

# Graduate Topics in Gender Studies: Porn Studies

Gender Studies, Indiana University

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Pornography is a study in contradictions. As a concept, it is notoriously hard to define, and yet, we often think (to paraphrase U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart) that we “know it when we see it.” It is perhaps the most controversial moving-image genre, but also one of the most popular in terms of widespread consumption. And, at its root, it is a genre deeply invested in providing documentary evidence of sexual pleasure, but also in simultaneously creating the illusion of fantasies that viewers might never put into personal practice. The field of Porn Studies primarily emerged from second-wave feminist and AIDS-era queer debates around the politics of moving-image pornography. Drawing on the work of several generations of anti-censorship, sex-positive feminist and queer scholars, we will examine the history, theory, and criticism of moving-image pornography as a genre that exists at the intersection of not just gender and sexuality, but also issues of law, ethics, race, class, taste, and other social forces that can powerfully affect our bodies. This course is not chiefly concerned with whether pornographic media should or should not exist in the first place, but rather what cultural and political purposes these texts can serve. Broadly speaking, the first half of course traces the historical development of both moving-image pornography and the debates over spectatorship and gender/sexual representation up to the digital era; and the second half of the course explores more contemporary pornographies and scholarly interventions about increasingly diverse representations and changing modes of production/reception.

*Note on Course Content: Given the topic of this seminar, we will be viewing and discussing—both within and outside of class—a variety of sexually explicit materials that feature unsimulated sex of many different types. Inevitably, some of these representations will not reinforce your own sexual preferences or political leanings, but all students are expected to engage with these diverse materials with an open-minded, mature attitude of intellectual curiosity. Students with known sensitivities to particular content should, however, consult with the Instructor early in the semester.*

### Required Books:

- Linda Williams. (1989) 1999. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible.”* University of California Press.
- Susanna Paasonen. 2011. *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Mireille Miller-Young. 2014. *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography*. Durham: Duke University Press.

#### Assessment:

##### 30% — Participation

Regular attendance and discussion participation are expected of all students. If possible, please come each day with several questions or discussion points to share.

##### 15% — Golden-Age Film Analysis (~1500 words)

Choose a feature-length narrative porn film made from approx. 1970-84 (not already viewed for class) to analyze for its use of narrative, representation, spectatorship, etc.

##### 15% — Tube Site Analysis (~1500 words)

Explore the website organization, common genres/themes/tags, and major trends of a major porn tube site (e.g., Pornhub, xHamster, xVideos, Youporn).

##### 5% — Proposal for Final Project (~300 words)

##### 35% — Final Project

- *Option 1:* 20-25 pg. research paper on topic of own choice. This can be a substantial expansion of an earlier analysis paper, in consultation with the Instructor.
- *Option 2:* Semester-long participation in screening & evaluation/comments on SECS Fest submissions (submitted to FilmFreeway through end of semester), followed by 10 pg. reflection paper. Further instructions will follow for students interested in this option.

### Course Schedule

#### Week 1: Course Introduction

- Linda Williams, *Hard Core*, chapter 1.

#### Week 2: The Stag Film

**Screening:** Early American & French stags (ca. 1915-30s; 28 min.)

- Williams, *Hard Core*, chapters 2-3.
- Tom Waugh. 2001. "Homosexuality in the Classical American Stag Film: Off-screen, Onscreen." *Sexualities* 4 (3): 275-91.
- Mireille Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar*, chapter 1.

#### Week 3: Homoerotica Before Stonewall

**Screening:** *A Very Special Friend* (Pat Rocco, 1968; 15 min.)

- David K. Johnson. 2010. "Physique Pioneers: The Politics of 1960s Gay Consumer Culture." *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 4 (Summer): 867-92.
- Yvonne Keller. 2005. "'Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife So Passionately?' Lesbian Pulp Novels and U.S. Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (June): 385-410.

- Tom Waugh. 1996. "Cockteaser." In *Pop Out: Queer Andy Warhol*, edited by Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and Jose Esteban Muñoz, 51–77. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Whitney Strub. 2012. "Mondo Rocco: Mapping Gay Los Angeles Sexual Geography in the Late-1960s Films of Pat Rocco." *Radical History Review* 2012, no. 113 (Spring): 13–34.

#### Week 4: Sexploitation Cinema

**Screening:** *Office Love-In*, *White Collar Style* (Stephen C. Apostolof, 1968; 81 min.)

- Elena Gorfinkel. 2017. "Producing Permissiveness: Censorship, Obscenity Law, and the Trials of Spectatorship," and "Watching an 'Audience of Voyeurs': Adult Film Reception." In *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s*, chapter 1 and 4, 27–96, 197–244. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- David Church. 2016. "Ephemerality between Fantasy and Reality: Sexploitation, Fan Magazines, and the Adults-Only Film and Publishing Industries." In *Disposable Passions: Vintage Pornography and the Material Legacies of Adult Cinema*, chapter 2, 61–102. New York: Bloombury Academic.

#### Week 5: Hardcore "Porno Chic"

**Screening:** *Inside Deep Throat* (Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, 2005; 90 min.); and *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (Radley Metzger, 1976; 84 min.)

- Linda Williams, *Hard Core*, chapters 4–6.
- Mireille Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar*, chapter 2.

