DOING MEDIA EDUCATION:
THE MEDIA & CULTURE SCREENING
& DISCUSSION SERIES

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by

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A final report submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Women's Studies

Women's Studies Program
Memorial University of Newfoundland

May, 2005

St. John's   Newfoundland

Popular culture is where the pedagogy is; it is where the learning is.

bell hooks

Abstract

The purpose of Media & Culture Screening and Discussion Series, an on-campus project created in the fall of 2003, has been to facilitate the viewing and discussion of alternative media, with a particular focus on the social role of mass media and issues of ideology, power, and the politics of representation. The following project report details the creation, execution, social context and theoretical underpinnings of the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series. Grounded in principles of popular critical education and a feminist social justice agenda, the Screening Series is both pedagogical and activist, and is an example of one of the ways media education might be 'done'.

Acknowledgements

Screening Series. Your participation and willingness to share, has made the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series a space of interdisciplinary, radical learning. Thank you for making this project such a joyful experience.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2003, I participated in a five-week internship at the Media Education Foundation (MEF)[1] in Northampton, Massachusetts. My interest in interning at MEF stemmed from a graduate course, completed as part of the elective course work component for the Master of Women's Studies Program, Education 6106: Reading and Teaching Popular Culture, with Dr. Ursula Kelly. The internship was unpaid; however, I was given a series of media education videos as a thank you gift for my work. On my way back to St. John's, I happened to meet Dr. David Thompson in the Halifax airport. Because I had worked with David on media issues in the past, both as an undergraduate student and as a Teaching Assistant in conjunction with Memorial University's Graduate Program in Teaching (I worked with the MEF video *Advertising & the End of the World* in one of David's classes), I mentioned my newly acquired MEF videos. David's response was, "Well, you should get those shown on campus." After several meetings to discuss how this might be arranged, the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series was born.

Begun as a way to share my new videos with anyone interested, the Screening Series has become my Master of Women's Studies project and has created an important space for cross-disciplinary discussion at Memorial University. Grounded in principles of popular

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[1] MEF produces and distributes video documentaries that aim "to encourage critical thinking and debate about the relationship between media ownership, commercial media content, and the democratic demand for free flows of information, diverse representations of ideas and people, and informed citizen participation" (www.mediaed.org/about).

critical education and a feminist social justice agenda, the Screening Series is both pedagogical and activist, as will become clear throughout this project report.

This report begins with a description of how the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series worked, how it was advertised, who sponsored it, and possible plans for the future. In section 2, I discuss why the Screening Series is an appropriate project for a Master of Women's Studies Program and, by looking at various definitions of feminism, how it is specifically feminist in nature. A personal narrative, in Section 3, Why a Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series, I reflect on my own experience with and desire for media education. Section 4, Social Context, includes a brief discussion of the historical development of, and social context for, media education. In Section 5, Theoretical Context, I outline approaches to media education as discussed in media education literature and consider how the Screening Series is an example of critical media literacy. Section 6, Goals and Objectives, is divided into two subsections. Subsection A, The Gap in Media Education, outlines the current dearth of media education and argues that the success and popularity of the Screening Series signifies a need and desire for publicly accessible media education. Subsection B, Critical Thinking and Political Consciousness, discusses how the Screening Series worked to bring people together to share their thoughts about, and to challenge, the many and varied social structures of power and domination that shape our lives. In section 7, I explore some of the ways in which the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series is an example of critical, feminist pedagogy in practice or what Paulo Freire and bell hooks call "education

as the practice of freedom." Finally, in the concluding section, Personal Reflections on Theory and Practice, I discuss how the Screening Series is an example of feminist praxis—a site of feminist theory in action.

Appended, readers will find an annotated videography. Like an annotated bibliography, the videography provides reference information for, and brief descriptions of videos screened during the first three terms of the series[2] (Fall 2003, Winter 2004 and Fall 2004). The videography is arranged alphabetically by video title and includes information about the screening of each video: name of discussion facilitator(s), screening date(s) and advertised description. Brief further discussions of two of the videos screened, *Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete* and *Wrestling with Manhood: Boys, Bullying & Battering*, are also included. These two videos look specifically at gender, and the presentation of each in turn created its own specifically gendered situation, provoking specifically gendered questions and challenges. Other appended materials include: a sample email sign-up sheet, participant feedback form, and a selection of Screening Series advertisements and media coverage. Appendices are referenced throughout this text.

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[2] Videos screened during the Winter 2005 semester are not included, as a completed draft of this report was written before the fourth term of the Media & Culture Screening Series began on February 10, 2005.

Section 1: The Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series—A Description

The Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series began in the Fall 2003 semester and continued during the Winter 2004, Fall 2004 and Winter 2005 terms. The Screening Series was officially incorporated into my graduate work in its third term. Each semester 6-8 videos were screened and discussed during a two-hour period, once a week, for 6-8 weeks (dependent on the number of videos being screened). Videos were chosen based on availability and relevance to the general theme of media and culture.

Throughout its four-term duration, I acted as Screening Series coordinator. As coordinator, I chose and secured all videos; invited discussion facilitators (individuals with some issue-relevant expertise) to lead and facilitate group discussion; introduced videos and discussion facilitators to the audience; handled all Screening Series publicity (creating series 'ads', overseeing the creation and posting of posters, posting posters, maintaining an email list and listserv, and speaking with campus media); and participated in all screenings and discussions. I acted as discussion facilitator at least once each term.

The Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series was open to the public and free of charge. Though it became my Master of Women's Studies Project, the series itself was not part of a course. It took place on campus in room SN2018. This room was provided to the Screening Series free of charge, as was the projection equipment. For three of the past four semesters the series was held from 12-2pm on Thursdays; in its second semester, the

Screening Series was held on Fridays from 1-3pm. These times were chosen because of room availability and because the Faculty of Arts had set aside slot 16 in the university timetable (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12-12:50 pm and Fridays 1-1:50pm) "as common time to be held open" within the Faculty of Arts, to facilitate seminars and other activities aimed at enhancing "intellectual life" on campus (Report of Faculty of Arts, p. 6, 2003). While it would be impossible to choose a time that would work for everyone interested in coming to the Screening Series, David Thompson and I hoped that many students and faculty (in the Faculty of Arts at least) would be free at this time.

A typical Screening Series session looked like this[3]: the door to SN2018 is open, a poster just outside the door (a copy of the posters used to advertise the screening throughout the week) signals that this is the room where the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series takes place and what video is being screened. I set up the projector and test that everything is working as participants arrive. At about 12:05 I welcome participants to the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series and thank them for coming. I note that the Screening Series is part of my graduate work and hand out (optional) feedback forms[4]. I introduce the video of the day and explain how the series works—we will watch a video and then discuss it and the issues it raises; the discussion will be facilitated by a discussion facilitator. I welcome and introduce the discussion facilitator, noting their

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[3] This description is meant to paint a picture of what a typical Screening Series session looked like for the reader who has not attended the series; not every session looked exactly like this. The atmosphere at the Screening Series was informal and the steps outlined here were not adhered to in a regimented way.

[4] Before the Screening Series became part of my graduate work, blank feedback sheets were periodically distributed for comments and suggestions.

particular interests and expertise as relevant to the video. I note the length of the video and that there will be a brief pause between the end of the video and the beginning of the discussion in case anyone needs to leave directly after the screening.[5] I distribute an (optional) email list sign up sheet (see Appendix 2). I announce the screening for the next week and ask if anyone has any questions before we begin. If there are questions, I address them. The video is screened. When the video is over, I invite the discussion facilitator to begin. The discussion facilitator stands or sits at the front of the room, speaks briefly (usually from 5-10 minutes) to some aspect of the video and then opens the floor for comments and questions. Often participants begin by addressing the speaker directly; as the discussion progresses it usually takes on a group dynamic with participants talking back and forth to each other and the facilitator. Many participants stay for the full discussion period, others leave directly after the screening or stay for part of the discussion.

Each Screening Series session lasted for approximately 2 hours (the total time available). Where the screening portion of the session was less than 1 hour, some sessions were slightly shorter, however shorter-length videos often resulted in a longer discussion. Ideally screening time was equal to discussion time, i.e. 1 hour for the video, 1 hour for discussion. Occasionally, videos screened exceeded 60 minutes. Because the room was typically only available for a total of 2 hours, this cut in on discussion time. For example, *The Laramie Project*, screened in the series' third semester, is about 90 minutes long;

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[5] Throughout the series some participants indicated they could only stay for the first hour or screening portion of the series because of work or school commitments, etc.

unfortunately the screening did not begin until about 12:10 because of technical problems with the projector. This left only 15 minutes for discussion, which, given the complex and important issues raised in the film, was not enough time.

In the series' third term, I began to distribute feedback forms (see Appendix 3). These forms asked participants to answer the following question: 'What do you think is use/value of having and/or attending a series like this?' And then left space for 'Other comments, suggestions, ideas....' Participants were then asked to indicate whether they had been to the series before, if 'yes' how many times, and if they would come again. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they were an undergraduate student, graduate student, professor, other university staff, or other. As the series progressed and some regular participants began to ask if it was necessary for them to keep filling out the feedback form, I changed the form slightly, asking participants to answer the following questions: 'How did you hear about the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series?' 'Do you think the series is valuable/useful? In what ways?' Participants were again asked to indicate whether they were an undergraduate student, graduate student, professor, other university staff, or other; whether or not they had been to the series before, if 'yes' how many times, and if they would come again. At the bottom of the form, space was left for 'Further comments, suggestions....' At each screening in the third term of the series, participants were told the Screening Series was my Master of Women's Studies project, that I would greatly appreciate them filling out the feedback form but doing so was entirely optional, that the feedback form was meant to be

anonymous, and that some of their comments might be used in my final project report. All solicited feedback was deposited in a comment box at the back of the room.

Participant feedback included many useful comments such as suggestions for screening topics. For example, in the series' second term a number of participants indicated a desire to see material that looked specifically at media representations of homosexuality. While I could not find/access a documentary that dealt specifically with Gays and/or Lesbians in the media, *The Laramie Project* has been presented in a number of Women's Studies classes as a way to facilitate discussion around social difference and compulsory heterosexuality. In response to participant feedback, *The Laramie Project* was screened in the series' third term.

Response to the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series has been overwhelmingly positive, both on solicited feedback forms and in informal conversation. Many people in the university community have said the series is a great addition to the campus learning environment. Such generous encouragement helped me realize that what began as a distraction from my 'work'—from writing a thesis and earning money—actually was important work, was doing media education.

