

Western University
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research
WS 2205F Making Men: Critical Studies in Masculinity (Fall 2017)

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Lecture:

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We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron (Neutral), and Wendat peoples.

Course Description: What is masculinity? This course interrogates masculinity as a social construction through an interdisciplinary approach that combines critical perspectives from multiple academic disciplines. By approaching this question from these positions, we consider the differences between masculinity and masculinities from the perspective of women's studies and feminist theory. Throughout the course we aim to decentre, problematize, confront, analyze, deconstruct, expose, investigate, demystify, and imagine alternatives to masculinities that are composed by social, cultural, racial, political, economic, and historical forces. Our main goal is to critically read discourses, images, and ideals of masculinities that are represented and expressed in film, television, literature, poetry, music, advertising, the internet, social media, politics, the military, education, sports, and other sites. We begin the course by surveying theoretical and critical literature across the field of masculinities studies to build a foundation to support critical readings. With this foundation in place and a set of working definitions, the course examines modes for critically reading masculinities in a wide range of media, themes, issues, problems, and concerns.

Course Objectives:

- Articulate ideas both orally and in writing in ways appropriate to the context.
- Read carefully and with attention to disciplinary, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Locate, evaluate, and critique sources and methods using appropriate disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary research skills and tools.
- Apply rigorous critical thinking and analysis, engage productively with new ideas.
- Challenge received ways of thinking, from multiple, relevant disciplinary perspectives.
- Recognize and make nuanced distinctions across ideas and/or areas of study that are productive, imaginative, and/or problem-solving.
- Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the breadth and diversity of feminist approaches.
- Develop ethical and critical citizenship skills, and the ability to engage with diverse scholarly and everyday communities, local and/or global.
- Develop skills as active and self-directed learners to re-imagine the social, cultural, and political world.

Course Website: All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>

Required Texts:

- Brian Ascalon Roley. *American Son*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2001. [novel]
- All other required readings available on OWL – note some suggested available there, too

Media Texts: the lecture schedule includes a number of clips from film and other media texts. Students are not expected to view these media texts in their entirety—but they may choose to do so and focus on media texts within their final essay. Clips and images presented in lecture will be made available within PowerPoint presentations and uploaded to OWL, and some clips may be made available through an external online source.

Evaluation

Participation (in-class and online): 15%
 Thematic reflection [DUE October 3]: 15%
 Final essay [DUE November 28]: 35%

Online forum posts: 20%
 Media reflection [DUE October 31]: 15%

Participation (in-class and online) 15%: students have the opportunity to contribute to discussions within lecture and as responses to online forum posts. Expectations for participation will be outlined thoroughly during the first lecture and a PowerPoint presentation containing this information will be upload to OWL following the lecture. Students have the opportunity to regularly offer insights and perspectives that demonstrate an effort to engage critically with the ideas presented by any given text as well as the ability to situate these ideas within socio-cultural contexts or to outline constructive alternatives to these ideas. The goal of this assignment is to provide students multiple platforms to discuss and explore course materials.

Online forum posts 20%: each week students will be given a set of questions to consider before the upcoming lecture – these will be discussed at the end of each lecture and a PowerPoint presentation containing these questions will be uploaded to OWL following the lecture. Students will then post their thoughts in relation to the question(s) and readings for the upcoming lecture by 11:59pm each Sunday. Students are then encouraged to respond (as participation) to the posts of other students before or following lecture. The goal of this assignment is to generate a working sense of the material prior to lecture and to open up the potential for an ongoing discussion following the lecture. Note: forum posts need to adhere to a word count of 150 to 250 words each week.

Thematic reflection [DUE October 7] 15%: students are required to write a reflection of 1000 words (12 point font, double-spaced, 2.5cm margins) that situates any of the assigned readings from the first four weeks (excluding the *New York Times* article) within the context of a contemporary issue, problem, or concern. Students are welcome to incorporate stories from news sources and/or personal observations in order to examine how the focus of a reading offers the capacity to critique, question, or problematize aspects of our socio-cultural milieu. The goal of this assignment is to bridge theory and praxis by thinking about the links between our course materials and our lived realities.

Media reflection [DUE October 31] 15%: students are required to write a second reflection of 1000 words (12 point font, double-spaced, 2.5cm margins) that analyzes the representation or expression of masculinities in a clip from a film, television episode, commercial, sports highlight, or music video on YouTube (students wanting to choose a clip from outside of these choices must receive permission from the instructor). Using critical reading skills developed during the course, students will interrogate the images and discourses presented by their chosen clip (a link must be provided) through a consideration of the issues and readings from the course materials. Students are asked to limit the clip to a maximum of five minutes. The goal of this assignment is to encourage increased critical and speculative engagement with images of masculinities that saturate our popular media.

