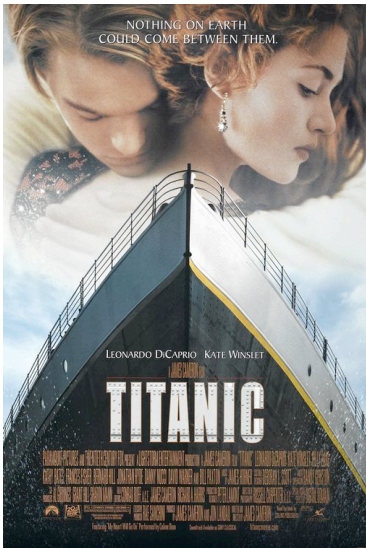


Titanic to Twilight:
A Decade of Girl-Powered Media Production, Consumption, and Text

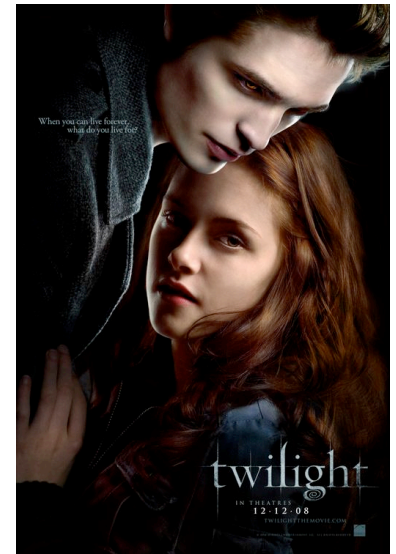
Collins Living-Learning Center Course Proposal
Spring-Serenity Duvall, School of Journalism



Course Description

One of the most notable media phenomena of the past year has been the presence of *Twilight* – at the box office, in bookstores (and clothing stores), on the internet, in countless magazines and newspapers, and on television. At the forefront of discourse surrounding the book series and film adaptation were claims of astonishment that a media product targeted at, and consumed primarily by, teen girls and young women could be so successful. Yet, people in the know – researchers, media critics, and audiences who remembered that *Titanic* was raised to blockbuster status by young women and girls – repeatedly contended that the only people surprised by the success of *Twilight* were male media producers and critics who continue to ignore or discount girl culture.

This course is designed to take an in-depth examination of *Twilight* as a starting point from which to explore contemporary media targeted at girls and to examine the culture of girl-produced media through the lens of Girl Studies, an area of interdisciplinary research that has grown steadily over the last decade. We will read articles and books that critically examine girls as producers and consumers, as well as analyze media texts that are targeted at girls. Immersion in Girl Studies also calls for reading articles in popular magazines and newspapers in order to understand the public discourse that critiques, discusses, and often dismisses girls. As you will see in the outline of topics below, we will address girl culture as a multi-media phenomenon, covering music, film, books, internet, and print media.



Learning Objectives

Each class period will be designed to address a specific topic as well as encourage specific levels of learning: knowledge acquisition and comprehension, application and analysis of ideas, and synthesis and evaluation of information. To this end, we will use a combination of mini-lectures, analysis of multi-media examples (film, advertising, television, music, etc.), discussion of readings, and written participation to better understand celebrity colonialism. The emphasis will be on experiential learning, so you will be encouraged to actively engage with the course material by taking it out of the classroom and applying it to your own media consumption.

- Goal 1: Knowledge and Comprehension
 - You will be provided with a strong background in relevant Girl Studies theory as a foundation for understanding the last decade of girl media.
 - You will learn key terms and ideas related to the study of girls and girlhood.
 - You will learn research tools for finding secondary and primary sources.

- Goal 2: Application and Analysis
 - You will learn to use Girl Studies theory and critical methods to examine popular and news media constructions of girlhood and feminine identity.
 - You will learn to critically evaluate theory, sources, and mass media discourse.

- Goal 3: Synthesis and Evaluation
 - You will gain the tools to a) critically evaluate a broad range of media content, beyond the scope of girl media and b) to synthesize theory, media, and your own ideas in creating a final multi-media project.

