

COM 172: Critical Issues in Human Inquiry
Princesses, Brides, and Mothers: Images of Contemporary Femininity
Spring 2022 211 Eppley
172 A: Mon/Wed 9:30-10:45
172 B: Mon/Wed 11-12:15

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Required Readings:

Engstrom, E. (2011). *The bride factory: Media depictions of women and weddings*. NY: Peter Lang.
Orenstein, P. (2011). *Cinderella ate my daughter: Dispatches from the front lines of the new girlie-girl culture*. NY: Harper.

Additional readings will be assigned and placed on Blueline as noted on your syllabus

GENERAL INFORMATION

This course will descriptively and critically examine three exalted feminine images: Princesses, brides, and mothers. Often, images that are dominant in our culture are taken for granted as natural and unproblematic, however, this class asks you to think critically and reflectively about the way gender is constructed via these three icons. Additionally, this course will encourage students to critically engage power and privilege and to promote justice, dignity, service, and advocacy related to gender, sexuality, and culture.

This course is a Critical Issues in Human Inquiry Core Course designed for first year students and is held in conjunction with the 1 credit Oral Communication component (COM 101).

DEPARTMENTAL MISSION

The Department of Communication Studies prepares students to be intellectually curious, go into the world informed by Jesuit values, and contribute meaningfully to their communities and professions. Within our program, students will analyze, craft, and evaluate communication messages and understand communication as a set of everyday practices that are mindful, purposeful, and strategic. Students learn to ask good questions and find the answers about meaningful problems in our society, our workplaces and our personal lives. In our major capstone sequence, all students conduct a senior research project, complete an internship and reflect on the role of communication in their work, and connect communication with Jesuit values of service and justice. Our program offers flexibility in terms of choices of projects, service, and work experiences, giving students a chance to pursue a wide variety of occupations or graduate programs pursuant to their particular talents, callings, and interests. Our graduates are able to embrace and act on complex problems in groups, organizations, relationships, and cultures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The College of Arts and Sciences has agreed upon a general set of learning outcomes, and more specific objectives to assure that our students get what we want them to get from their Creighton education. Below are the objectives that will be fulfilled in all Critical Issues in Human Inquiry courses:

- Students will demonstrate the basic skills of information literacy, including critically evaluating information from sources and appropriately using and citing information.
- Students will effectively deliver a formal oral extemporaneous presentation of at least 5 minutes in length that is appropriate for a specific audience, in terms of content, organization, and delivery.
- Students will explain the concepts of “service”, “social justice”, and “human dignity” as they are understood within the Catholic and Jesuit traditions and how they are influenced by systems of social differentiation and by relative power and privilege.
- Students will identify their own social locations and conditions and analyze a controversial issue by articulating their own values and perspectives and those of an unfamiliar community.
- Students will evaluate and critique the way systems of relative power and privilege are reinforced.

COURSE FIT TO CORE AND MISSION

According to the Magis CCAS Core Document (2013), Jesuit Education emphasizes the formation of, “upright person(s) through an examination of the qualities that make us human” (p. 29). Given the focus on critical examination of feminine icons and on tying these icons to more general themes in gender, culture, and sexuality, the central purpose of this course is in keeping with this goal of Jesuit Education. By unpacking the limited and sometimes harmful ways in which our society has constructed gender, sexuality, and culture, the course aims to engage in more than just an intellectual exercise. Rather, it promotes the unity of heart, mind, and soul that is fundamental to Jesuit values.

Learning about cultural patterns and media representations of identity helps students to be more critical and reflective about their own social location and privilege. No matter the gender identity of the student, or whether the princess, bride, and mother icons form a part of their own identity (past, present, or future), all individuals can benefit from learning to critique media representations of these icons that play a role in shaping and constraining all genders and sexualities. For example, the princess culture being so girl-identified creates considerable difficulties for boys who are interested in princess play or dress. Thus, a course like this encourages us to examine more closely the socially constructed expectations for gender in a more general sense.

Through moving from discussion of the problems with societally constrained feminine roles to considering ways that we can be agents of change as we engage in service and advocacy, students taking the course will hopefully become more committed to critiquing the status quo and exploring their own biases to become women and men for and with others. Ideally, the critical engagement of seemingly “natural” and taken for granted feminine roles will inspire concern for the ways these expectations marginalize not only women, but all people. Further, by exploring the intersections of gender, culture, and sexuality, students will be exposed to the need to promote dignity for all persons, especially those who do not perform their gender or sexuality in normative ways.

