

LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN POPULAR CULTURE

GNDR_ST 371 & ENGLISH 368

FALL
2022



This class will examine lesbian representation in film and television over the last four decades. “Representation” is a tricky word in politics and media: queer communities, communities of color, and disabled communities (and those categories overlap in important ways) have pushed for more representation in film, television, the music industry, and publishing. Lesbian women have long complained of the community’s invisibility. At the same time,

minoritized communities must grapple with the fact that simple representation can be a mixed bag. If the primary goal is visibility, is all representation good representation? Are lesbian villains, or lesbians who are narratively punished, still politically useful? Does the inclusion of a lesbian character (or lesbian characters) “count” if no one involved in the production of the object was themselves a lesbian? This course will explore these questions and more, discussing theoretical readings from cultural studies alongside our primary films, television, music, and print media. We will consider the difficult and derogatory tropes that are part and parcel of lesbian representation in the media, but we will engage most intensively with narratives that have attempted to expand the narrative potential of queer female life and to affirm lesbian identities—with complex results.

Hannah Chaskin

MW 2-3:20 pm
Harris Hall L04