Teaching and Learning Philosophy

The purpose of higher education is to expose students to ideas and knowledge beyond their personal experiences and to establish a foundation of understanding upon which students may continue to build throughout their lives. Learning is a personal and continuous process that requires individual commitment, but must take place in an active learning community that thrives on the sharing of ideas and opinions. I believe that the role of an instructor is to foster a desire for lifelong learning and to guide students to reach their full potential as critical thinkers. My ultimate goals are to support students as they take responsibility for their own educations and to challenge them to fully engage with new ideas. In putting my philosophy into practice, I favor a teaching style that encourages experiential learning and dialogue, without sacrificing the necessary construction of foundational knowledge through readings and lectures.

Classroom interactions and activities are limited in time and scope and must be supplemented by our willingness as learners to engage beyond the walls of the classroom. Because of my own desire to be part of a community of scholars, I am committed to mentoring students in any aspect of their education. In an effort to foster a holistic learning experience, I will be very available outside of class time to discuss both this course and other ideas that you might have. I will hold office hours in the Edmondson Formal Lounge.

Classroom Activities

Each class period will be interactive and will include a combination of mini-lectures, critical evaluation of media clips/examples and direction group discussion of readings.

Readings

Readings will be assigned for each class meeting and should be completed before the class period for which they are scheduled. Each required book will be available for purchase and will be placed on reserve in at least one IU Library; all other readings will be handed out in class or posted on Oncourse. Please bring the readings to class with you as these will serve as a basis for discussion and participation.

As savvy media users, I believe you have likely encountered news and popular media discussions of the topics and media we will be learning about, so early in the semester I will invite you to suggest articles for course readings and will incorporate those suggestions into the reading schedule.

In addition to readings, we will also view portions of *Titanic*, *Twilight* and other feature films, listen to music, view music videos and read excerpts from novels in class in order to enhance critique and discussion.

Required Books

S. R. Mazzarella (2008), *Girl wide web: Girls, the Internet, and the negotiation of identity*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

M.C. Kearney. (2006). *Girls make media*. New York: Routledge.

Articles

All articles will be available via Oncourse, as well as placed on reserve in at least two IU Library locations.

(See weekly schedule for full citation of articles).

Assignments and Grading

The purpose of your assignments will be to emphasize the synthesis of knowledge – to integrate class material and discussion with your own ideas in order to help you more fully understand media constructions of girlhood. Your grade will be based on a media journal, reading responses, two short papers, and one final multi-media project. Detailed handouts and reviews will be provided for all assignments.

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT	POINTS	DUE DATE
Media journal	20 %	200	Every class
Paper 1	15 %	150	Week four
Reading responses	25 %	250	One per week (total 13)
Paper 2	15 %	150	Week eight
Final project	25 %	250	Finals week
TOTAL	100%	1000	

Media Journal: Your media journal, in which you will evaluate media representations of girls, girl-power, femininity, etc., that you encounter outside of class. I will provide you with a couple of questions to answer for each media item you examine. You should expect to have at least one entry per week and will bring your journal to class to use during group discussions.

Papers: You will complete two papers over the course of the semester, each worth 15 percent of your grade. *Detailed instructions and examples will be provided for each paper.* Each paper will be 4 to 6 double-spaced pages in 12pt Times New Roman font. Full source citation is required. *Late papers will not be accepted without prior permission from the instructor.*

- Paper 1: This paper gives you an opportunity to draw on secondary sources to critically reflect on girl media by answering one of the following questions:
 - How have you experienced girl media?
 - Why is the construction of girls and girlhood a major cultural project?
 - What is at stake when we take seriously an understanding of the constructed nature of girlhood?
 - What are the implications for social change and for girls' selfhood and their skills in media literacy?
- Paper 2: Building on Paper 1, this paper will ask you to draw on secondary sources to critically examine the gendered nature of media production by answering one of the following questions:
 - How has the involvement of girls in media production been historically invisible?
 - How does girls' media production impact content and audiences?
 - How does male produced media targeted toward girls differ from female produced media targeted toward girls?
 - How, specifically, can girls wield power in media production at both a large and small scale?