Advertising

The Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series has been advertised in a variety of ways (see Appendix 4): posters placed throughout campus (one term when a MUCEP

student was helping with the posting of posters, posters were also placed in cafes downtown); radio announcements on the campus radio station, CHMR; an email list (these e-announcements often get forwarded to other lists); on the University website http://today.mun.ca; and in the classifieds of the University student newspaper, The Muse. When I began to ask participants to let me know how they found out about the series, most cited the eye-catching posters placed throughout campus. All series posters were designed by my brother, John Devereaux, a graphic designer in London, England. Each week I emailed him the text for the upcoming screening and he sent me a poster. He did this work free of charge.[6]

The Screening Series has also benefited from local media coverage (see Appendix 5). The Muse ran a two-page feature story on the series one week before it began (Riggio, 2003)[7]. Additionally, in its first semester CBC Radio interviewed one of the discussion facilitators, Jay Goulding, about the screening of *Wrestling with Manhood: Boys, Bullying and Battering* (see Videography for further discussion of the gender dynamics at play in this interaction with 'the media'), and Student Correspondent Lacy O'Connell wrote a piece about the series, "The Best Course You'll Never Take," in the University paper Gazette (2004).

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[6] And I will be eternally grateful.
[7] Thanks to David Thompson for approaching The Muse about writing this story and to Adam Riggio for the excellent pre-Screening Series publicity.

Sponsorship

Readers who view the appended posters and articles will note that when the series began it was sponsored by the Philosophy Department. As mentioned above it was by pure coincidence that I ran into David Thompson in the Halifax airport. While David has been affiliated with Women's Studies in the past, he is a professor in the Philosophy Department and offered to have Philosophy sponsor the series. Sponsorship of the series involved covering photocopying costs, and served to 'legitimise' the series in an administrative sense—official university sponsorship facilitated the distribution of series advertising (e.g. the mailroom will only distribute notices that have some official university sponsorship) and the booking of a room and projector. As I did not initially intend to incorporate the series into my graduate work, and saw no need for further sponsorship, it did not occur to me to ask the Women's Studies Program to act as a co-sponsor. However, as the series progressed, a number of people in the Women's Studies Program began to ask why Women's Studies was not involved. Additionally, as its popularity grew, it became clear that the Screening Series was beneficial for its sponsor in terms of positive publicity (a situation I had not anticipated).

At the end of the first term, I discussed adding Women's Studies as a co-sponsor with Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Women's Studies Program Co-ordinator. In its second term, the Screening Series was sponsored by both Women's Studies and the Philosophy Department. Additionally, Elizabeth found some funding, which would allow me to be paid for running the series during its second term, and Women's Studies hired a MUCEP

student who assisted with series publicity (unfortunately these little 'luxuries'—a salary and an assistant—though much appreciated, only lasted one term).

By the third term of the series, I had finally come to realize that my work in the area of media education was more than an extra-curricular activity; I came to realize that media education is the type of feminist and academic work I want to do and I began the process of incorporating the series into my graduate program. At this time, David Thompson was away on sabbatical and I took over the logistical aspects of the series he had previously been charged with—booking a room and a projector. I did not approach the Philosophy Department to request continued sponsorship. In its third term, Women's Studies was the sole sponsor of the Screening Series. However, in its fourth term, as a mark of the support the Screening Series has gotten from both David Thompson (Philosophy) and Elizabeth Yeoman (Women's Studies) the series is again listed as being co-sponsored by Women's Studies and the Philosophy Department. Women's Studies continues to cover the photocopying costs.

Plans for the future

This project began as a personal interest and passion, and it has continued to be a personal interest and passion. The value of the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series has been acknowledged by many in the university community. Given the interest in the series, on the part of students and faculty, the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series has the potential to become a long-term, regular feature on campus.

The series has developed a significant following and there are currently over 200 names on the Media & Culture Screening Series email list. Though I cannot be sure of my direct involvement over the next few years, (I will be out of the province come fall 2005), a number of student participants have expressed interest in helping out with the series. Possibilities for continuation will be discussed with the Women's Studies Program. One possibility may be for the Women's Studies Program to secure funding to hire a student to coordinate the series. I will maintain contact with future Screening Series coordinators, and my personal copies of videos/dvds will always be made available to the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series community. Hopefully Memorial's collection of media education videos, produced by MEF and others, will continue to grow[8], and the series will continue as a space of cross-disciplinary learning. grounded in principles of popular critical education and a feminist social justice agenda.

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[8] Though I have not attempted to do so, it may be helpful for future coordinators to work in conjunction with the Media Centre at the QE II library. Perhaps such a collaboration would increase the number of videos available to be screened in the series.

Section 2: Feminism and the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series

Part of what I want to consider in this report is why this project is appropriate for completion within a Women's Studies Program. Indeed, at times when I have told people what my project is, they have responded with something like, "Oh, so you're looking at women in the media are you?" While some of the videos screened do deal specifically and exclusively with media images of women, for example *Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete*, the videos shown during the series have not been limited to ones that deal exclusively with gender or women, the underlying theme of the series is not women in the media and the audience is not women-only. Nor should the theme or audience be so limited, as such limitation would betray the intersecting and compounding nature of social and cultural difference and oppression[9].

The videos screened at the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series cover a wide range of topics central to discussions of ideology, power and representation. Gender is certainly a central theme, for example in *Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete* and *Wrestling with Manhood: Boys, Bullying & Battering*, but it is not the only one. The series has also looked at central themes of: sexuality (*The Laramie Project. Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*); racism (*Game Over: Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games)*; imperialism (*Beyond Good & Evil: Children, Media & Violent Times*; *Independent Media in a Time of War)*; the environment (*Advertising & the End of the*

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[9] Thanks to Dr. Ursula Kelly for this insight.

World); and, class and capitalism (*The Overspent American*). Often, the themes intersect, for example, *Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood & Corporate Power* looks at capitalism, imperialism and representations of gender, race and childhood. The range of topics is broad, but the underlying theme of the series is critical analysis of cultural systems of power and oppression. To some, it may not be immediately clear that this is a particularly feminist project. The series is not, after all, called the Feminist Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series, but it could be.

In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks argues that feminism must challenge not only a patriarchal society, but also "a political system of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (2000, p. xiv). hooks writes:

> Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is
> necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that
> permeates Western culture on various levels [gender, race, class,
> sexuality], as well as a commitment to reorganising society so that the
> self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism,
> economic expansion, and material desires.... A commitment to feminism
> so defined would demand that each individual participant acquire a critical
> political consciousness based on ideas and beliefs. (2000, p. 26)

In *A Feminist Dictionary* (Kramarae & Triechler, 1985), citations defining Feminism fill five columns, and include the following from the Combahee River Collective:

> We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual,
> heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the
> development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that
> the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these
> oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.... (p. 159)

Like the Black feminist women in the Combahee River Collective, many feminists of colour—bell hooks, Barbara Smith, Charlotte Bunch, Audre Lorde, Cerrie Moraga—have challenged feminism to see its job as not only about gender, but about fundamentally altering all systems of oppression to radically change society. They argue that this mass movement for change would work to benefit the lives of *all* women and girls. It would also work to better the lives of men and boys, as it would acknowledge that men and boys also suffer at the hands of oppressive, imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, heterosexist structures of domination. This vision of a mass feminist movement is holistic in its approach and could potentially be (and has been) critiqued for shifting the focus from women. However, many feminists who insist that feminism must take on racism, heterosexism, classism and imperialism in addition to sexism, argue that the struggle to end oppression does not have to be an either/or approach, indeed it cannot be an either/or approach, as, as the Combahee River Collective contend, it is "the synthesis of these oppressions [that] create the conditions of [women's] lives."

Calling attention to the different systems of oppression affecting women's lives does not dismiss sexism; it places sexism within a broader context, what bell hooks calls—"the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture". Feminists like bell hooks and Christine Sleeter (see Miner & Peterson, 2000/2001) argue such an approach acknowledges the ways in which women are both oppressed by and *benefit* from institutionalised systems of oppression; a social justice agenda to end ideologies of oppression must recognize difference, and problematize all privilege, not just gender

privilege. For example, as a white, middle-class woman living in North America I have race, class and geographical privilege, and the ways in which I experience oppression are different from the ways in which an Arab woman in Afghanistan experiences oppression. Thus a video like *Beyond Good & Evil: Children, Media & Violent Times*, which does not look specifically at sexism but does look at racism and imperialism, is relevant to me as a woman and feminist, and can help me to think critically about the ways I may participate in and benefit from institutionalised forms of racism and imperialism.

At first glance this project may seem to be an unusual fit for a Women's Studies Program as within such programs feminist research is often framed as being 'for, of and about women.' I would argue that feminist work does not have to be 'for, of and about women' at the exclusion of men. It can be work that is 'for, of and about' women, 'for, of and about men;' 'for, of and about' envisioning a society that does not subscribe to an ideology of domination. Feminist movement to eradicate a political system of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy has the potential, as a mass-based feminist movement should, to create a space where all people feel that feminism is relevant to their lives. In the current ideology of domination, very few people actually live lives free of oppression.

Though this project does not always focus exclusively on sexist oppression and is not organized around the theme of women in the media (which, while also problematic, would more obviously 'fit' the Women's Studies Program), within a broader context of

critical analysis, it challenges ideologies of domination as reinforced through media systems in a media-centric society, and as such is a feminist project informed by feminist principles. The series attempts to provide an interdisciplinary space where the many and varied intersections of power and oppression can be examined, analyzed and talked about. Naming, thinking critically about and discussing these systems of oppression may help, in some small way, to begin the process of dismantling them, as we envision ways in which our lives might be lived differently, in more egalitarian, feminist ways.

Section 3: Why a Screening and Discussion Series?

If asked, at the very first screening of the series, why I was doing this, I may not have been able to articulate why, on a philosophical or epistemological level, I thought holding a Screening Series on campus might be important. I would, however, have been able to articulate why such a series would be relevant to my personal experience.

As stated above, the series began as a result of my having interned at the Media Education Foundation in Northampton, Massachusetts. I decided to apply to intern at MEF after watching the MEF video *Advertising & the End of the World* as part of Education 6106: Reading and Teaching Popular Culture. I loved this video. I borrowed the video from course instructor Dr. Ursula Kelly and used it when working as a Teaching Assistant. Some would say I became an *Advertising & the End of the World*

groupie. But why, why did *Advertising & the End of the World*, an educational video (hardly *The Dead Poets Society*) appeal to me so?

The general premise of *Advertising & the End of the World* is that advertising plays a powerful social role in our culture. In the video Sut Jhally (Professor of Communications, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and founder and director of MEF) argues that so much time, energy, human creativity and money go into advertising, so interwoven is advertising in all our forms of media communication, that advertising has today become our culture's main storyteller—it shapes our values, our behaviour, even our identities. Further, we 'buy' advertising, it plays such a significant role in our lives, not because we are duped into believing whatever advertisers tell us, but because advertising appeals to very real human needs for love, family, friendship, and belonging—our social needs—by linking these social needs to the inanimate world of things (see Videography for further discussion of *Advertising & the End of the World*).