#### Week 6: Gay Liberation and "All-Male" Pornography

**Screening:** *L.A. Tool & Die* (Joe Gage, 1979; 86 min.)

##### Golden-Age Film Analysis due

- Richard Dyer. 1985. "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms." *Jump Cut* 30 (March): 27–29.
- Tom Waugh. 1985. "Men's Pornography: Gay vs. Straight." *Jump Cut* 30 (March): 30–35.
- Ryan Powell. 2019. "Liberation Porn." In *Coming Together: The Cinematic Elaboration of Gay Male Life, 1945–1979*, chapter 4. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Jeffrey Escoffier. 2021. "Sex in the Seventies: Gay Porn Cinema as an Archive for the History of Sexuality." In *Sex, Society, and the Making of Pornography: The Pornographic Object of Knowledge*, chapter 3. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

#### Week 7: Pornographic Spaces of Consumption

**Screening:** *A Night at the Adonis* (Jack Deveau, 1978; 82 min.)

- Amy Herzog. 2008. "In the Flesh: Space and Embodiment in the Pornographic Peep Show Arcade." *Velvet Light Trap* 62 (1): 29–43.

- Rich Cante and Angelo Restivo. 2004. "The Cultural-Aesthetic Specificities of All-Male Moving-Image Pornography." In *Porn Studies*, edited by Linda Williams, 142–66. Durham: Duke University Press.
- José Capino. 2005. "Homologies of Space: Text and Spectatorship in All-Male Adult Theaters." *Cinema Journal* 45 (1): 50–65.
- Peter Alilunas. 2016. "Panorams, Motels, and Pirates: The Origins of Adult Video." In *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Video*, chapter 1. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- David Church. 2014. "'This Thing of Ours': Heterosexuality, Recreational Sex, and the Survival of Adult Movie Theaters." *Media Fields Journal*, no. 8.

### **Week 8: The Emergence of Feminist & Queer Pornographies**

**Screening:** *Suburban Dykes* (Deborah Sundahl, 1991; 28 min.); and *Mutantes: Punk, Porn, Feminism* (Virginie Despentes, 2009; 92 min.)

- Heather Butler. 2004. "What Do You Call a Lesbian with Long Fingers? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography." In *Porn Studies*, edited by Linda Williams. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Candida Royalle. 1993. "Porn in the USA." In "Explores the Sex Trade," edited by Anne McClintock. Special Issue. *Social Text* 37 (Winter): 23–32.
- Lynn Comella. 2013. "From Text to Context: Feminist Porn and the Making of a Market." In *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, edited by Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, Mireille Miller-Young, 79–94. New York: The Feminist Press.

### **Week 9: Online Pornographies**

**Tube Site Analysis due**

- Susanna Paasonen, *Carnal Resonance*, chapters 1–5.

### **Week 11: Black and "Interracial" Pornographies**

**Final Project Proposal due**

- Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar*, chapters 4–6.
- Ariane Cruz, 2016. "Interracial Iterations and Internet In(ter)ventions." In *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography*, chapter 3, 125–68. New York: NYU Press.
- Whitney Strub. 2018. "No Sex in Newark: Postindustrial Erotics at the Intersection of Urban and Adult Film History." *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58 (1): 175–81.

### **Week 12: Asian-American Pornographies**

- José Capino. 2006. "Asian College Girls and Oriental Men with Bamboo Poles: Reading Asian Pornography." In *Pornography: Film and Culture*, edited by Peter Lehman, 206–219. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Celine Parreñas Shimizu. 2007. "Racial Threat or Racial Treat?: Performing Yellowface Sex Acts in Stag Films, 1920–34," and "Queens of Anal, Double, Triple, and the Gangbang: Producing Asian/American Feminism in

Pornography, 1940s–1990s.” In *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women On Screen and Scene*, chapters 4–5, 102–84. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Nguyen Tan Hoang. 2014. “The Rise, and Fall, of a Gay Asian American Porn Star.” In *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation*, chapter 1, 29–70. Durham: Duke University Press.

### Week 13: Contemporary Gay Pornography

- John Mercer. 2017. *Gay Pornography: Representations of Sexuality and Masculinity*, chapters 3–5. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Tim Dean. 2009. “Representing Raw Sex.” In *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*, chapter 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lucy Neville. 2018. “Sometimes It’s Hard to Be a Woman.” In *Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys: Women and Gay Male Erotica and Pornography*, chapter 5. Palgrave Macmillan.

### Week 14: Trans Pornographies

**Screening:** *Mes Chéris* (Ethan Folk & Ty Wardwell, 2020; 13 min.)

- Sophie Pezzutto and Lynn Comella. 2020. “Trans Pornography: Mapping an Emerging Field.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7 (2): 152–71.
- Jeffrey Escoffier. 2021. “Trans Porn, Heterosexuality, and Sexual Identity.” In *Sex, Society, and the Making of Pornography: The Pornographic Object of Knowledge*, chapter 9. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Marcel Barriault. 2016. “Bucking Heteronormativity: Buck Angel as Porn Performer, Producer, and Pedagogue.” *Porn Studies* 3 (2): 133–46.
- Carolyn Bronstein. 2020. “Pornography, Trans Visibility, and the Demise of Tumblr.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7 (2): 240–254.

### Week 15: Porn and/as Sex Work

**Screening:** *Hot Girls Wanted* (Jill Bauer and Ronna Gradus, 2015; 84 min.)

- Jeffrey Escoffier. 2021. “Gay-for-Pay: Straight Men and the Making of Gay Pornography.” In *Sex, Society, and the Making of Pornography: The Pornographic Object of Knowledge*, chapter 6. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Tristan Taormino. 2013. “Calling the Shots: Feminist Porn in Theory and Practice.” In *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, edited by Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, Mireille Miller-Young, 255–64. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Heather Berg. 2021. *Porn Work: Sex, Labor, and Late Capitalism*, chapters 2–3. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Final Week: Final Paper due