Reading Responses: Thirteen short-answer reading responses will be due over the course of the semester, with the lowest grade thrown out. You will be given handouts with questions to consider while completing assigned reading and your responses will answer those questions. The goal of this assignment is to foster reading comprehension, so you will be fully supported and prepared to write the responses during class time.

Final Project: As a student-centered course you will have a choice of an individual or group final multi-media project. Each project will consist of discussing relevant literature and analyzing girl culture in media text, audience, or production. *Detailed instructions and examples will be provided for project.*

- Working individually or in groups, you will conduct a media analysis of popular or news media related to our course topics. Each project will include a review of literature and a critique of a set of media texts.

- Working together, we will decide the best technology and techniques for you to use to create a multi-media project that reports your findings. Your final product may take the form of a video or other graphic visual arts project.
- Again, to clarify, you will conduct an individual OR a group project.

Grading: In keeping with my overall objective to foster your understanding of the course material, the grading process will be as transparent as possible. Each assignment will include a handout detailing the expectations of the assignment and the weighting of points to be distributed. The rubric used to grade each assignment will be available to every student prior to starting the assignment and will be returned with detailed feedback when a grade is given. I do not grade on a curve. You will be assessed in part on:

- Clarity and precision of writing
- Evidence of strong comprehension of readings
- Insightful and complete media analysis
- Productive suggestions and discussions of your fellow students' projects

Course Policies

What follows are just a few items that I believe are important to creating a collegial classroom environment; your ideas of what make for productive, enjoyable class meetings are also key to the success of the course. Therefore, on the first day of class I will ask each student to offer suggestions for course policies and will post the results so that we may all benefit.

Bring your readings to class: Please remember to bring your relevant readings to class because we will work regularly on questions and class exercises that relate to the assigned readings.

Attendance: Attendance at every class period is expected – meaning that you should arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. Attendance will be taken and your grade will be reduced beginning after three unexcused absences. One half grade will be deducted for each unexcused absence after three.

Absences will also impact your performance on the papers because you may catch up on readings, but you will miss the discussions that would enhance your understanding of the course material. You would also miss video clips and other material shown in class that are not available elsewhere.

- If you miss class and need to catch up on material or discuss what you missed, please come to office hours or set up an appointment to meet with me.
- If you will require accommodation for religious observances, please submit a university request form at least two weeks prior to the absence.

Mature and professional behavior in the classroom: Some of the issues discussed in class may be controversial or challenging. I encourage you to approach our discussions with a

spirit of openness and tolerance. I will encourage a great amount of discussion in this class and I expect students to interact with each other in a mature and respectful fashion.

Academic misconduct: Plagiarism and other academic misconduct of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in severe consequences for your final grade or an automatic grade of F for the course. Please refer to the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities and Conduct* of your Schedule of Classes for the definitions and procedures concerning academic misconduct.

About the Instructor

Spring-Serenity Duvall is a doctoral candidate in the Indiana University School of Journalism with a minor in Gender Studies. Her dissertation examines constructions of gender, race, globalization, and power in popular and news media coverage of celebrity activism. A secondary research agenda focuses on representations and interpretations of girlhood in entertainment and news media. She combines her research and teaching interests by serving as instructor for media studies courses that address gender, race, class and sexuality in media; youth and media; and media ethics, power, and politics. She recently visited New Harmony, Indiana, and was very disappointed that the tour guide wouldn't let her touch the hundred-year-old printing press.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

WEEK ONE / Introduction to Girl Studies or, Why study girls?

Read:

- Mazzarella, S. R., & Pecora, N. (2007). Girls in crisis: Newspaper coverage of adolescent girls. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 31(1), 6–27.
- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York: Ballantine Books. Chapter 1.

Discuss

- How did girl studies emerge in the 1970s in response to biases in cultural studies?
- Why did girl studies begin to grow in popularity in the 1990s?
- What changes in popular culture inspired an intense focus on girls and girlhood?