Before entering the Master of Women's Studies Program at MUN, I lived for two years in Budapest, Hungary and worked for an environmental organization, the World Wide Fund for Nature. Budapest is a beautiful city; it is also a city where poverty, at a level where basic human needs are not being met, is visible everyday. By Budapest standards, I was well off and I was very much aware of this. My colleagues and friends were, for the most part, environmentalists and Hungarian. Although Hungarians do have access to a great deal of Western media, and Hungary is currently experiencing rapid Westernisation

through foreign—Canadian and American—investment, I would argue that Hungarian values, in terms of wealth and consumerism, are still quite different from North American values. Or it is at least possible to find and participate in community life with a more socialist, less individualistic outlook, wherein 'success' is not exclusively defined in terms of monetary wealth, as is often the case in North America. Outside of grocery and souvenir/gift shopping, I shopped very little; when I did shop for clothing, I usually shopped second-hand (a very common practice in Budapest). I had very little access to media and media advertising: I did not watch TV, since I could not understand Hungarian; I did not buy magazines, English ones were too expensive; I had limited access to the Internet; and, I did not understand billboard ads. I did occasionally buy English newspapers.

When I left Budapest, I moved to Toronto to intern at *Saturday Night* magazine. Suddenly, in Toronto, I went from being a person who was content with what she had (and knew she was lucky to have it) to a person who wanted everything she saw. I could not walk past a store without feeling I needed newer, more fashionable clothes, could not pass a hair salon without feeling I needed a better, more expensive hairstyle. I could not believe it. What was wrong with me? Miss Socialist Environmentalist was suddenly Miss Consumer Capitalist. Why were my feelings suddenly so counter to what I believed I valued? In Budapest that May, I felt fine with who I was, lucky to have all that I had; in Toronto that June, I didn't feel so good, and for some reason felt compelled to buy my way to feeling better.

When I returned to St. John's in the fall, I still could not explain my experience. Then I watched *Advertising & the End of the World*, and found in this video the words/analytical tools I needed to explain or theorize that summer in Toronto: I had moved from a place where I was relatively settled and comfortable, to a place where I knew no one and felt like I did not belong. And I suddenly had access to North American media, very intimate access given that I was working at a magazine—I understood the ads, and I understood them better than I thought. That summer I was feeling as if I had no friends and did not belong, and the media around me offered a solution to these problems through consumption. I was not cracking up or losing my soul; I was accurately interpreting the messages of a media that is consumer-centric, participating in a society that is media-centric. Media education, in the form of a video produced by a place calling itself the Media Education Foundation, gave me the theory, the words, to better understand a rather confusing personal experience in a social context.

Section 4: Social Context—Why is Media Education Important?

Media education, also often referred to in the literature as media literacy, has been part of educational discourse for a number of decades. In the essay, *Literacies and Media Culture*, Ursula Kelly (2005) notes that recognition of the need for media education has happened at a variety of levels, from large international bodies to individual educators:

> Since the 1950s the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural
> Organization (UNESCO) has focussed its attention on education and
> media and, by the early 1960s, had made its first declarations regarding

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the need for education which encouraged a critical perspective on media culture…. In subsequent decades, various UNESCO initiatives – research, curriculum development, conferences – were undertaken while, simultaneously, in several countries, educational inroads were forged by teachers who argued, from a number of competing ideological perspectives, that media education was an essential component of contemporary citizenship. (p. 2)

Official and grassroots recognition of the need for media education/ literacy indicates a willingness (at least on the part of some) to acknowledge the powerful social role communications media play in our daily life.

The invention and mass availability of television in the 1950s and early 60s seems to have been, at least to a degree, one of the major catalysts behind this move toward recognition of and support for media education. And certainly television continues to be a primary focus of media educators. As Carmen Luke, a feminist educator writes in *Media Literacy and Cultural Studies* "Television is today's mass social educator and it does have a powerful influence on social life, politics, consumer behaviour, and the shaping of public sentiment" (1997, p. 19). Even if one is hesitant to say that *television* is today's mass social educator, surely popular media—in the form of TV, movies, radio, music, the Internet, magazines and newspapers—is. Many of us learn a great deal of what we know about the world around us—including what we know about gender, race, class, sexuality, and difference—through popular media. This learning shapes our value systems, our identities and the way we live in the world. Again Luke writes,

Given the pervasiveness of Western mass media and mass culture that children grow up with—the electronic, symbolic, commodity, and ideological signification system of popular culture—…TV [or we may say

here all popular media] cannot be ignored…but must be treated seriously as a social text, as cultural icon, and as social practice. (1997, p. 20)

Much of what is written about media education focuses on children and young adults. This is understandable given that: a) many media education advocates are educators who work in the classroom and experience, firsthand, the role popular media plays in the lives of their students; b) children and young adults consume a great deal of popular media at a time when they are said to be in 'developmental and impressionable stages of life'; c) the producers of popular media spend a great deal of time and money targeting children and young adults as media consumers (a child may sit in front of the television watching Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, wearing a t-shirt with Belle and the Beast on it, as she eats the McDonald's 'happy meal' that came with the Belle figurine that she's also playing with!); and d) media communication—the shows they watch, the music they listen to, the computer games they play—is very important to children and young adults.

I agree that media education should play an important role in the educational lives of children and should be included in school curricula. I would also argue that the mass media continues to act as mass educator, continues to shape the way we live in the world, long after we've passed through young adulthood and have left our school years behind. If we consider the fact that most people in North America finish with formal education once they've reached the age of 21 or 22, it is possible to argue that popular media acts as the primary, indeed virtually the sole, social educator for the majority of the population in

North America, for most of their lives. The media will play this role whether we recognize the importance of, or indeed have access to, media education/literacy or not.

Section 5: Theoretical Context—Paradigmatic Approaches to Media Education

In *Paradigms and Pedagogies: Watching Media Teaching World-wide*, a cross-cultural study of media education in eight English-speaking countries, Andrew Hart (1998) outlines three media education paradigms:

1) inoculatory/ protectionist
2) discriminatory/ popular arts
3) critical/ representational/ semiological.

These paradigms represent "three major phases in the development of Media Education in the last 50 years" (Hart, p.19). Hart notes that these paradigms are not mutually exclusive and often work contingently when and where media education is 'done'. The inoculatory/ protectionist paradigm "seeks to develop discrimination against certain kinds of media" (p. 18); here 'the media' may often be framed generally as something students/citizens need to be protected from. The discriminatory/ popular arts paradigm "seeks to encourage discrimination between media" (p.18); here students/citizens might be primarily asked to recognize the aesthetic merit of certain media, e.g. documentary, while other types of media, e.g. American soaps, are dismissed. The critical/ representational/ semiological paradigm "seeks to address issues of ideology, power and

the politics of representation" (p.18) within the media we consume and (potentially) create.

In *Multiple Literacies and Critical Pedagogy in a Multicultural Society*, Douglas Kellner (1998) outlines four different 'approaches' within the field of media pedagogy:

> A traditionalist "protectionist" approach would attempt to "inoculate" young people against the effects of media addiction and manipulation by cultivating a taste for book literacy, high culture, and the values of truth, beauty, and justice, and by denigrating all forms of media and computer culture…. A "media literacy" movement, by contrast attempts to teach students to read, analyze, and decode media texts, in a fashion parallel to the cultivation of print literacy. Media arts education in turn teaches students to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of media and to use various media technologies as tools of self-expression and creation. Critical media literacy…builds on these approaches, analyzing media culture as products of social production and struggle, and teaching students to be critical of media representations and discourses, but also stressing the importance of learning to use the media as modes of self-expression and social activism. (p. 113)

Obviously, the paradigms outlined by Hart and the approaches outlined by Kellner are closely aligned. I would argue (and hope) that the paradigm/approach the Screening Series is most closely aligned with, is what Hart calls the critical/ representational/ semiological paradigm and what Kellner refers to as the critical media literacy approach; a paradigm/approach which incorporates feminism, critical race theory, queer theory and other anti-oppressive frameworks to promote a social justice agenda in media studies and media education.[10] For example, videos presented at the Screening Series directly analysed media in ways that addressed "issues of ideology, power and the politics of

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[10] Thanks to Dr. Ursula Kelly for this insight.

representation" and "media culture as products of social production and struggle" (*Advertising & the End of the World; Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete; Wrestling with Manhood; Game Over: Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games*), or helped to facilitate discussion around issues of ideology and power through the medium of the video screened (*Who's Counting: Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies & Global Economics; The Laramie Project*). The Screening Series was not a film series; videos screened were not chosen for their artistic or cinematic merit, nor was their aesthetic value generally discussed at the series.

hooks (2000) argues that education is essential to a mass-based feminist movement, that critical, analytical thinking skills are necessary for liberation. Yet most of us are not encouraged to think critically. As Charlotte Bunch (1979) writes:

> Our society (and indeed all societies today) trains only a few people to think in this manner, mostly those from the classes it expects to control the social order. Certainly most women are not expected to take control, and, in consequence, are not encouraged to think analytically. In fact, critical thinking is the antithesis of woman's traditional role.... We are not meant to think analytically about society, to question the way things are, or to consider how they could be different. Such thinking involves an active, not a passive, relationship to the world. It requires confidence that your thoughts are worth pursuing and that you can make a difference. And it demands looking beyond making do, and into how to make "making do" different—how to change the structures that control our lives. (p. 14)

Given its potential to facilitate critical thought, media education which follows a critical media literacy approach has the potential to be profoundly radical in nature, helping women and men, girls and boys, conceive of "revolutionary ideology" (Boggs & Boggs, 1974), to create a blueprint for transgressive change. As Kellner suggests, where media

education also includes "learning to use the media as modes of self-expression and social activism," media education can be an empowering creative tool, used to further feminist struggle for the transformation of society. Creating media was not part of the Media and Culture Screening and Discussion Series. However, media—in the form of videos—was used to do media education. In this way, the series resisted the current colonization we see happening in mainstream media whereby the media is used more often to reinforce a "pedagogy of domination" (hooks, 2003, p. 11). Media does not have to be used in this way, media can be revolutionary; media can be used to facilitate critical thinking, to critique, not uphold, the status quo. Additionally, by watching media and then discussing it, we are not colonized by the media we consume, we interact with it (both the video we have just seen and the media that video is analysing). In most of our day-to-day interactions with the media, we are simply 'talked to'; the discussion portion of the Screening Series allows participants to 'talk with.' This dialogue may be considered a form of what Paulo Freire refers to as "education for critical consciousness," a concept he has also specifically referred to as "dialogic pedagogy" (Shor and Freire, 1987).

