

Pornography: Bodies, Sex, and Representation

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Module Aims

Pornography: Bodies, Sex, and Representation will introduce you to the main theories and debates that have surrounded and framed the production, dissemination and consumption of pornographic images. With a focus on modern and contemporary porn images, the module will approach pornography as a form of cultural production that can illuminate our understanding of the ways in which our societies have conceived and represented human bodies, their sexual desires and sexual pleasures. Tracing the “birth” of pornography back to the “birth” of modernity, we will follow the tense and complex relationships of visibility and invisibility that have given porn its currency, and we will map our changing understandings of obscenity vis-à-vis the histories of our cultural policing of both bodies and the visible. To do so, we will be critically engaging with materials ranging from literature to early visual erotica; from historically censored films to the so-called “Golden Age of Porn;” from gay porn to feminist and queer “post-porn;” from online amateur pornography to artists who blur the boundaries between art and pornography. Informed by scholarship drawn from feminist and queer theory, law, media and cultural studies, and the emerging interdisciplinary field of porn studies, the module will allow you to develop important porn literacy skills that you will use to engage with a form of visual production that is second to none when it comes to the scale of its contemporary output. In so doing, the module will enable you to think critically about wider issues of power, censorship, obscenity, sex, sexuality, subjectivities, desires and pleasures as they intersect with and are co-shaped by modern and contemporary visual culture.

Content Notice

Please note that, whilst the module will be guided by the highest standards of academic integrity and rigour, the nature of the topic and of the learning materials may make it challenging on a number of ways. Even if the assigned readings may be dense and difficult to read at times and/or challenge your assumptions, you will still be expected to read them in preparation for each lecture and seminar. Further, both the texts and the visual materials used may call into question taken-for-granted views of sex and sexuality, and their place in visual culture. Finally, given the module’s subject-matter, visual and literary materials of a graphic, controversial and/or explicit nature will be used which some students may find offensive. The module convenor will always contextualise the materials used and provide a ratio-

nale for their discussion, and no illegal material will ever be used. You will have the opportunity to bring up any questions or difficulties you may encounter whilst engaging with primary sources, but it won't be possible to pass the module by avoiding them. The classroom is a space where frank academic discussions on difficult topics can take place in a safer environment.

Learning Outcomes

Beyond developing discipline-specific methodologies and key skills in academic research, writing, and collaborative work, upon successful completion of the module you will be able to:

1. Summarise and discuss the concepts and debates in the emerging field of porn studies.
2. Critically analyse pornographic representations of bodies, sex, and sexuality in relation to the cultural, historical, and political contexts of their production, dissemination, and consumption.
3. Identify some of the ways in which pornographic images and their media have fed into modern and contemporary understandings of the human body, human sexualities, and subjectivities (including their intersections with race, gender, and class).

Assessment

Formative: 1,000-word mini-essay

Summative: 3,000-word essay (90%) + five 400-word response papers (10%)

Syllabus Plan

The module comprises two 1-hour lectures, seven 3-hour seminars, and 1 hour of individual tutorials, as well as an estimate of 126 hours of independent study.

Lectures and seminars will be structured thematically in order to introduce and explore key concepts and themes relevant to contemporary scholarship on pornography, sexuality, and visual culture. Seminars will be focused on close readings of interdisciplinary scholarship and pornographic sources.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (lecture): What is Porn?

- Laura Kipnis. 1999. "How to Look at Pornography." In *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy*, 161–206. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Susanna Paasonen. 2011. "Introduction: Carnal Appeal." In *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography*, 1–29. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen and Laura Saarenmaa. 2007. "Pornification and the Education of Desire." In *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*, 1–20. Oxford: Berg.

- Linda Williams. 1999. "Generic Pleasures: Number and Narrative." In *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*, 120–152. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 2 (lecture): Porn Histories

- Feona Attwood. 2018. "Regulating Sex Media." In *Sex Media*, 33–60. Cambridge: Polity.
- John R. Clarke. 2013. "Before Pornography: Sexual Representation in Ancient Roman Visual Culture." In *Pornographic Art and the Aesthetics of Pornography*, edited by Hans Maes, 141–61. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lynn Hunt. 1993. "Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800." In *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800*, edited by Lynn Hunt, 9–95. New York: Zone Books.
- Walter Kendrick. 1987. "Origins." In *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, 1–32. New York: Viking.
- Thomas Waugh. 1996. "Beginnings." In *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall*, 1–58. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week 3 (seminar): Stag Films

- Thomas Waugh. 2004. "Homosociality in the Classical American Stag Film: Off-Screen, On-Screen." In *Porn Studies*, edited by Linda Williams, 127–41. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Linda Williams. 1999. "The Stag Film: Genital Show and Genital Event." In *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*, 58–92. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 4 (seminar): The Golden Age