WEEK TWO / Foundation of Girl Studies: Feminist theory and practice

Read

- Durham, M. G. (2003). The girling of America: Critical reflections on gender and Popular communication. *Popular Communication*, 1(1), 23–31.
- Gilligan, C. (1998). Wild Voices: Fiction, Feminism and perennial flowering of truth. In J. Fisher & E. Siber, *Analyzing the Different Voice: Feminist psychological theory and literary texts* (Roman & Littlefield).
- McRobbie, A. (2004). Post-feminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 4(3), 255–264.

- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York: Ballantine Books. Chapter 3.

Discuss

- How do feminist theories address girls and girlhood differently over time?
- What are key aspects of girls' psychological development that help us understand girls' relationship with media?
- How do media, science, and other cultural aspects construct girls and girlhood?

Get

- Handout with detailed instructions for Paper #1.

Due

- Suggestions for course readings.

WEEK THREE / *Titanic* success: Girl-powered ticket sales

Read

- Rushing, Janice Hocker, and Frenzt, Thomas S. (2000). Singing over the bones: James Cameron's *Titanic*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17 (1, March), 1-27.
- Weinraub, B. (1998, February 23). Who's lining up at the box office? Lots and lots of girls [Electronic version]. *New York Times*, p. E1.
- Readings to be suggested by students.

View

- Portions of *Titanic (2007)* and news clips discussing the film.

Discuss

- What contributed to the success of *Titanic*?
- How did *Titanic* influence media production / consumption in the following decade?

WEEK FOUR / *Spice Girls* and *Buffy*: Riding the Third Wave

Read

- Early, F. H. (2001). Staking her claim: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as transgressive woman warrior. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 35(3), 11-27.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2004). Girls rule! Gender, feminism, and Nickelodeon [Electronic version]. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(2), 119-139.
- Brabazon, T., & Evans, A. (1998). I'll never be your woman: The Spice Girls and new flavours of feminism [Electronic version]. *Social Alternatives*, 17(2), 39-42.
- Hains, R. C. (2004). The problematics of reclaiming the girlish: The Powerpuff Girls and girl power. *Femspec*, 5(2), 1-39.

Discuss

- Why does third wave feminism emphasize the role of media in constructing identity?
- How does third wave media content both resemble and differ from previous media content?
- Why is third wave media / identity often dismissed as frivolous and anti-feminist?

Due

- **Paper #1**

WEEK FIVE / Girlhood in books – Anne, Laura, and the “spunky” girls of fiction

Read

- Christian-Smith, L. K. (1988). “Romancing the girl: Adolescent romance novels and the construction of femininity.” In L. G. Roman, L. K. Christian-Smith & E. Ellsworth (Eds.), *Becoming feminine: The politics of popular culture* (pp. 76–101). London: Falmer Press.
- Garner, A. C. (1999). Negotiating our position in culture: Popular adolescent fiction and self-construction of women. *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 22 (1, Spring), 85-119.
- Select excerpts from *Twilight* book series and *Anne* book series.

Discuss

- How do popular girl books of the last century foreshadow the appeal of *Twilight*?

Get

- Graded Paper #1

WEEK SIX / Fang-girls bite deep: Twilight’s “surprise” success

Read

- Owen, S. A. (1999). Vampires, postmodernity, and postfeminism: Buffy the Vampire Slayer. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 27(2), 24–28.
- Rutkowski, A. (2002). Why chicks dig vampires: Sex blood, and Buffy. *Iris: A Journal About Women*, 45, 12–18.
- Clark, L.S. (2002). U.S. Adolescent Religious Identity, the Media, and the ‘Funky’ Side of Religion. *Journal of Communication* 52 (4), 794-812.

View

- *Twilight* (2008)

Discuss

- Critical analysis of *Twilight*.

Get

- Detailed handout on Paper #2

Guests

- Collins residents invited to view film and take part in critical discussion.

WEEK SEVEN / Fangirls unite: Constructing community and identity online

Read

- Bortree, D. S. (2005). Presentation of self on the Web: An ethnographic study of teenage girls' weblogs [Electronic version]. *Education, Communication and Information*, 5(1), 25–39.
- S. R. Mazzarella (2008), *Girl wide web: Girls, the Internet, and the negotiation of identity*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers. Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Discuss

- How did online community building and mobilization cause *Twilight (2008)* to exceed industry expectations?