While not all media education is 'done' through the medium of video, this format is highly accessible. In *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center*, bell hooks argues that low print literacy continues to be a problem in North America today and insists that if the feminist movement continues to depend on written material to disseminate its message (as it has done in the past) it must work to improve literacy and/or deliver its message in different ways using alternative media. Most people in the West today have had some

experience with reading visual media (television/movies) and can read these texts at a basic level of comprehension. Feminist media education then, when facilitated through media such as video, has the potential to develop these visual reading skills further to encompass critical and analytical skills. Basic print literacy may not have been an issue for Screening Series participants, as most were involved with the university in some way. However, if, as hooks contends, feminism must concern itself with accessibility, the potential for increased accessibility is relevant here as a Women's Studies project and as a consideration if this Screening Series were to be used as a model for the creation of similar media education-focused screening and discussion series elsewhere (as part of an alternative education program, for instance).

I coordinated the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series with the intention of creating a project informed by a critical/ representational/ semiological paradigm or critical media literacy approach; however, there was sometimes slippage between paradigms, as Hart suggests there will be. As coordinator, I was not 'in control' of the series. For example, I had no role in the production of the videos screened and was limited in terms access to screening materials; I asked discussion facilitators to facilitate discussion in the hope that they would subscribe to similar ideological perspectives with respect to public and media pedagogy, but I was never certain; participants attended screenings with their own ideological perspectives and opinions with respect to media. For instance, to some degree, the video *Game Over: Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games*, and some of the discussion around it, did, at times, dismiss video games as

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'bad'—a rather protectionist approach, and commonly held opinion, not always useful in engaging people who play video games. However, this situation was somewhat mediated by the fact that I was fortunate enough to have found a discussion facilitator, Andrew House[11], who is a video game fan, and a number of people in the audience (though they were in the minority) were also video game fans. This screening may not have altered some of the anti-gamers rather protectionist perspectives on video games, nor some of the pro-gamers more 'media arts' approach to the artistic/digital merit of video games; however, it did result in a rather lively discussion.

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[11] Andrew had been coming to the Screening Series frequently and once mentioned something about video games during a post-screening discussion. I then tracked him down using the Screening Series email list and the Internet and asked him to act as a discussion facilitator. Thanks to Andrew for the excellent discussion facilitation.

Section 6: Goals and Objectives

A) The Gap in Media Education

Ursula Kelly (2005) notes that although media education/literacy has been acknowledged, discussed and even incorporated at a variety of levels for over half a century, "educational attention [to media culture] remains uneven, sporadic, contradictory, and terribly out of step with many of the most compelling theoretical advances regarding media, education, and literacy" (p. 2). The need for and importance of media education may be immediate, and in many circles officially recognized and even theoretically supported, but that does not mean it is being done. Why not?

There are many reasons why media education is neither being done on a large scale at secondary and post-secondary institutions or, more informally, as part of a broader public pedagogy. As Henry Giroux (1999) suggests,

> Culture provides the conditions for putting subject positions and identities in place, and it has become a major force for global historical changes. Moreover, it is increasingly characterized by the rise of institutions and technologies which are transforming the traditional spheres of the economy, industry, society, and everyday life. Culture [particularly popular culture] now plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others." (pp. 1-2)

Yet, generally speaking, societal and pedagogical approaches to culture have abstracted it from "the dynamics of power and politics," claiming that culture has little or nothing to do with power and politics, relegating the serious study of culture—that is high

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culture—to the search for "universal claims of truth, beauty and reason" (Giroux, 1999,

p. 1).

We pay very little attention to popular culture, particularly popular media culture; it is

dismissed as 'mere entertainment,' a pastime that does not require any serious attention,

or alternately, as banal and stupid. Nadine Dolby (2003) writes that this argument is

deeply rooted:

> From the 1860s until the 1950s, Matthew Arnold's concept of culture,
> which in turn helped define popular culture, was the most significant and
> influential. In an often-quoted phrase, Arnold defined culture as 'the best
> that has been thought and said in the world.' This definition, combined
> with Arnold's pronounced beliefs that the British aristocracy and middle
> class were not only superior to the working class but also further along the
> evolutionary path, led to a valorization of so-called high culture as
> opposed to the culture of the common or working class. (pp. 258-59)

This point may help explain why novels and poetry—read by many for entertainment and

pleasure—seem to merit serious study, while the merit of studying other texts, TV

programs and video games, is often still in question. Arnold's obvious bias—in terms of

nationality, class, race, gender, and sexuality—seems almost laughable. British,

aristocratic, white, male, heterosexual culture would of course likely be defined as 'the

best that has been thought and said in the world,' by a British, aristocratic, white, male,

heterosexual. And certainly the institutionalisation of this definition was supported and

entrenched by others who shared with Arnold—or longed for—similar positions of

power.

Unfortunately, though Arnold's bias is obvious, as Giroux and Dolby contend, the distinction between and favouring of high culture over popular/low culture continues. To a great degree, public and educational resistance to taking popular media culture seriously has limited the mass availability of any type of media education. For example, in his cross-cultural study of how media education is taught internationally in the English-speaking world, Andrew Hart (1998) notes that even media educators will often express such disdain for television, that they, and in turn their students, are prevented from engaging with television in any meaningful way. Further, in *Media Literacy and Cultural Studies* Carmen Luke writes,

> Educators, as defenders of print, have a particular and longstanding problem with TV and popular culture more generally. For the most part, teachers claim that they do not watch "low brow" commercial TV, they refuse to teach with it or about it. Most will only acknowledge it as a significant part of children's lives and an important part of their social and cultural learning in terms of TV's negative content and social consequences. (1997, p. 19)

Many Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series participants have said informally to me, and/or anonymously on optional feedback sheets, that they come to the series because they do not normally get to see/hear/discuss the types of things they see/hear/discuss at the Screening Series. They do not normally have access to these types of videos, these types of discussion; they do not normally have access to media education. One undergraduate student who indicated s/he had been to the series twice before answered the question "Do you think this series is valuable/useful? With the statement: "Yes. I'd never see these films otherwise." Another first-time participant and

graduate student wrote: "It is a great forum to discuss important issues, and access to videos we wouldn't normally have access to." An undergraduate student and first-time participant wrote: "While this is my first visit to the series, I feel that the outlet is a valuable resource on campus that illuminates relevant and important issues that may otherwise receive little acknowledgement."

I latched on to *Advertising & the End of the World*, travelled to Northampton Massachusetts and stayed for five weeks, doing unpaid work, because of a personal desire for media literacy. The success and popularity of the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series are evidence that other people at Memorial University feel this need/desire, and indicates that these needs/desires for media education are not being met in other settings. This project has tried, in a small way, to meet these needs/desires, and to fill (even a little) this huge gap.

B) Critical thinking and Political Consciousness

As discussed earlier, media education has the potential to facilitate critical thinking. Providing a space conducive to critical analysis and political consciousness has been one of the primary goals of the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series. Informal discussion with Screenings Series participants in addition to written feedback on optional feedback forms suggests that the series has achieved this goal. Written responses to the

question "What do you think is the use/value of having and/or attending a series like this?" include:

> Increases awareness on important issues, gives people an opportunity to discuss and address issues they otherwise may not. (Graduate student; first time series participant. *Playing Unfair*.)

> I think this "media + culture" series encourages critical thinking about taken-for-granted aspects of our culture. The films/documentaries shown attempt to show the "other side" of what we see/hear in mainstream media. (Undergraduate student; frequent series participant who indicated s/he had attended series approximately 6 times. *Playing Unfair*.)

> Wow! It's been so long since I've seen a group of people sit down and think critically about such issues. (Graduate student; first time series participant. *Beyond Good and Evil*.)

> Allows ourselves to be educated on the events occurring in our own world. Educate ourselves enough to not just accept, but to make important good decisions. (Undergraduate student; first time series participant. *Beyond Good & Evil*.)

This last comment speaks directly to the value of critical thinking. Being 'allowed,' even encouraged, to think critically about the world around us is empowering, is feminist. As critical thinkers we have, as Charlotte Bunch (1979) suggests, an active relationship with the world; we do not simply 'accept' the world around us, we challenge it, and can work to make it better.

As series co-creator and coordinator, I often worried that perhaps the series was simply a venue for 'preaching to the converted.' As an optional activity, the audience was entirely self-selecting. How could I convince people to participate who might not already be interested in the issues being discussed? Should I? At the second screening of *Advertising & the End of the World*, we discussed the possible problem of 'preaching to the

converted.' In response to the question "Do you think this series is valuable/useful? Comments, thoughts..." one undergraduate student and first-time series participant wrote: "Yes, valuable—even though we may be 'preaching to the converted.' Being informed is always important. We all interact with people and we influence them, so any effort like this is a benefit."

The second screening of *No Logo: Brands, Globalization & Resistance* was done in conjunction with The People & Planet Fair: A Green and Fair Trade Extravaganza, an event organized by MUN's Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility (CESR) and other youth in the community. The aim of the weeklong Extravaganza was to educate people about environmental and social justice issues. There were a number of new faces at this screening, many who seemed to be in some way affiliated with The People & Planet Fair; as such, the potential for 'preaching to the converted' in this instance was quite high. Participants were not asked to fill out feedback forms, but were given blank pieces of paper as optional comment sheets. One participant wrote: "I have not been to many discussions this year, but I found this one to be quite good. One of the most lively and informative discussions this term. I hope to make it to more screenings next term." This person's comment suggests that even when most people in the audience are already acquainted with both the ideas presented and one another, there is value, even joy and excitement, in building and strengthening community among people with similar values. Additionally, the series has the potential to bring together like-minded people, who may, in the words of another participant commenting after the

screening of *Waiting for Martin*, "have similar interests/curiosities but might not usually get to cross paths."

I would like to present the videos screened in this series to other, perhaps more 'captive' audiences, and have tried to do so in a number of ways. For example, in presentations to university classes of undergraduate students, in a presentation to a group of first-year English instructors, in a joint presentation with Dr. Ursula Kelly to the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, and as part of Memorial University's Junior High School Enrichment program. Still, the process of coordinating a Screening Series for people who choose to attend has been a valuable experience in itself. While many of the people who attend the series are already critical thinkers and are at the series precisely because of their political awareness, critical analysis and political consciousness are not static states. Each participant brings his or her own experiences and viewpoints to the discussion. I have viewed and discussed *Advertising & the End of the World* with many different audiences: each time, I have learned something new. Through the screening of media that aim to challenge aspects of imperialist, heterosexist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy and the facilitation of group discussion, the series created a learning environment wherein individual political consciousness and critical awareness could grow and expand.

