruction, and reflection – how it allows you to draw parallels and connections, but also posit juxtapositions, in ways that present the material in a new light and connect to the overall topic of the course.

The audio-visual project conceived as **a two-part group work**.

1. You will produce an audio-visual project as a group (5-10 minutes long) that you will present in class. The audio-visual essay **must be made available five days in advance** so that those commenting on it (see below) have time to do so. Please clear with Morgane Ghilardi during the second session how to circulate your essay to all members of the seminar.

Possible subjects: “Late Victorian Culture and Gender”; “Gender in the Jazz Age”; “Race and Ethnic Hybridity”; “Women Directors in the Hollywood Studio System”; “Female Stars in the Interwar Period in Hollywood”; “Mildred Pierce – the original novel by James M. Cain and the original film by Michael Curtiz”; “Melodrama and Female Desire”; “Melodrama and Queer Culture”; “Quality TV as a New Format”; “Gendering the American Dream”; “Race and the American Dream”. You can come up with another topic, but if you do so, please clear it with Prof. Bronfen.

2. Each group will be assigned as reviewers for another group’s audio-visual project. You will produce a two-page response paper on one of the audio-visual projects in which you should formulate comments and questions. While you will present this orally in class, **a written version will be part of your portfolio** and should be handed in to Prof. Bronfen – in paper form – **no later than one week after the discussion took place**.

Final Seminar Essay

The essay (8000 words) should evolve from the materials read and viewed in this research seminar, while taking the class discussion into an original direction. You will be expected to do thorough research on your subject. Please use the session “How to Write a Seminar Paper”, to practice preparing your argument. Please also discuss the final outline of your paper with either Prof. Bronfen or her assistants, Morgane Ghilardi and Hannah Schoch. **The deadline for handing in your essay is 1 March, 2020.** Please hand in a hardcopy at the department office AND send a PDF version of the paper to electronic version to Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch). She will check it for plagiarism.

Final Grade

The **portfolio counts 50%** toward the final grade. The **final paper counts 50%** toward the final grade.