View

- *Twilight* fan websites.

WEEK EIGHT / gURL power online: Beyond zines and blogs

Read

- Harris, A. (2003). gURL scenes and grrrl zines: The regulation and resistance of girls in late modernity. *Feminist Review*, 75(1), 38–56.
- S. R. Mazzarella (2008), *Girl wide web: Girls, the Internet, and the negotiation of identity*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers. Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Discuss

- How does new media technology show potential for community and identity construction beyond fandoms and social networking?

View

- Girl-produced websites.

Due

- **Paper #2**

Get

- Detailed handout on Final Project.

WEEK NINE / Hot Topic: Girl-powered consumption / merchandising

Read

- Driscoll, C. (1999). Girl culture, revenge and global capitalism: Cybergirls, riot grrls, Spice Girls. [Electronic version]. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 14(29), 173–193.
- Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279–297.
- M.C. Kearney. (2006). *Girls make media*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1 and 2.

Discuss

- What is the significance of merchandising and consumption in the promotion of *Twilight* and the cohesion of the Twilighters community?
- What are the broader implications of building identities around consumerism?

Due

- 1 page final project proposal.

Get

- Graded Paper #2

WEEK TEN / Twilight Guy: Boys in Girl Media

Read

- Readings to be suggested by students.

Discuss

- Discussion to depend upon readings suggested by students.

Get

- Detailed feedback on Final Project.

WEEK ELEVEN / SPRING BREAK

WEEK TWELVE / Transnational Twilight: Bridging geographic and cultural divides

Read

- Readings to be suggested by students.

Discuss

- Discussion to depend upon readings suggested by students.

Due

- Final Project progress report / “rough draft.”

WEEK THIRTEEN / Team Edward, Team Jacob ... Team Bella?: Sexuality and female friendship in girl media

Read

- Durham, M. G. (1999b). Girls, media, and the negotiation of sexuality: A study of race, class, and gender in adolescent peer groups. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76, 193–216.
- Gonick, M. (2004). The “mean girl” crisis: Problematizing representations of girls’ friendships. *Feminism and Psychology*, 14(3), 395–400.
- Ross, S. (2004). Dangerous demons: Fan response to girls’ power, girls’ bodies, and girls’ beauty in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Femspec*, 5(2), 82–100.

Discuss

- What are the dynamics of fan attachment to certain fictional characters?
- Why do fangirls sometimes react negatively to female characters/celebrities?
- What is the role of female friendship and romance in fangirl culture?

Meet

- Individual meetings with me to discuss final project.

WEEK FOURTEEN / The Bella Cullen Project: Girls making music, making movies

Read

- Schilt, K. (2003). “A little too ironic”: The appropriation and packaging of riot grrrl politics by mainstream female musicians. *Popular Music and Society*, 26(3), 5–16.
- Wald, G. (1998). Just a girl? Rock music, feminism, and the cultural construction of female youth [Electronic version]. *Signs*, 23(3), 585–610.
- Kearney, M. C. (2003). Girls make movies. In K. Mallin & S. Pearce (Eds.), *Youth cultures: Texts, images, and identities* (pp. 17–34). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2005). Teen content creators and consumers. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved January 23, 2006, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.

Discuss

- How are girls portrayed in music lyrics and music videos?
- What are stereotypical images of girl bands and girl musicians?
- How do counter-stereotypical girl musicians challenge cultural perceptions of girls and girlhood?
- What is the significance of girls increasingly acting as media producers rather than passive consumers?

WEEK FIFTEEN / Empowerment / Exploitation: The future of girl media

Read

- Sweeney, K. (2005). Girls make movies: The emergence of woman-led filmmaking initiatives for teenage girls. *Afterimage*, 33(3), 37–42.
- M.C. Kearney. (2006). *Girls make media*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Discuss

- How does the phenomenon of girls making media effect the cycle of media empowerment and exploitation of girls and girlhood?
- What changes or trends are on the horizon for girl media and Girl Studies?
- Course summary / synthesis of ideas.

WEEK SIXTEEN / Student final project presentations

WEEK SEVENTEEN / Final Exam Week – FINAL PROJECTS DUE