To satisfy the oral communication partnership, there is one major presentation and two shorter presentations, as well as numerous opportunities for discussion facilitation and participation throughout the semester to help students gain competence in formal and informal oral communication.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

We can all gather "facts" on our own, but often we only come to really understand something after we discuss it. The success of this class depends upon your active engagement with the material and your commitment to building a community in our class. Keeping up with the reading and discussing the material will help everyone to learn more about feminine icons than any of us could learn on our own. Students who do not attend or engage in class may find it difficult to do well in the course. In other words, students who are physically present but unprepared or focused on cell phones or laptops and not actively engaging with their classmates and the teacher will miss out on a major component of the class.

Even though things look more normal, we are still in the middle of the COVID pandemic. We are still supposed to be monitoring our health and staying home when we're ill or know we have been exposed. If you are sick, please do not come to class. In the event of illness (fever/chills, shortness of breath, headache, sore throat, lack of taste/smell, etc.) please contact student health and also let me know what's going on. In this case, please just stay in touch with me, and I'll do the same for you. Students who must miss class for due to illness or self-quarantining due to COVID-19, I will work with you.

Late work

All assignments are due at the assigned date & time for full credit. Assignments not turned in on time will usually receive a penalty of 10% for each day late, unless arrangements are made with me ahead of time or in the case of extenuating circumstances. If you know you will miss class due to a university-sponsored event, please make arrangements with me to do assignments in advance. If you stay in touch with me about extenuating circumstances, late written work will be treated with some grace. When presentations are scheduled, however, please treat these as more set in stone than other deadlines. We only have so much class time available, and if you don't do your presentations as scheduled, it will be difficult to make it up.

Classroom Community and Atmosphere

Although we all have varying insights and experience, our individual perspectives are somewhat limited. In conjunction with the mission Creighton University's Department of Communication Studies, I am committed to providing an atmosphere of learning that values the diversity with which we are blessed. This includes respect for materials and discussions involving gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, and culture. I ask you to play your part in creating a classroom environment where people are free to learn by challenging and being challenged by others' contributions. You are also asked to be respectful and sensitive to others and to work to make our classroom environment safe and welcoming to everyone.

Classroom Conduct Policy

According to the [Creighton University Student Handbook](#), all Creighton students are to uphold the following standards of conduct:

1. Act with professional, academic, and personal integrity.
2. Respect and promote the dignity of all persons.
3. Respect the policies and procedures of the Creighton University community and the rights of its members both on and off campus, as well as the just laws of the civic community and the rights of its members.
4. Support the personal, professional, academic, and vocational development of the members of the Creighton University Community.

Upon the first violation, you will be notified via university email or via a face-to-face meeting with the instructor. If the behavior continues, you will be asked to leave class and referred to the Office of Community Standards and Well-Being. You will not be permitted to return to class without instructor permission.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the rules and regulations outlined in the [Creighton University Student Handbook](#). Students committing academic misconduct will be referred to the CCAS Dean's office for disciplinary action. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism or otherwise misrepresenting the words or ideas of others as your own, submitting work that has been offered for credit in another course (without the specific permission of the instructor), falsely obtaining, distributing, using, or receiving test materials, and any behavior obstructing or disrupting the classroom teaching and learning environment. According to the Creighton University Academic Integrity Policy: "Plagiarism" is the attempt to pass off other peoples' work (ideas, words, phrases or passages) as your own. I expect that your written works are entirely your own creation. "Copying and pasting" others' written work (whether from a friend or an internet source) is a serious offense. Plagiarism is never acceptable, regardless the type of assignment. Depending on severity, the penalty for academic misconduct can range from a grade of "0" on the assignment, paper, or test, to a grade of "F" for the course and/or dismissal from the University.

Inclement Weather Days

In the event that Creighton is open, but I am unable to drive to campus due to weather, I will inform you of cancellation or the need to go remote via Blueline announcement and Creighton email. If you have any doubts as to whether class might be cancelled due to inclement weather, you should check Blueline and email before heading to class. If we do we have a weather-related cancellation, please check the Blueline site for alternate activities or a revised schedule.