Final essay [DUE November 28] 35%: students are required to write an essay of 2500-3000 words (12 point font, double-spaced, 2.5cm margins) that examines key issues, themes, and discourses from the course materials. Students will be given a list of potential topics in lecture on November 7th, but students wishing to propose their own topic may do so as long as they seek approval from the instructor by November 14th. The goal of this assignment is to demonstrate competence in essay writing and the ability to think critically about the social construction of masculinities.

Policies

Assignment submission policy: Students must submit all assignments online within the appropriate section of our course website: <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

Medical Policy: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see:

<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg117.html>
and (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>).

Students seeking accommodation for medical illness of work worth less than 10% of the total course grade will not need medical documentation for such accommodation, but the instructor must be made aware of the situation within one week (seven days) of the deadline—if a deadline is missed on a Sunday there should be communication before the following Sunday.

Late Submission Policy: Students are expected to hand in assignments on the deadlines outlined in the syllabus. This is an important practice because it prevents the accumulation of assignments, which have the potential to be overwhelming. However, should personal situations arise that are outside the confines of the medical policy above, students will receive a penalty of 2% a day for late papers (Monday to Friday, excluding weekends). Students must notify the instructor immediately if they are about to miss or have missed a deadline so that the instructor can help generate a plan for successfully completing the assignment in a timely manner.

Classroom behaviour: Students are expected to respect the views of other students and work towards fostering a community that foregrounds the discussion of ideas and a willingness to critically respond to materials or positions presented in lecture, readings, as well as the contributions of all participants. Topics and material may be challenging in certain contexts and instead of launching personal polemics—such as accusing another participant of embodying a negative viewpoint. We will aim to generate an inclusive

environment that promotes and develops ongoing discussions with the capacity to critique any viewpoint in question. This will be done in an effort to establishing opportunities to increase awareness of privileges, shortcomings, hierarchies, differences, and limitations with our overall goal being to strive for equality in all forms and manifestations. It is often easy to dismiss and dispel those that have yet to become aware of a view we strongly believe in, but this easy pathway can foster the festering of misinformed resentment and toxic emotions. Rather than dismissing and dispelling, we will work as a community to put forth a genuine effort to speak on behalf of those views we strongly believe in, as opposed to speaking against others, as a means of advocating for increased awareness instead of bolstering boundaries and ostracizing participants.

Furthermore, it is important that students understand that certain materials in this course may contain material some find shocking or offensive. Your enrollment in this course indicates your awareness of this and your willingness to approach these ideas and texts in a critical manner.

Turnitin: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>.)" (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

Academic Offences: "Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>" (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

Note for students with disabilities: Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

Academic Accommodation: Academic Counselling asks that students seeking Academic Accommodation make their request within 28 days of the missed assignment.

Electronic devices in lecture: Students are encouraged to take notes using a method that is best for them while not causing disruptions to the rest of the participants. Therefore, students are welcome to use laptops, tablets, cellphones, or other devices during lecture, but they should refrain from behaviour—such as watching videos—that can be distracting to others.

Electronic devices in tests and exams: N/A

Lecture Schedule

→ **Week One (September 12):** Introduction – Masculinities Studies and Feminist Theory

- Reading: Robyn Wiegman. "Unmaking: Men and Masculinity in Feminist Theory." In Judith Kegan Gardiner (ed.) *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002. 31-59.
- Suggested: Jessica Bennett. "[A Master's Degree in ... Masculinity?](#)" *The New York Times*. Originally published: August 8, 2015.
- Media: *Casablanca* (Curtiz 1942), *Rio Bravo* (Hawks 1959), & *Dirty Harry* (Siegel 1971),

→ **Week Two (September 19):** Patriarchy, Social Construction, and Violence

- Readings: R. W. Connell. "The Social Organization of Masculinity." In *Masculinities* (second edition). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. 67-92.
- David Buchbinder. "Regarding Patriarchy." In *Studying Men and Masculinities*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013. 65-96.
- Suggested: Tim Edwards. "Violence and violation: Men, masculinity and power." In *Cultures of Masculinity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. 44-63.
- Media: *Straw Dogs* (Peckinpah 1971), *Blue Steel* (Peckinpah 1989), *Good Will Hunting* (Van Sant 1997), *American Psycho* (Herron 1998), & *Rounders* (Dahl 1998)

