**Course Goals:** This course will explore the cinematic fascination with, and anxiety about, the body as visual surface. Films will be post-1950 with an emphasis on mainstream releases and thematics relevant to gender studies and critical race and queer studies. We will be exploring the ways in which cultural expectations about the visual, and their interpolation in the filmic medium, encourage viewers to read identity by way of exterior markers. We will also examine films that endeavor to thwart this trend. Scholarly essays and film theory will help students assess how perceptions of gender, race, and sexuality are affected by these films. Every week, we will address a new film (or two) and discuss it in terms of theoretical and critical essays. By the end of the course, students should have honed analytical skills, learned how to describe the effects of a camera’s point-of-view, and developed a sense of how to write on and read films critically. Theoretical readings will expose students to psychoanalytic and philosophical approaches; as a result, students should develop intensive analytical reading skills, akin to those required in philosophy courses.

Prior knowledge of Women’s Studies and Film Studies is recommended. If you are unfamiliar with terms related to film editing, mise-en-scene, sound, and cinematography, you must purchase a copy of *Film and Form* and review it on your own. This course does not replicate the material covered in Film 150/250/351, but expects sufficient background for writing film analyses.

**Grading and Assignments:**

- Students are expected to attend all classes, with the reading for that day well prepared.
- Each week, students must hand in responses or notes on the coming week’s film(s) and required readings (totaling ten: five of each). Responses address a theoretical quandary or concept raised by the week’s material. These are 2-3 pages in length, double-spaced, typed, and must use quotes and details from the reading (these are not just gut responses). Avoid using “I” and focus on posing an argument that might serve for a formal paper (although these are not strictly formal—more like draft papers). Notes on the reading should be 2-3 pages single spaced, with spacing between quotes and points. Break out points/key scenes/quotes from the film from those on the reading AND include off-set sentences of your own analysis (in bold or italics). Both responses and notes indicate that required readings and viewings have been completed and allow you to reflect on the assignments before we begin discussion. Any of the responses may be used as a seed or draft for the final
paper, as may the student's own presentation. **Important note:** Responses/notes cannot be handed in at a later date, unless the student has special permission. You may skip two (but not both of the first two—I want to give you feedback on at least one), and may also skip the one due for the week of your presentation. If you miss one beyond that, it drops the final response/participation grade a whole letter (from an "A" to a "B," for example).

- Each student will give a formal presentation, which will be 20 minutes and should include independent research, a thesis/argument about the film, some questions and analysis that will start class discussion, and one film clip of five minutes or less. You must address and give a brief synopsis of one of the week’s required readings as well.

- There will be two formal papers (first paper, 5-7 pages; the second 7-10 pages—both use 1-3 outside refereed sources, one of which may come from the syllabus readings). These papers are the most important aspect of the course, proving that the student has learned thesis development, textual synthesis and analysis, and formal writing. You will need to turn in a brief bibliography of potential sources found in a search for scholarly sources using First Search, MLA-Bibliography, or World Cat. Not just J-Store (please!).

- *Participation is also crucial in this class; students should miss no more than one class and anyone absent for more than four risks failing the semester.* If in class discussion I discern that you haven’t seen the week’s film or done the reading, your final participation grade will be docked a full letter. So please come prepared.

**On Re-use of Work:** You may not re-use work written for another course, but, in writing your two formal papers, you may use your presentation and any of your responses written for this class.

**Grading:**
- Participation 10%
- Responses/notes 25%
- Papers (20/30) 50%
- Presentation 15%

**Required Texts:**

Other readings are posted on Blackboard. Please print out all of them and bring them to class, on designated weeks.

Films on reserve at Swem (to be viewed there, unless you watch it on your own at home)

**Recommended:**
- Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*
Schedule:

Section I: The Signifying Body

Responses are always due in class on Tuesday. After the first two responses you may choose to turn in notes for ½ of these assignments.


Sept. 23/25: *Some Like it Hot* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1959; 127 min.)
Annette Kuhn, “Sexual disguise and cinema”; Staayer, “Redressing the ‘Natural’: The Temporary Transvestite Film.” Recommended: “Introduction: Queering Screen,” Stacey and Street, QS.

Sept. 30/Oct. 2: *Boys Don’t Cry* (dir. Kimberly Pierce, 1999; 114 min.); Read from QS: Halberstam, *The Transgender Gaze in BDC*”; and all the other essays in this section: “Pass/Fail” Michele Aaron; “Risk and Queer Spectatorship” Julianne Pidduck; “Girls Still Cry,” Patricia White; “The class character of BDC,” Lisa Henderson; and “Boyz do cry: screening history’s white lies” (** don’t skip this last one, it is interesting on some omissions in the film). In your response, discuss Halberstam and mention at least 2 of these. Recommended: *The Story of Brandon Teena* (dir. Muska and Olafsdottir, 1998). Siegel “Curing Boys Don’t Cry” (on BB).

Oct. 7/9: *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990). Select your scholarly piece for the week from one of the following: “The Mirror Stage” by Lacan; *Boy I Am* (Samantha Feder, Julie Hollar, 2006; 72 minutes) documentary re: feminist/lesbian debates re: trans-ing; or “The She-man,” Chris Straayer QS.
Fall Break: No class Tuesday, Oct. 14th.

Oct. 16th: *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002). Our discussion may continue for part of the class on Oct. 21st. Readings from CTH: Choose two from: Marcia Landy “Storytelling and Information in TH’s films”; Scott Higgins’ “Orange and Blue, Desire and Loss: The Colour Score in FFH”; and/or Todd McGowan’s “Relocating Our Enjoyment of the 1950s: The Politics of Fantasy in FFH.”


Oct. 23rd: 1st Paper due in class: 5-7 pages, 1-3 refereed sources, only 1 of which can come from our syllabus. I will return these papers before 10/31 (last day to withdraw).

Section II: Body Angst/Fear of What Lies Behind the Visible


Changing Beauty:

Nov. 18/20:: *American Beauty* (dir. Sam Mendes, 1999; 121 min.). Read: Karlyn Rowe, “‘Too close for comfort’: American Beauty and the incest motif” (Response #4). Recommended: Jacqueline Furby, “Rhizomatic Time and Temporal Politics in *American Beauty.”*
Nov. 25th: *Nostalghia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983; 125 minutes); Read: James MacGillivray, “Anrei Tarkovsky’s *Madonna Del Parto.*” Recommended: Burns, “Tarkovsky’s *Nostalghia*” (or Hamid Naficy)
Nov. 27: No class; Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 2/4: *High Art* (Lisa Cholodenko, 1998; 101 minutes); Read: “Bodies in the Light: Relaxing the Imaginary in Video.” And “Guerilla in the midst: women’s cinema in the 80s” Teresa de Lauretis QS. Recommended: Linda Williams, “Film Bodies.”

**Final Paper, 7-10 pages (1-3 refereed sources) due by 3 p.m. on date of the final exam, December 16th, in my mailbox or on my door, Tucker 210.**