Unexpected Course Disruptions

Creighton University may modify, suspend, or postpone any and all activities and services immediately and without notice because of force majeure causes beyond Creighton's control and occurring without its fault or negligence including, but not limited to, acts of god, fire, war, governmental action, terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, weather, national emergencies, or other threats to the safety of students or staff. Creighton may, at its option, alter the academic schedule or provide alternate instruction modalities to meet course objectives and competencies and program outcomes, including, but not limited to, distance or remote learning, until such time as Creighton determines normal operations may resume safely.

Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at Creighton University is committed to providing services and resources to meet the need of qualified students with disabilities by establishing equal access to academic programs and University facilities. Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations in a particular class are encouraged to contact Disability Services as soon as possible to discuss the request process and eligibility requirements, as accommodations are not retroactive. If you believe that you may qualify or have questions regarding accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services Website](#) for more information or contact Disability Services at DisabilityServices@creighton.edu or 402-280-2195. Once accommodations are granted, students are responsible for informing their professors of approved academic accommodations. Accommodation letters are generated and shared via ClockWork, an accommodation software system.

Mental Health Issues

At Creighton University, care for the whole person is an important part of your educational and college experience. If you are experiencing signs or symptoms of diminished mental health, please know that campus resources exist to support you. [Student Counseling Services](#) are committed to offering individual and group therapy, along with consultations, psychiatry, assessments, and evaluations. Many of these are free to you as a student while others may require insurance or up-front costs. Appointments can be made by calling 402-280-2735. If you are seeking assistance after-hours, this webpage can provide you with specific resources: <https://studentlife.creighton.edu/wellness/health-and-counseling/after-hours-care>

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation

I prefer an informal class atmosphere, but don't mistake that for a lack of rigor. This course is taught as a seminar, meaning our class time will be used for discussion of issues raised by the readings. I will rarely simply lecture on readings. Your attendance, contributions to discussion, facilitation of one discussion period, and in class work will combine to make up your participation grade, which is 15% of your course grade. There are three types of participation:

Day to Day

Your participation is crucial. When you skip class or attend but do not share your perspective, you deprive the rest of us of learning from you. Class periods will contain videos and other materials to supplement the readings as well as speaking opportunities and other in class activities that can't be made up. Since we are a discussion-based course, when you are here in person, ***I ask that you engage your fellow students and me without the barrier of laptops or other forms of technology.*** I will let you know if you need to get your laptops out for an in-class activity, and I prefer you use a notebook for jotting down notes from discussion. In the event that we all have to switch to remote learning at some point during the semester, I will employ a mixture of zoom discussions during class time and online discussion boards to assess participation. When we are zooming in to class, it is important to remember that the learning in this class is not a passive activity that you can just half listen to while you do something else. To engage remotely looks like having your camera on, being in a place where you can fully participate in class via typing in the chat or speaking, and being on top of things like joining breakout sessions for small group discussion.

Discussion Preps

For each class day with assigned reading, log on to Blueline ***at least 1 hour before class begins*** and type up a short discussion prep. Sometimes you will have a specific prompt, but if not you can use the generic prompt as follows:

1. Identify one passage in the reading that speaks to you in some way...because it is interesting, important, moving, provocative, or because you want to discuss it for the purpose of criticism.
2. Write out at least 2 burning questions or hot topics that you want to discuss in class.

In total, day-to-day participation (in class plus Blueline prep) will be worth 15% of your grade.

Facilitation

Keep your eyes open for interesting examples that relate to current class topics in media, politics, at work, at school, in your family, etc. Sometime over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for bringing an artifact you find to class and leading a **5-minute** discussion about it. Your artifact can be a website, video, photo, magazine, toy, a story—anything that you can show the class. If your artifact requires media to be shown, please email it to me by class time so that I can pull it up and show it. You will begin by giving a little background on your artifact, and then be prepared with 2-3 specific discussion questions about your artifact to lead discussion. In choosing your artifact, keep in mind that your entire discussion should be about 5 minutes (including showing your artifact), so you have to be choosy about videos). Your goal is not to completely explain the artifact, but to get us discussing it. If you miss class on the day you are scheduled to facilitate, and you don't contact me ahead of time, you will miss those points. In the event that you or all of us are learning remotely, you can still facilitate discussion remotely. The facilitations will be worth 5% of your grade.