Section 7:

Education as the practice of freedom—Critical, feminist pedagogy in practice

As a project, the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series was about 'doing' media education. The series has aspired to embody what both bell hooks (1994) and Paulo Freire (1976) describe as 'education as the practice of freedom.' hooks builds on, and adds a specifically feminist critique to, the work of Brazilian thinker and educator Paulo Freire in her collection of essays *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. In his work, Freire argues that education has historically been used to reinforce societal power structures. As Nancy Squires and Robin Inlander (1990) write in *A Freirian-Inspired Video Curriculum for At-Risk High-School Students*,

> [Freire] believes that education is never neutral. It is a political act. The official curriculum is designed by the oppressors in a society and is imposed on the oppressed. The hidden agenda in this curriculum is teaching the basic skills and values of the dominant society and motivating the student through promises of future gains, grades, and/or punishment. In this process, the traditions [values, identities, and desires] of those outside of the dominant society are devalued. (p. 51)

However, education does not have to, nor should it, be used as an oppressive tool. Education has the potential to challenge, disrupt and radically transform oppressive ideologies. This type of education—education as the practice of freedom—has the potential to be a place of joy, a place of "ecstasy—pleasure and danger" (hooks, 1994, p. 3): the pleasure of learning new ideas, imagining new possibilities; the danger, the challenge, but also the excitement, of bringing these new ideas into daily life, of insisting on radical change.

In this section, I will outline the ways in which the Screening Series has been an example of critical, feminist pedagogy—education as the practice of freedom. In doing so, I am not claiming that every screening was an exercise in education as the practice of freedom, or that every person who attended the Screening Series experienced it as such. Rather, I am outlining both how, pedagogically, the series was set up, and my ideological position as series coordinator.

Education as the practice of freedom is about more than acquiring knowledge; it is directly related to how we live in the world. In this context, we are engaged as active participants in the world, potential revolutionaries. The classroom is a learning community, a collaborative learning environment and traditional student/professor learner/educator hierarchy is challenged; "education is a live and creative dialogue in which everyone knows something and does not know others, in which all seek together to know more" (Freire, 1971, p. 113).

When the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series began, discussion facilitators were listed on the series schedule and posters as 'speakers' (see Appendix 4). Naming discussion facilitators 'speakers,' reinforced conventional learner/educator hierarchies. There were a number of reasons for this set up. On a basic level, 'speaker' was the format I was most accustomed to seeing in public education/ public lecture settings. It actually did not occur to me to call the person who agreed to get up in the front of the room, speak

and direct the conversation (should there actually be any) anything but 'the speaker'. Additionally, as a student, I found myself in the position of asking people, in particular professors, some who I did not personally know, to come speak and facilitate discussion at a new and novel Screening Series and, well, who was I? They certainly did not need to agree to participate to impress me (as might be the case if asked by the head of their department or the Dean of their Faculty). Furthermore, I could not offer any type of monetary stipend to anyone who agreed to participate. Therefore, it seemed to me that I should at least offer the venue up as a speaking engagement, marking 'the speaker' as a type of expert and imbuing the task with at least a little prestige. The least I could do was offer people their name on a poster. Additionally, I initially feared that if people did actually come to the Screening Series, they might not talk. If that were the case, the main job of the speaker/discussion facilitator would indeed be to speak (perhaps this initial fear was in part related to my own experience of being in classes or at public lectures and not feeling comfortable enough to talk).

Partway through the first term of the series, Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman suggested she was surprised at being billed as 'speaker' on posters advertising the screening of *Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood & Corporate Power* (November 13, 2003). She did not consider herself to be a Disney 'expert' and was not really planning to 'speak,' but lead and participate in the discussion. Her comments, and our pursuant discussions around the notion of 'expert' and the role of the people who I had been billing as speakers, helped me realize that although the speakers did indeed have a great deal of

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expertise to offer, their role as the one who opened up and then directed discussion was actually more in line with that of equal participant. 'Discussion facilitator' more accurately described their task. After the first semester of the Screening Series, speakers were referred to as discussion facilitators. Though this naming is a relatively small change, it is indicative of one of the ways in which the Screening Series disrupts typical speaker/audience, educator/learner hierarchies, and how it has, over time, adapted and evolved.

Traditional educator/learner hierarchy (most often articulated as professor/student in the university setting) was challenged on a number of levels at the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series. I co-created, coordinated and was the public face of the series. I am not a professor; I am a student (and, significantly, a feminist student). Second, discussion facilitators had a variety of backgrounds. Some were professors (e.g. Dr. Robin Whitaker, Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman), some were students or former students (e.g. Andrew House, Laura Fitzpatrick), some were members of the public (e.g. Jay Goulding, Kevin Hehir); and while they were asked to begin the discussion by speaking to the video, they were asked to primarily *facilitate discussion*.

As bell hooks suggests, the practice of grading students' work makes it difficult to fully challenge traditional professor/student hierarchies in most academic settings, as neither the student who wants a good mark, nor the professor charged with assigning it, can ever completely forget this power dynamic. The Screening Series was not part of a for-credit

course, which enabled it to further disrupt traditional professor/student classroom hierarchies. Additionally, as a not-for-credit endeavor, the Screening Series was not attached to a fee and was open to the public. A person did not have to be registered at the university (i.e. paying tuition), or employed by it, to participate. Because I only screened videos available at no cost—through my affiliation with the Media Education Foundation, their availability at the university or public library, or via other contacts (professors'/friends' private collections)—there was no charge to attend the Screening Series. Though charging a fee could perhaps make it possible to order new screening material, it was important to me that the series be available as a free learning/thinking space. Most interactions in capitalist society require that people assume the role of consumer. By offering a cost-free learning space, the series addressed participants as people—citizens, co-learners and co-educators—not consumers. Education as the practice of freedom: education as free.

The 'not-for-credit' factor also disrupts conventional notions of learning that see education as something that is necessarily institutionally recognized. In the essay *Educating Women* (2000), bell hooks calls on feminist educators to educate women, to spread the feminist word so to speak, in non-academic settings. Educating outside the realm of the institution, at the margin, may be seen as a specifically feminist endeavor. Institutional sanction is not necessary for the legitimization of learning; learning can and does take place without administrative approval. The Screening Series could certainly form the basis of a university-level, for-credit course, and perhaps in time it will.

However, feminism has long challenged us to recognize the value of knowledge/work/learning that has not been traditionally valued within institutionalized social systems of white supremacist, colonial, capitalist patriarchy. Yet today, to not pursue post-secondary institutionalized education is often seen as a mark of failure, even where this choice means a person will learn and develop skills—get an education—in non-institutionalized ways (e.g. not going to university or college to pursue fishing or farming). In this climate, it is particularly important to have spaces where, metaphorically speaking, pedagogy can take place 'outside the classroom.' I say 'metaphorically speaking' because it is not the actual physical classroom that is necessarily the problem. The Screening Series does take place in a classroom and as such is affiliated with the university. However, hierarchal classroom dynamics, like conventional notions of what an education is, were challenged. This does not mean the university classroom setting was unproblematic. Holding the Screening Series on-campus meant that I could access a free screening space (SN 2018) and projector, I could access university-related media outlets for the purpose of advertising and I had the support of both the Philosophy Department and Women's Studies Program. However, people disenfranchised from such spaces (e.g. many poor women) because they often do not speak to their experiences, will most likely not come to on-campus events, even when these events are free and open to the public. The university community has work to do on bridging the perceived gap (as if the university is somehow above, not part of, the larger community) between the university and the broader public.[12] The Screening Series itself may have worked to

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[12] The development of the Women's Studies graduate course Feminism as Community may be seen as an

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bridge this gap, if people usually disenfranchised by educational institutions came to the series and felt comfortable in the learning community setting it created. Because I know very little about the backgrounds of series participants, I cannot say if this ever happened, but the potential is there. [13]

The ways in which the series challenged typical educator/learner hierarchies and conservative notions of education, seemed to play a role in the development of a setting that saw all series participants—students, members of the public and faculty—act as equal participants in post-screening discussions. One undergraduate student and first time series participant wrote, in response to the question "What do you think is the use/value of having and/or attending a series like this?" simply, "Learning, talking together." That s/he underlined the word 'together' is indicative of the important role 'togetherness' has played in the series. This togetherness has helped make the series a learning **community**. Even as a graduate student, I have at times felt uncomfortable participating in discussions in some learning situations, particularly at public lectures. Often in these settings the atmosphere sends a message which suggests that it would be best to let the real experts talk, because well, who am I, and what do I know anyway? Because the series has been constructed as a learning community, people felt comfortable participating in discussions. In some instances it was clear that individual's comfort levels grew as the series progressed, perhaps as it became evident that the series was an open and safe space. As

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attempt to address and bridge this gap.

[13] One way to address this situation in the future may be to specifically target typically disenfranchised populations in the advertising of the series, e.g. placing posters at the St. John's Women's Centre.

one undergraduate student, who indicated s/he had been to the series once before wrote: "This is unique. You don't need to invest yourself the same way (put yourself on the line the same way) as an actual class. You really can consider the information and deliver your ideas without worrying about how it will be accepted."

The videos screened at the series are meant to speak to a broad audience and deal with issues pertaining to media and culture—issues about which everyone, and anyone, is an expert by virtue of living in a media-centric world. The content and language of the videos worked to encourage people to relate the material presented to their personal experience. hooks insists that we must be "willing to acknowledge a connection between ideas learned in university settings and those learned in life practices" (1994, p.15); education as the practice of freedom gives participants (students and professors alike) permission to call upon and share personal experiences. Within Women's Studies, where the personal has long been considered political, the value of personal narrative in the classroom is, in most instances, assumed. During the discussion portions of the series, audience members frequently connected what they had just seen to their personal experience. For example, at the second screening of *No Logo*, one participant recounted his experience of working at a "McJob" in retail at Gap, and in turn, others discussed their personal struggles with trying to shop ethically. These personal anecdotes greatly added to the discussion of social conditions working to create McJobs and sweatshop labor, and how and why these conditions are relevant to our everyday practice.

The creation and evolution of the Media & Culture Screening and Discussion Series has been an interesting experience in public pedagogy. In all honesty, at each screening I worried that no one would show up, and if they did, that no one would talk (this fear diminished with each term but never left me entirely). But people kept showing up and they kept talking! Though I essentially offered discussion facilitators nothing but my thanks in exchange for their time and efforts, discussion facilitators kept agreeing to participate, were even happy to participate, thanked me for asking them to participate! Student, public and faculty interest in attending the series—an optional, middle-of-the-day activity which would give them no credit, nothing to write on their resume, no payment—indicates that people are simply interested in learning, discussing, sharing their experiences, listening to others' experiences, critical analysis, and critical thinking. People are interested in and seek out media education; they are interested in and seek out education as the practice of freedom.