- Jeffrey Escoffier. 2009. "Paradise and the City of Orgies." In *Bigger than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore*, 89–115. Philadelphia: Running Press.
- Elena Gorfinkel. 2014. "Wet Dreams: Erotic Film Festivals of the Early 1970s and the Utopian Sexual Public Sphere." In *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, edited by Eric Schaefer, 126–150. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Neil Jackson. 2018. "The Pornographer." In *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Clarissa Smith, Feona Attwood and Brian McNair, 428–33. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Linda Williams. 2008. "Going Further: *Last Tango in Paris*, *Deep Throat*, and *Boys in the Sand* (1971–1972)." In *Screening Sex*, 112–154. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Week 5 (seminar): The Feminist Porn Wars

- Lisa Duggan, Nan D. Hunter and Carole S. Vance. 1993. “False Promises: Feminist Anti-Pornography Legislation.” *New York Law School Law Review* 38: 133–63
- Andrea Dworkin. 1989. “Power,” “Force,” “Pornography,” and “Whores.” In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 13–47, 129–224. New York: Plume.
- Catharine MacKinnon. 1989. “Pornography: On Morality and Politics.” In *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, 195–214. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gayle Rubin. 2011. “Misguided, Dangerous, and Wrong: An Analysis of Antipornography Politics.” From *Deviations: The Gayle Rubin Reader*, 254–75. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Working Group on Women, Censorship, and “Pornography.” 1993. *The Sex Panic: Women, Censorship and “Pornography,” A Conference Report*. New York: National Coalition Against Censorship.

Week 6: Tutorials

Week 7 (seminar): Queer & Feminist Porn Gazes

- Richard Dyer. 1985. “Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms.” *Jump Cut* 30: 27–29.
- John Mercer. 2017. “History, Industry and Technological Change.” In *Gay Pornography: Representations of Sexuality and Masculinity*, 44–74. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Lynn Comella. 2015. “Positively Fat and Queer: An Interview with Indie Porn Insider Courtney Trouble.” In *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, edited by Lynn Comella and Shira Tarrant, 371–80. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Whitney Strub. 2015. “Queer Smut, Queer Rights.” In *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, edited by Lynn Comella and Shira Tarrant, 147–64. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Week 8 (seminar): Racialised Pleasures

- Mireille Miller-Young. 2013. “Interventions: The Deviant and Defiant Art of Black Women Porn Directors.” In *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, edited by Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, and Mireille Miller-Young, 105–20. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Mireille Miller-Young. 2020. “Exotic/Erotic/Ethnopornographic: Black Women, Desire, and Labor in the Photographic Archive.” In *Ethnopornography: Sexuality, Colonialism, and Archival Knowledge*, edited by Pete Sigal, Zeb Tortorici, and Neil L. Whitehead, 41–66. 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*, 29–70. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Bryan Pitts. 2020. “‘Hung, Hot, and Shameless in Bed’: Blackness, Desire, and Politics in a Brazilian Gay Porn Magazine, 1997–2008.” In *Ethnopedagogy: Sexuality, Colonialism, and Archival Knowledge*, edited by Pete Sigal, Zeb Tortorici, and Neil L. Whitehead, 67–96. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 9 (seminar): Trans Perspectives

- Jiz Lee. 2013. “Uncategorized: Genderqueer Identity and Performance in Independent and Mainstream Porn.” In *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, edited by Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, and Mireille Miller-Young, 273–78. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Sophie Pezzutto and Lynn Comella. 2020. “Trans Pornography: Mapping and Emerging Field.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7 (2): 152–71.
- Eliza Steinbock. 2018. “Representing Trans Sexualities.” In *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Clarissa Smith, Feona Attwood and Brian McNair, 27–37. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Eliza Steinbock. 2019. “Shimmering Sex: Docu-Porn’s Trans-Sexualities, Confession Culture, and Suturing Practices.” In *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change*, 61–106. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 10 (seminar): Porn Workers of the World, Unite!

- Heather Berg. 2014. “Labouring Porn Studies.” *Porn Studies* 1 (1–2): 75–79.
- Heather Berg. 2016. “‘A Scene is Just a Marketing Tool’: Alternative Income Streams in Porn’s Gig Economy.” *Porn Studies* 3 (2): 160–74.
- Alan McKee. 2016. “Pornography as a Creative Industry: Challenging the Exceptionalist Approach to Pornography.” *Porn Studies* 3 (2): 107–19.
- Valentina Mia. 2020. “The Failures of SESTA/FOSTA: A Sex Worker Manifesto.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7 (2): 237–39.

Week 11: Tutorials