Examinations

There will be three Blueline exams given, one after each unit of the course. The tests will assess not only your basic understanding of concepts and theories, but also your ability to integrate and apply them. The exam will contain some combination of multiple choice, short essays, and sometimes longer take-home essay questions. Each exam will be worth 15% of your grade, for a total of 45% for the semester. A review guide will be provided before each exam with more details.

Oral assignments

Throughout the semester, we will work on building your confidence and skill in oral communication in conjunction with what you are learning in your online oral communication course. We will do as many of these assignments in person as possible, but we can switch to doing them remotely if need be. In addition to the numerous opportunities to engage in impromptu speaking and discussion as part of your participation grade, the formal speaking assignments will be:

This I Believe

Your specific purpose for this speech is to share one belief you hold about princesses, brides, or mothers, and explain why you have this belief and/or what experience you have had that helped you to arrive at that belief. More details about the requirements for this speech will be given in class. This speech is worth 5% of your grade.

Informative Presentations

The purpose of this speech will be for you to teach the class something about a particular wedding tradition or ritual. You may choose to either research the history or original meanings of a ritual that many in the class may be familiar with OR you may choose to discuss a tradition or ritual from a culture with which many in the class will not be familiar. You will conduct research on your topic and deliver an extemporaneous presentation that will help us all go deeper in our understanding of diverse wedding practices. This presentation is worth 20% of your grade. In conjunction with this presentation, you will complete a **bibliographic assignment** to improve your ability to find and evaluate quality sources. This part of the assignment is worth 5% of your grade.

Letter to the Editor/Protest Rally Speech

Your purpose for this assignment will be to take one issue that we have covered this semester and to communicate about it both written and oral form in the public forum. Letters to the editor and protest speeches are two common ways that citizens can make their voices heard on issues of concern. During the last week of the semester, you will choose one issue that has been raised during the semester and write and speak persuasively about it for these two different audiences. More details about the requirements for these assignments will be given in class. This assignment is worth 5% of your grade.

EVALUATION

Assignments

Day to Day Participation	75
Facilitations	25
Exam I	75
Exam II	75
Exam III	75
This I Believe Speech	25
Informative Presentation	100
Bibliographic Assignment	25
Letter/Protest Rally	25
TOTAL	500

Grading scale

93% and up	=A
90-92.9%	=A-
87-89.9%	=B+
83-86.9%	=B
80-82.9%	=B-
77-79.9%	=C+
73-76.9%	=C
70-72.9%	=C-
67-69.9%	=D+
63-69.9%	=D
60-62.9%	=D-
<59.9%	=F

Explanation of grading standards

I operate with the presumption that all Creighton students have the ability to earn at least a “C” grade in this course, and that it is the level of care, effort, skill, creativity, and insight that truly distinguishes the grades students earn on assignments. I will provide a detailed sheet of assignment guidelines and grading criteria for each major assignment you do in this course. Following these guidelines and meeting all of the *minimum* requirements on an assignment will earn a “C.” It is those students who *exceed* the minimum requirements who earn “B” and “A” grades.

To earn an “A” on an assignment (*excellent* work), students must meet the criteria for a “B” assignment as well as:

1. Demonstrate exceptional skill in using the elements of written and/or oral communication to create understanding and acceptance of the assignment;
2. demonstrate mastery of all the elements that constitute communication competence for the audience, context, and type of assignment; and
3. demonstrate a level of clarity, vividness, and succinctness that shows remarkable command of writing and/or speaking.

To earn a “B” on a written assignment (*above average* work), students must meet the criteria for a “C” assignment as well as:

1. demonstrate skillful use of transitions, internal summaries, and evidence to communicate your viewpoint or argument; and
2. provide detailed information that exceeds the basic requirements of the assignment.
3. demonstrate proficiency in all the elements that constitute communication competence for the audience, context, and type of assignment; and

To earn a “C” on a written and/or oral assignment (*average* work), students must meet the following criteria:

1. meet the purpose of the assignment;
2. include an introduction, body, and a conclusion;
3. include some form of transitions between main points;
4. include supporting evidence and detail that meets the purpose of the assignment; and
5. minimally meet accepted standards for spelling, grammar, clarity, sentence structure, and source citation (APA).