Section 8: Personal Reflections on Theory and Practice

The development and coordination of the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion
Series has bridged what I have felt as a gap between feminist theory and feminist practice
in my own experience of Women's Studies.

In *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* bell hooks describes a "tug-of-war" within the
feminist movement between feminist activists and feminist intellectuals:

> This tug-of-war has led to the formation of a false dichotomy between
> theory (the development of ideas) and practice (the actions of the
> movement).... From the onset, women's liberation movement participants
> have struggled to unite theory and practice, to create a liberatory feminist
> praxis (defined by Paulo Freire as "action and reflection upon the world in
> order to transform it"). This struggle has been undermined by anti-
> intellectualism and by elitist academics who believe [and/or act as if] their
> "ideas" need not have any connection to real life. (2000, pp. 113-114)

As Women's Studies struggled to become part of academia, it was sometimes forced to
conform to structures of hegemony and oppression in order to prove its academic worth.
Only certain types of work—often work which in its language and form made it
inaccessible to most people—counted. hooks argues the work that most often fit was
work done by straight, white, middle-class women, as it would be these women who
could most easily fit within the structures held in place by colonialism, capitalism,
compulsory heterosexuality and white-supremacy:

> Work by women of color and marginalized groups of white
> women...especially if written in a manner that renders it accessible to a
> broad reading public, is often de-legitimized in academic settings, even if
> that work enables and promotes feminist practice. Though such work is

often appropriated by the very individuals setting restrictive critical standards, it is this work that they most often claim is not really theory. Clearly, one of the uses these individuals make of theory is instrumental. They use it to set up unnecessary and competing hierarchies of thought which reinscribe the politics of domination by designating work as either inferior, superior, or more or less worthy of attention. (1994, pp. 63-64)

Conversely

Within feminist circles, many women have responded to hegemonic feminist theory that does not speak clearly to us by trashing theory, and, as a consequence, further promoting the false dichotomy between theory and practice…. By internalizing the false assumption that theory is not a social practice, they promote the formation within feminist circles of a potentially oppressive hierarchy where all concrete action is viewed as more important than any theory written or spoken." (hooks, 1994, pp. 65-66)

Perhaps in an effort to remedy what has historically been academic exclusivity, in an attempt to prove to activist feminists that academic feminists are 'real feminists' too, and in an effort to bridge the gap that currently exists between the university and the community (as discussed above), my experience of graduate work in Women's Studies has been somewhat counter to the situation hooks describes. Theory was not favoured over action as the type of work graduate students in Women's Studies should do, (we should read it of course, but not do it); rather, it seemed to me, action was favoured over theory. [14] As a student drawn to Women's Studies by feminist theory, I spent a great deal of time worrying about the divide between feminist theory and feminist practice. I felt such relief when I first read bell hooks' article *Theory as Liberatory Practice* (1994). In

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[14] I completed the required Women's Studies graduate coursework during the Fall and Winter Semesters of 2001/2002. This comment is meant to convey my personal experience and interpretations of this coursework and it is not meant as a critique of the program. As hooks contends, the 'tug of war' between feminist theory and practice is a long-standing one, finding a theory/practice balance is difficult in any setting.

this piece hooks insists that theory—words—can be action and "subversive" action at that (p. 67). Indeed theory can be an important part of education as the practice of freedom. Perhaps I would not have to abandon theory, this thing that had brought me to Women's Studies, to be a good feminist. But could I actually do theory?

Terry Eagleton writes:

> Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as "natural," and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently. (1990, p. 34)

Theory then, is about trying to make sense out of experience; it is about imagining different, better alternatives. Theory is not exclusive to the academy; theory is everywhere.

By creating and running the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series, I have in some ways (much to my surprise), bridged the imposed gap between feminist theory and practice, a gap that I personally felt as extremely painful. Creating and running the series was an action, feminist action, which created a place where the value of critical thinking was recognized, allowed, encouraged; where theory was brought back to the everyday. The action of collectively doing theory, as participants in the Screening Series have done, acknowledges that there does not have to be a gap between theory and practice. Doing media education became feminist praxis.

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Appendix 1

Videography

- <u>Advertising & the End of the World</u>. Writ./Prod. Sut Jhally. Media Education Foundation: Northampton Massachusetts, 1999.

  Discussion Facilitator: Danielle Devereaux.
  Date: Shown at the very first screening October 23, 2003 and again November 4, 2004.[15]

  Advertised description: *Advertising surrounds us. Yet despite its prevalence, despite the vast amounts of money, time and creative energy spent on advertising we often dismiss it as trivial, unimportant. This video turns a critical eye on the world of advertising, examining the connection between the powerful social role of advertising and the consumer culture fueling a way of life this planet cannot sustain.*

  Video Synopsis: Broken into sections—Advertising as Culture; How Do We Become Happy; What Is Society; How Far into the Future Can We Think; and Imagining a Different Future—this video features Sut Jhally, director and founder of MEF. Jhally's analysis of the social impact of advertising is illustrated with clips from advertisements, news footage and graphs. Jhally argues advertising has colonized our culture, become our society's main storyteller and, as such, shapes our values and identities. As the mouthpiece of the capitalist marketplace, advertising shapes the way we live in the world in specific ways. In the way that advertising connects the dead world of things to happiness, it pushes us to seek satisfaction through consumption. In the way that it talks about the individual, it relegates societal concerns (e.g. environmental destruction and poverty) to the sidelines. In the way that it focuses on the present, it frees us from worry about the future. Jhally contends the consumer-centric world created and held together by advertising works because so much time, money and creative energy is put into it; he insists that we must create a new worldview, one that speaks to our social values and human needs, not the values and needs of the marketplace. (Video length: 40 min).

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[15] Anne Budgell, host of the CBC Radio Program *Radio Noon*, heard about the second screening of *Advertising and the End of the World* and invited me to come on the show to discuss advertising's influence on society (*Radio Noon Crosstalk*, February 28, 2005). Listeners were invited to call in and express their views on and experiences with advertising. Many listeners called in to participate in the discussion. Thanks to Anne for this fabulous opportunity.

- <u>Beyond Good & Evil: Children, Media & Violent Times</u>. Writ./Prod. Chyng Sun, Dir./Prod. Miguel Picker. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, Massachusetts. 2003.

  Discussion facilitator: Dr. Claire Wilkshire. Second screening: Dr. Karen Stanbridge. **Date**: February 13, 2004 and October 7, 2004.

  Advertised description: *From Hollywood movies and video games to what we watch on the evening news —when complicated issues are framed in black and white war becomes a game and we all cheer for the good guys. In the wake of September 11th the media was often used to turn complex international relationships into a simple fight between good and evil. Sure the story may be easier to sell but what is it doing to the future of the human race?*

  Video synopsis: Media scholars (Robert Jenson, Robin Andersen), child psychologists (Diane Levin, Nancy Carlsson-Paige), teachers (Merrie Najimy, Brian Wright), and educators (Eli Newberger and Betty Burkes) discuss the rhetoric of good versus evil in mainstream media, from children's programs, to Hollywood blockbusters and the evening news. In the rhetoric of good versus evil, violence in the name of good—as a means of overcoming evil—whether in reference to fictional movies or real life war, is justified, even glorified. The video looks specifically at how the mainstream media collaborated with the US government to frame the tragic events of September 11th as a fight between 'good' (America) and 'evil' (the 'foreigners' who orchestrated the attack) and justify the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Interviews with adults who say they want "revenge," that "the enemy must be eradicated because you cannot negotiate with the enemy" in addition to interviews with young children who say, among other things, that patriotism means "if someone says something bad about America, don't believe them cause it's not true" illustrate the analysis. (Video length: 37 min).

- <u>Game Over: Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games</u>. Dir./Prod. Nina Huntemann. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2000.

  Discussion facilitator: Andrew House.
  Date: March 19, 2004.

  Advertised description: *The military learned the hard way that most people don't really like killing other people, not a good situation if you find yourself at war, and so they came up with various training techniques to overcome this problem. One of them was the video game, introduced as a training device for the military now in the hands of millions of kids worldwide. Maybe it is all fun and games… but then what's so fun about electronic blood and gore anyway?*

Video synopsis: Includes interviews with media scholars Nina Huntemann, Michael Morgan, Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., Erica Scharrer and Lt. Col. David Grossman. Their analysis is illustrated with clips from video games and other relevant footage (e.g. of people playing video games). Interviewees discuss representations of race and gender in video games, arguing that most video games on the market today present very narrow images of gender and race: women are almost exclusively relegated to being 'buxom babes'; characters of color are usually 'the bad guy'; the protagonist character is usually a white male and his masculinity is linked to extreme violence. Violent acts are framed as a necessary means for reaching the goal of the game. *Game Over* includes an historical overview of the video game, which was originally created to help prepare soldiers for battle, simulating real life situations in an attempt to teach soldiers to kill. Today video games are a multi-billion dollar industry. This video asks what the social implications of the success and mainstream popularity of the video game and its representations of race, gender and violence might be. (Video length: 41 min).

- Independent Media in a Time of War. Prod. Branda Miller. Hudson-Mohawk Indy Media Center: Troy, MA, 2003.

    Discussion facilitator: Dr. Robin Whitaker. Second screening: Dr. Joan Scott.
    Date: March 5, 2004 and September 23, 2004

    Advertised description: *The corporate media's coverage of the 2003 Iraq War downplayed civilian casualties and glorified military combat. In this video Amy Goodman – independent journalist and host of Democracy Now! – considers the costs of coverage that is both sanitized and sensationalized. Using the example of the Iraq war Goodman asks: what impact does the commercialization and consolidation of the media industry have on journalism and democracy?*

    Video synopsis: This video revolves around a lecture delivered by Amy Goodman, independent journalist and host of *Democracy Now!* Her points are illustrated with clips from mainstream media coverage of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. She argues that in the US, mainstream media glorify war and downplay civilian casualties, thus US media viewers get a skewed picture of the reality and consequences of war. Further, Goodman contends that the commercialization and consolidation of the media is jeopardizing journalism as a craft, the lives of journalists (as in, you're embedded, or you're not protected) and democracy. (Video length: 35 min).

- The Laramie Project. Writ./Dir. Moises Kaufman. HBO Films: New York, 2002.

  Discussion facilitator: Laura Fitzpatrick.
  Date: September 30, 2004.