→ **Week Three (September 26):** Cowboys, Myths, and the Crisis of Masculinity

- Readings: Michael S. Kimmel. "The Birth of the Self-Made Man." In *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006. 11-29.
- Philippa Gates. "The Myths of Masculinity." In *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006. 27-51.
- Suggested: John MacInnes. "The crisis of masculinity and the politics of identity." *The End of Masculinity*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1998. 44-60.
- Media: *High Noon* (Zinnemann 1952), *Shane* (Stevens 1953), *The Searchers* (Ford 1956), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford 1962), *Unforgiven* (Eastwood 1992), *American Beauty* (Mendes 1999) & *Fight Club* (Fincher 1999)

→ **Week Four (October 3):** Theoretical Approaches

- Readings: Todd Reeser. "Theorizing Masculinity." In *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 17-54.
- Suggested Judith Halberstram. "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity Without Men." In *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998. 1-43.
- Media: *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz 1945), *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (Johnson 1956), *Written on the Wind* (Sirk 1956), *The Ballad of Little Jo* (Greenwald 1993), *Mrs. Doubtfire* (Columbus 1993), & *Braveheart* (Gibson 1995)

*** READING WEEK (October 9-13) ***

→ **Week Five (October 17):** Critical Readings – From the Male Gaze to Hypermasculinity

- Readings: Laura Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* (1975) 16. 3: 6-18.
- Steve Neale. "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema." *Screen* (1983) 24.6: 2-16.
- Yvonne Tasker, "Action Heroes in the 1980s: The Limits of 'Masculinity'." *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993. 132-152.
- Suggested: Susan Jeffords. "Hard Bodies: The Regan Heroes." In *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Regan Era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994. 24-63.
- Media: *Out of the Past* (Tourneur 1947), *The Big Heat* (Lang 1953), *Vertigo* (Hitchcock 1958), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg 1981), *First Blood* (Kotcheff 1982), *The Terminator* (Cameron 1984), & *Die Hard* (McTiernan 1988)

→ **Week Six (October 24):** Race and Masculinities I

- Readings: Brian Ascalon Roley. *American Son*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2001. [novel]
- Eleanor Ty. "Abjection, Masculinity, and Violence in Brian Roley's *American Son* and Han Ong's *Fixer Chao*." *MELUS* 29.1 (March 2004): 119-36.
- Suggested: Alfredo Mirande. *Hombres Y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.
- Media: *Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa 1954) *Enter the Dragon* (Clouse 1973), *Chungking Express* (Wong 1994), *Amores Perros* (Iñárritu 2000), *Y Tu Mamá También* (Cuarón 2001), & *The Namesake* (Nair 2006)

→ **Week Seven (October 31): Race and Masculinities II**

- Readings: Manthia Diawara. "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance." *Screen 29.4* (1988): 66-79.
- Robin M. Boylorn. "From Boys to Men: Hip-Hop, Hood Films, and the Performance of Contemporary Black Masculinity." *Black Camera: An International Film Journal* 8.2 (2017): 146-164.
- bell hooks. "gangsta culture: a piece of the action." In *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2004. 15-32.
- Suggested: Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2015.
- Media: *Super Fly* (Parks Jr. 1972), *Boyz n the Hood* (Singleton 1991), *Menace II Society* (Hughes & Hughes 1993), *Clockers* (Lee 1995), *Training Day* (Fuqua 2001), *Moonlight* (Jenkins 2016), & *Fences* (Washington 2016)

→ **Week Eight (November 7): Historical and Contemporary Masculinities at War**

- Readings: Bonnie Mann. "History." *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons From the War on Terror*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. 48-66.
- Philippa Gates. "'Fighting the Good Fight:' The Real and the Moral in the Contemporary Hollywood Combat Film." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22 (2005): 297-310.
- Tim O'Brien. "The Things They Carried." [short story]
- Suggested: Robert Eberwein. *Masculinity and Sexuality in the American War Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Media: *Patton* (Schaffner 1970), *The Deer Hunter* (Cimino 1978), *Platoon* (Stone 1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick 1987), *Born on the Fourth of July* (Stone 1989), *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg 1998), *The Thin Red Line* (Malick 1998), *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow 2008), & *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow 2012)

→ **Week Nine (November 14): Gay Masculinities, Homosocial Bonding, and Homophobia**

- Readings: Tim Edwards. "Identity and desire: Gay male sexuality and masculinity." In *Cultures of Masculinity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. 70-86.
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. "Introduction." In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985. 1-20.
- Suggested: Tim Edwards. "Queering the Pitch? Gay Masculinities." In Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and R. W. Connell (eds.) *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*.

(Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004). 51-68.

Michael S. Kimmel. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." In Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (eds.) *The Masculinities Reader*. 266-87.

Media: *My Own Private Idaho* (Van Sant 1991), *Elephant* (Van Sant 2003), *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee 2005), *Superbad* (Mottola 2007), & *I Love You, Man* (Hamburg 2009)

→ Week Ten (November 21): Ecomasculinities

Readings: Greta Gaard. "Toward New EcoMasculinities, EcoGenders, and EcoSexualities." In Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen (eds.) *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 225-40.

Scott Slovic. "Taking Care: Toward an Ecomasculinist Literary Criticism?" In Mark Allister (ed.) *Eco-Man: New Perspectives on Masculinity and Nature*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004. 66-80.

select poetry Gary Snider.

Media: *Dances with Wolves* (Costner 1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (Mann 1992), *The Edge* (Tamahori 1997), *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (Kunuk 2001), *Grizzly Man* (Herzog 2006), & *Searchers* (Kunuk 2016)

→ Week Eleven (November 28): Confronting Contemporary Masculinities

Readings: Amy Calvert. "You are what you (m)eat: explorations of meat-eating, masculinity and masquerade." *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 16.1 (2014): 18-33.

Helene Shugart. "Managing Masculinities: The Metrosexual Moment." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 5.3 (2008): 280-300.

Jessica Greenebaum and Brandon Dexter. "Vegan men and hybrid masculinity." *Journal of Gender Studies* (Published online: 08 Feb. 2017): 1-12.

Media: *Zoolander* (Stiller 2001), *Super Size Me* (Spurlock 2004), *Vegucated* (Wolfson 2011), *Mansome* (Spurlock 2012), & *The Ghosts in Our Machine* (Marshall 2013)

→ **Week Twelve (December 5):** Aggrieved Entitlement and Masculinities as Creative Force

Exam Review

- Readings: Rosi Braidotti. "Post-Humanism: Life beyond the Self." In *The Posthuman*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2013. 13-54
- Suggested: Michael Kimmel. "Manufacturing Rage: The Cultural Construction of Aggrieved Entitlement." In *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of An Era*. New York, NY: Nation Books, 2013. 31-67.
- Terrance H. McDonald. "Conceptualizing an Ethology of Masculinities: Do We Know What Masculinities Can Do?" *Men and Masculinities*. (Published online: 02 Jun. 2016): 1-16.
- Media: *Falling Down* (Schumacher 1993), *Jerry Maguire* (Crowe 1996), *Office Space* (Judge 1999), *Birdman* (Iñárritu 2014), *Hell or High Water* (Mackenzie 2016), & *Nocturnal Animals* (Ford 2016)
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Women's Studies Grading Criteria

A+ (90 to 100)

One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A (80 and up)

Superior work which is clearly above average

- Challenging and specific thesis that is clearly developed • Correct and interesting sentence structure • Sophisticated writing style • Appropriate documentation
- Quotations well integrated into the text, with proper documentation • Evidence of originality or independence of thought • Provision of strong analysis • Complexity, and subtlety in approach to subject
- Well-organized with a logical development of the argument

B (70 to 79)

Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

- Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs • Correct sentence structure • Adequate documentation • Allowance for some (minor) problems such as:
- errors in factual content or interpretation • some minor errors in terminology or general writing skills • occasional lapses in clarity, including vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure • Provision of some analysis

Note: A grade in the range of 75-79 indicates an essay that borders on an A but has some significant flaw that prevents giving out the higher grade.

C (60 to 69)

Competent work, meeting requirements

- Generally correct but tends to provide more description than analysis • Tends to be too general or superficial in the handling of material • Weaknesses in argument including a descriptive thesis, a mechanical approach, lack of adequate evidence, documentation, or support • Problems with grammar or matters of style • Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression

D (50 to 59)

Fair work, minimally acceptable

- Does not provide an argument or a line of thought • Major difficulties with logical structure, and expression of ideas • Topic has not been thought through • Errors of grammar and diction interfere with understanding • Over-generalization with inadequate support, evidence, or documentation

F (49 and down)

Fail

- Assignment submitted does not apply to course
- Basic requirements of the assignment are not met

Plagiarism with intent to deceive (to be handled by the department)