To earn a “D” on a written and/or oral assignment (*below average* work), one or more of the following problems are evident:

1. the use of generalizations without sufficient explicit supporting materials so that the assignment is based solely on opinion;
2. incomplete development of ideas;
3. a lack of organization;
4. the use of language that is inappropriate for the audience or context of the assignment;
5. frequent violation of accepted standards for spelling, grammar, clarity, sentence structure, and source citation.

To obtain an “F” on a written and/or oral assignment (*unacceptable* and therefore failing work), one or more of the following problems are evident:

1. a majority (or all) of the problems of a “D” assignment;
2. a lack of specific, timely, or relevant supporting material;
3. fabricated supporting material;
4. the deliberate distortion of supporting material; and/or
5. plagiarized and/or stolen materials.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The assignment schedule is subject to change in case of emergency, class needs, or community health conditions. Please bring your syllabus with you to class, so that you can note any changes. I reserve the right to substitute announced course materials if necessary. Assigned reading is ongoing and blueline won't be reminding you of each specific reading assignment, so please do the reading before each class and keep up.

Week:	Date:	Unit:	Assignments & Reading:
ONE	W 1/12	Intro to Course Considering Advocacy & Service Part I	
TWO	M 1/17	MLK Jr Day	NO CLASS
	W 1/19	Princesses & girlhood	Orenstein Ch. 1-3 (pp. 1-53)
THREE	M 1/24	Princesses & girlhood	Orenstein Ch. 4-5 (pp. 55-94) Facilitation: _____ & _____
	W 1/26	Princesses & girlhood	Orenstein Ch. 6-7 (pp. 95-131) Facilitation: _____ & _____
FOUR	M 1/31		<i>This I Believe speeches in class</i>
	W 2/2		<i>This I Believe speeches in class</i>
FIVE	M 2/7	Princesses & girlhood	Orenstein Ch. 8-10 & appendices (pp. 133-206) Facilitation: _____ & _____ <i>Speech self evaluation due to blueline</i>
	W 2/9	Princesses, princes, and boyhood	Readings posted on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____
SIX	M 2/14	Princesses wrap up and review	
	W 2/16		<i>Exam I on blueline 9am Wed-11:59pm Thurs</i>
SEVEN	M 2/21	Brides & weddings	Engstrom Ch. 1 (pp. 1-38) Facilitation: _____ & _____
	W 2/23	Brides & weddings	Engstrom Ch. 2-3 (pp. 39-116) Facilitation: _____ & _____ <i>Topic proposal discussion on blueline due today</i>
EIGHT	M 2/28	Brides & weddings	Engstrom Ch. 4-5 (pp. 117-190) Facilitation: _____ & _____
	W 3/2	Brides & weddings	Engstrom Ch. 6-8 (pp. 191-264) Facilitation: _____ & _____ <i>Bibliographic assignment due today</i>
	3/7-9	Spring Break	NO CLASS

NINE	M 3/14	Grooms and marriage	Readings posted on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____
	W 3/16	Weddings wrap up and review	
TEN	M 3/21		<i>Exam II on blueline 9am Sunday -11:59pm Monday</i>
	W 3/23	Wedding rituals and culture	<i>Presentations in class</i>
ELEVEN	M 3/28	Wedding rituals and culture	<i>Presentations in class</i>
	W 3/30	Wedding rituals and culture	<i>Presentations in class</i>
TWELVE	M 4/4	Wedding rituals and culture	<i>Presentations in class</i>
	W 4/6	Mothers	Readings on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____ <i>Speech self evals due to blueline today</i>
THIRTEEN	M 4/11	Mothers	Readings on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____
	W 4/13	Mothers	Readings on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____
FOURTEEN	M 4/18	Easter recess	NO CLASS
	W 4/20	Fathers' issues	Readings on Blueline Facilitation: _____ & _____
FIFTEEN	M 4/25	Reconsidering service and advocacy	Readings on Blueline
	W 4/27	Wrap up and review	
SIXTEEN	M 5/2		<i>Letters to the Editor (due to Blueline) Protest Rally Speeches (prep to Blueline, delivery in class)</i>
FINALS WEEK		172A: 5/4 8am 172B: 5/10 8am	<i>Exam III On blueline (times TBD)</i>