  Advertised description: *In October 1998, Laramie Wyoming became, for a time, the hate crime capital of North America when 21 year old Matthew Sheppard was brutally beaten, tied up and left to die because he was gay. The murderers, like the victim, were kids. The media descended on Laramie, as did a small theatre company who stayed for a year, interviewing over 200 of its residents in an effort to understand how 'a crime that couldn't happen here,' did. Their transcripts became a play; this HBO video is a dramatization based on the play and the interviews.*

  Video synopsis: Adapted from the play of the same name, *The Laramie Project* is a reenactment of events that took place when a New York theatre troupe spent a year in Laramie, Wyoming interviewing residents of the community about the brutal killing of gay college student Matthew Sheppard. The film includes dramatized reenactments of interviews with townspeople, clergy, hospital staff and police who tended to Matthew, college students and professors, and Matthew's friends. Some of the interviewees say Laramie is a nice town, that the people of Laramie are 'not like that;' that kind of thing doesn't happen here. Others say that because that type of thing *did* happen here, the people of Laramie, we, need to take responsibility for being like 'that.' Also includes dramatizations of the court proceeding of the two young men charged with, and convicted of Matthew's murder. (Video length: 90 min).

- Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood & Corporate Power. Writ./Prod. Chyng Feng Sun. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2001.

  Discussion facilitator: Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman.
  Date: November 13, 2003.

  Advertised description: *Innocence, magic and family fun – the Disney Company has built an empire on it. Disney's animated films enjoy massive popularity among children and endorsement from parents and teachers. But what stories do these films tell about race, gender and class? This video challenges us to confront our comfortable assumptions about a childhood institution and to ask what messages hide behind the mouse.*

  Video synopsis: Divided into four sections—Disney's Media Dominance; Disney's Gender Representations; Disney's Race Representations; and Disney's Commercialization of Children's Culture—this video analyses the world created by Disney's animated children's films and Disney's role as corporate powerhouse and cultural pedagogue on a global scale. Arguing that behind the veil of innocence and family fun are stories that

reinscribe imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy, its analysis is illustrated with clips from some of Disney's most popular animated films. Includes interviews with: Henry Giroux, Diane Levin, Gail Dines, Elizabeth Hadley, Carolyn Newberger, Alvin Poussaint, Justin Lewis, kindergarten teachers, multicultural educators, college students and children.

- No Logo: Brands, Globalization & Resistance. Ed./Prod. Kelly Garner. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2003.

  Discussion facilitator: Dr. David Thompson. Second screening: Danielle Devereaux. **Dates:** November 20, 2003 and November 23, 2004. (Second screening part of activities for The People & Planet Fair: A Green and Fair Trade Extravaganza!).

  Advertised description: *No space. No choice. No Jobs. No Logo. Based on the best-selling book by Canadian journalist and activist Naomi Klein, this video investigates the dynamics of corporate globalization and draws attention to democratic resistance arising around the world to challenge and reclaim this 'new branded world'.*

  Video synopsis: Features Canadian journalist Naomi Klein, is based on and may be considered a video version of her best-selling book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. Like the book, the video is divided into four sections: No Space; No Choice; No Jobs; and No Logo. Klein analyses how current multi-national corporate practice has left us with a new branded world in which communities are left with 'No Space' that has not been co-opted by advertising. Consumers are left with 'No Choice' in terms of the monopoly exercised by multi-national corporations. And citizens are left with 'No Jobs,' as jobs are outsourced to developing countries to the detriment of North American workers who lose jobs and/or are forced to take low paying, temporary McJobs, and workers in developing countries who find themselves in unsafe, often degrading, low-salaried working situations. Klein argues that the dynamics of No Space/No Choice/No Jobs have led concerned citizens around the world to organize large-scale protests and movements for change to call attention to the need for No Logo— public, non-commercialized space, consumer choice, and fair trade practices. (Video length: 42 min).

- The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need. Prod./Ed. Kelly Garner. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2004.

  Discussion facilitator: Danielle Devereaux.
  Date: March 26, 2004.

  Advertised description: *'Keeping up with the Joneses' next door is no longer enough for many North Americans; we've got to keep up with the Joneses (and Rosses and Rachels) we see on TV. Drawing on her academic research, Juliet Schor explains the cultural forces compelling us to work longer hours and spend more than we have so we can participate in a consumption competition. The video draws attention to – and raises serious questions about – the costs (both financial and societal) of relentlessly searching for happiness and identity through consumption.*

  Video synopsis: Built around an interview with Juliet Schor, in this video Schor, a Sociology professor at Boston College, discusses points put forth in her two books, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* and *The Overspent American: Upscaling, Downshifting and the New Consumer*. She argues that in today's consumer capitalist society, people in North America work more than ever and accumulate huge amounts of debt, not to meet basic survival needs but as a means of participating in what Schor calls a culture of competitive consumption. Acquiring and exhibiting 'stuff'—the large house, the big car, brand name clothes, even brand name water—has become a mark of social success. She argues the media have helped create this culture of competitive consuming by presenting upper-middle class and even very rich lifestyles as 'the norm.' We no longer aspire to be like others in our immediate social circle, we want—and will pay more than we can afford financially, socially, and environmentally—to be like the people we see everyday in the popular media we consume. (Video length 32 min).

- Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land – U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Prod. Bathsheba Ratzkoff. Co-Prod. Bathsheba Ratzkoff & Sut Jhally. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2004.

  Discussion facilitator: Dr. Noreen Golfman.
  Date: March 12, 2004.

  Advertised description: *Most of what we learn about the world outside North America we learn from the media, a media not quite as objective as we might think. Combining American and British TV news clips with observations of analysts, journalists, and political activists, this video provides an historical overview, a striking media comparison, and an examination of factors that have distorted U.S. media coverage and, in turn, public opinion about the Middle East Conflict.*

Video synopsis: This video discusses, through interviews with scholars, media critics, peace activists, religious figures, journalists and Middle East experts, how mainstream media in the US paint a distorted picture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, absent of historical and political context. Comparisons between US and International media coverage of the crisis in the Middle East illustrate the point. Generally, the video looks at the relationship between media and politics and how media coverage in the US is often complicit with imperialist foreign policy. Includes interviews with Seth Ackerman, Mjr. Stav Adivi, Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Hanan Ashrawi, Noam Chomsky, Robert Fisk, Neve Gordon, Toufic Haddad, Sam Husseini, Hussein Ibish, Robert Jensen, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Karen Pfeifer, Alisa Solomon, and Gila Svirsky. (Video length: 80 min).

- <u>Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete</u>. Prod. Loretta Alper. Ed. Kenyon King. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2002.

Discussion facilitator: Dr. T.A. Loeffler.
Date: October 30, 2003 and October 21, 2004.

Advertised description: *Where are the women athletes and why are they wearing bikinis? More women are playing sports than ever before, yet women continue to be barely there when it comes to sports media coverage. When we do see female athletes in the media they're often presented as hyper-feminine sex symbols or doting wives and mothers. The awesome strength and power of today's female athlete challenges gender stereotypes, but is mainstream media afraid to play fair?*

Video synopsis: One of the shorter videos in the series, *Playing Unfair* incorporates interviews with sports media scholars Mary Jo Kane, Pat Griffin and Michael Messener, and media clips featuring women athletes. It provides an analysis of media images of female athletes, discussing the disparity between the success of women in sport and the representations we see of them. Frequently, mainstream media simply does not cover women's sports; when it does, mainstream media images of female athletes downplay their athletic ability, power and strength. Images of female athletes in popular media often mirror images of fashion models or focus on the athletes' non-athletic roles as wife or mother. These images reinforce stereotypes of femininity and compulsory heterosexuality. The video concludes with a challenge to the media to turn the camera on women athletes, to recognize, and to let us see, their success, strength and power. (Video length: 30 min).

Further discussion: As one of the videos included in the series that looked specifically at gender, the screening of *Playing Unfair* created some specifically gendered conditions. This video did not draw the same crowds as some of the others in the series and attracted significantly more women than men. I would suggest that this may be in part due to the title, which has the potential to incite a "Well, what about the media image of the male athlete" response. Yet this video has sparked some of the most interesting, animated

discussions of the series. I did not personally know Dr. T.A. Loeffler or her research interests prior to asking her to act as discussion facilitator. I had read an article in *The Express* about a video she'd made called *Newfoundlanders Away*. The article said she worked in the Department of Human Kinetics and Recreation. Videos and sport—I figured I'd give it a try. Serendipitously, T.A. had worked with Mary Jo Kane as a graduate student and teaches/researches in the area of sport and gender[16]. Because of T.A.'s extensive knowledge of issues around gender and sport, she was able to answer very topic-specific questions and the audience clearly learned a great deal of new information during the discussion portion of the sessions.

One of the strengths of this video is that the process of looking seriously at the media image of the female athlete is a unique experience; in my undergraduate and graduate work in Women's Studies I had never encountered this topic and, prior to watching the video while at MEF, I had not even thought about it. At the second screening of *Playing Unfair* the audience applauded when the video ended, the first and only time this has happened in the entire series. The atmosphere at both screenings was one of excitement and empowerment. Comments included: "The discussion leader this week was awesome! Really informed and easy to listen to. Great video! I don't know much about the topic but I learned so much today" (graduate student). One undergraduate student simply wrote "excellent movie." At both screenings, professors in the audience indicated an interest in using this video in their classes. I have presented this video in a number of classes, lent the video to a number of professors for use in their classes and Memorial's QEII library has now obtained a DVD copy.

- Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol. Prod./Ed. Ronit Ridberg. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2004.

Discussion facilitator: Danielle Devereaux.
Date: October 14, 2004.

Advertised description: *From TV shows to TV ads both the media and alcohol industry frame high-risk drinking as 'normal' student behavior. But why should what it means to be a college or university student be decided by industries with something to sell? Sure alcohol is linked to good times and fun, but it's also linked to sexual violence, addiction and death. This MEF video looks at the ties between North American media representations of alcohol and our cultural attitudes toward high-risk drinking, and includes interviews with media critics, health professionals and students themselves.*

Video synopsis: Examines the widely held belief that college culture is, necessarily, a drinking culture. Includes interviews with media critics, Jackson Katz and Jean Kilbourne, who argue that in today's mass media—advertising, movies, television,

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[16] What luck!

music—drinking is linked almost exclusively to good times, fun, spontaneity, and great sex. In the world of popular culture, high-risk drinking rarely has any negative consequences, and popular culture products aimed specifically at young adults normalize and glamorize high-risk, college drinking. Interviews with health professionals—Ojae Beale, Alan Calhoun and Sally Linowski—illustrate the negative effect alcohol is having on the lives of college students: from poor academic performance and addiction, to sexual assault, rape, and even death. In its analysis, this video also looks at how gender and our definitions of masculinity and femininity shape our expectations around and experiences with alcohol, particularly with respect to sex, sexuality, sexual freedom, and sexual assault. Throughout the video, students from four colleges discuss the drinking culture on their campuses and reflect on their own experiences with alcohol. They discuss how cultural messages about alcohol, gender, sexuality, and what it means to be a college or university student, affect their lives. These young people express a desire to bring about change and suggest that students themselves are ready to challenge the notion that high-risk drinking is a necessary part of the college experience (Devereaux, 2004, p. 5). (Video length: 45 min).

- Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the crisis in Masculinity. Writ. Jackson Katz & Jeremy Earp. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, Massachusetts, 1999.

Discussion facilitator: Danielle Devereaux.
Date: November 27, 2003.

Advertised description: *School shootings, playground bullying – the perpetrators? Usually boys. Spousal abuse and murder – the perpetrators? Usually men. Violence in North America is overwhelmingly a gendered phenomenon. In the 21*[st] *century masculinity is still intimately linked to violence and control. Where does that come from? And what can we as a society do about it?*

Video synopsis: Featuring Jackson Katz, founder and director of MVP (Male Violence Prevention) Strategies, this video is divided into 2 parts: Part One: Understanding Violent Masculinity; and Part Two: Violent Masculinity in Action. Katz analyzes the role mainstream media plays in the social construction of masculinity and how this construction links masculinity to toughness and violence. His analysis is illustrated with examples from a variety of media. Particularly compelling, is a section that traces the body size of professional wrestlers, Hollywood movie heroes (e.g. Rambo, The Terminator) and even dolls for boys (e.g. G.I. Joe and Star Wars figurines) to illustrate how representations of the male body have gotten larger over time, while representations of the female body have gotten smaller (from Marilyn Monroe to Kate Moss for example). Likewise, gun imagery in mainstream media, particularly in Hollywood movies, has gotten larger and more threatening over time. Katz argues the stakes involved in what it means to look and be tough—in what it means to be a man—in both

the media and the real world have increased dramatically, at great cost to boys, men and society in general. (Video length: 82 min).

- Waiting for Martin. Writ./Dir./Prod. Magnus Isacsson & Sophie Southam. Cinema Libre: Montreal, 2004.

  Discussion facilitator: Keith Dunne and Kevin Hehir (co-facilitators).
  Date: October 28, 2004.

  Advertised description: *Following the tradition of documentaries like Michael Rubbo's Waiting for Fidel and Michael Moore's Roger and Me, independent filmmaker Magnus Isacsson and animator Sophia Southam follow activist David Bernans on his mission to dialogue with Paul Martin; seems Bernans is still waiting. A unique film about democracy, political accountability, the corporatization of government and the politics of protest in Canada.*

  Video synopsis: Documentary footage following activist David Bernan's three-year (failed) quest to publicly debate Paul Martin is combined with animated sequences, and statistics regarding Martin's past and present policies and practice. The video combines humor—animation, songs—with some rather frightening statistics regarding poverty in Canada and Paul Martin's history of slashing social spending while maintaining a pro-business agenda. (Video length: 55 min).

- Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies & Global Economics. Dir. Terre Nash. National Film Board of Canada: Montreal, 1995.

  Discussion facilitator: Dr. Shirley Solberg.
  Date: February 27, 2004.

  Advertised description: *Pimp your child out as a prostitute and you make a positive contribution to your nation's GDP, stay home to care for her and well, you're unproductive so you just don't count. Oil spills and war? Productive. Subsistence farming and clean air? Unproductive. This NFB video examines the economic system we build our lives around; in this system much of what we value has no value at all. "Economics anxiety" anyone?*

  Video synopsis: Based on many of the thoughts and analyses found in Marilyn Waring's 1988 book *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth*, this video traces Waring's career as a feminist politician, and why and how she came to write *Counting for Nothing*. In interviews and lectures, Waring demystifies the language of economics to argue that our current economic system makes no sense, as goods and activities only have value if they pass through the market and contribute to the nation's

GDP. Within this system, environmental catastrophes (e.g. oil spills) are seen as productive because they generate money, while staying home to raise children is considered unproductive and doesn't 'count'. Waring argues this system assigns no worth to much of what we truly value and that we need to come up with a better way to decide 'what counts.' (Video length: 90 min).

- Wrestling With Manhood: Boys, Bullying & Battering. Writ./Dir. Sut Jhally. Prod. Ronit Ridberg. Media Education Foundation: Northampton, MA, 2002.

Discussion Facilitator: Jay Goulding.
Dates: November 6, 2003 and February 20, 2004.

Description advertised: *Professional wrestling. It's only entertainment – incredibly profitable and popular entertainment. Professional wrestling idolizes and rewards violent, homophobic, misogynist bullying and we've made it a runaway success – so what does that say about us? Why is it so popular? And what does its popularity tell us about North American culture? About contemporary masculinity and how boys learn to become men? Contains violent physical and sexual imagery viewer discretion is advised.*

Video synopsis: features interviews with and analysis by Sut Jhally and Jackson Katz, clips from World Wrestling Entertainment (the WWE), news media footage and interviews with wrestling fans. The video is broken into seven sections: Taking Wrestling Seriously; Happy & Escalating Violence; Making Men: Glamorizing Bullying; Homophobia & Constructing Heterosexuality; Divas: Sex & Male Fantasy; Normalizing Gender Violence; and "It's Only Entertainment". In its analysis, the video focuses on the mass media's, and specifically, professional wrestling's role in the social construction of masculinity and masculine identities. Jhally and Katz argue that while the WWE does not directly cause men to be violent, current social constructions of masculinity, like those seen and glorified in the hugely popular, financially successful WWE, do equate masculinity with glorified violence and play a significant role in how boys learn to be men. (Video length: 60 min).

Further discussion: As one of the videos included in the series that looked specifically at gender, the screening of *Wrestling with Manhood* created some specifically gendered conditions. A producer at CBC Radio saw a poster advertising the first screening of *Wrestling with Manhood*. The producer contacted me to inquire (briefly) about the screening and to ask for Jay Goulding's contact information, as Jay was listed on the poster as Speaker. Jay was invited to do a radio interview about the video/screening. He accepted the invitation, knowing that the producer had gotten his contact information from me. However, shortly after agreeing to the interview Jay called me, as he was concerned that he would be 'stealing my spotlight' since I was the one running the series and was also familiar with the video. (Jay had not been familiar with *Wrestling with*

Manhood prior to being asked to act as speaker/discussion facilitator; the video was my personal copy). I did not have a problem with Jay doing the interview, and in any case, when I spoke with the CBC producer she had not seemed at all interested in interviewing me. However, I was also happy to do the interview or a joint interview. Jay contacted the producer and suggested that CBC interview me—no, they didn't think that was such a good idea. He then suggested that they interview both of us—no, they didn't think that was such a good idea either, too complicated. In our pursuant discussions about the matter, Jay mentioned he had encountered similar situations when interacting with the media in his work with the Regional Coalition Against Violence (RCAV)—when the media wanted to interview someone about the report he authored, *Bars, Booze and Sexual Violence: Moving Masculinities*, they preferred to talk to him (a man) rather than his supervisor (a woman).

In the end, Jay did the interview. He credited me with running the Screening Series and I did not at all feel he was 'stealing the spotlight'. The interview was good publicity for the Screening Series (a record standing-room only crowd was in the audience for the first screening of *Wrestling with Manhood*) and for the work of the Regional Coalition Against Violence.

This interaction with CBC Radio made me reflect further on the fact that I had consciously asked Jay to facilitate *Wrestling with Manhood* not only because of his work with the RCAV, but also because he is a heterosexual man, and in fact a man who 'looks like' he might be a wrestler or at least watch professional wrestling himself. I had made this decision thinking if there were wrestling fans in the audience, and I hoped there would be, perhaps these fans would be more open to discussing constructions of masculinity, particularly in the context of professional wrestling, with a man, particularly a man who at least *looked* like them. The way CBC Radio seemed to dismiss me entirely did, to some degree, feel like a slight, and their refusal to entertain the notion of a joint interview with Jay and myself may be seen to reflect how 'the male voice' is consistently viewed as 'the voice of authority' in our society. At the same time, I understand Jay's appeal in this context and I would not change my decision to ask Jay to facilitate the discussion of *Wrestling with Manhood*. Given that the video looks specifically at constructions of masculinity and how boys learn to become men, I think it is preferable to have a male discussion facilitator. Likewise, I would not ask a man to facilitate the discussion of *Playing Unfair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete*, or any other text that focused specifically on constructions of femininity and feminine identities. However, given the social authority of the male voice, perhaps mainstream media would be more open to having a male interviewee or co-interviewee if *Playing Unfair* were the video being discussed. Interestingly, no one from CBC Radio, or any other media outlet, expressed interest in the screenings of *Playing Unfair*.

Appendix 2

E-Mailing List

If you sign up for this list, you will receive a 'screening of the week' email; from time to time I will also forward related info, e.g. other screening events. Your email address will not be shared with others. If at anytime you want to be taken off the list, just let me know by emailing devereaux@mun.ca. If you sign up for this list but don't get any Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series emails, please let me know and I'll try to figure out what the problem might be.

Name   Email (please print clearly)

Appendix 3

How did you hear about the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series?

Do you think this series is valuable/useful?

In what ways?

You are: an undergraduate ___   a graduate student ___   a professor ___
        other university staff ___   other ___

Have you been to this series before? ____   If yes, number of times: ____

Would you come again? _____

Further comments, suggestions....

Appendix 4

PLAYING UNFAIR

The Media Image of the Female Athlete

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this thursday 30 october, 12 - 2pm • SN 2018

Speaker: Dr. T.A. Loeffler,
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation.

Where are the women athletes and why are they wearing bikinis? More women are playing sports than ever before, yet women continue to be barely there when it comes to sports media coverage. When we do see female athletes in the media they're often presented as hyper-feminine sex symbols or doting wives and mothers. The awesome strength and power of today's female athlete challenges gender stereotypes, but is mainstream media afraid to play fair?

Second in the series of six every thursday 12 - 2pm • SN 2018

sponsored by the philosophy department

media + culture
screening + discussion series

WRESTLING WITH MANHOOD

Boys, Bullying & Battering

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this thursday 6th november, 12 - 2pm • SN 2018

Speaker: Jay Goulding, Author of the report *Bars, Booze and Sexual Violence: Moving Masculinities*

Professional wrestling. It's only entertainment – incredibly profitable and popular entertainment. Professional wrestling idolizes and rewards violent, homophobic, misogynist bullying and we've made it a runaway success – so what does that say about us? Why is it so popular? And what does its popularity tell us about North American culture? About contemporary masculinity and how boys learn to become men? **Contains violent physical and sexual imagery viewer discretion is advised.**

Third in the series of six every thursday 12 - 2pm • SN 2018
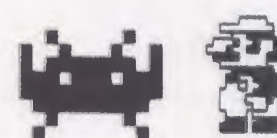
sponsored by the philosophy department

media + culture
screening + discussion series
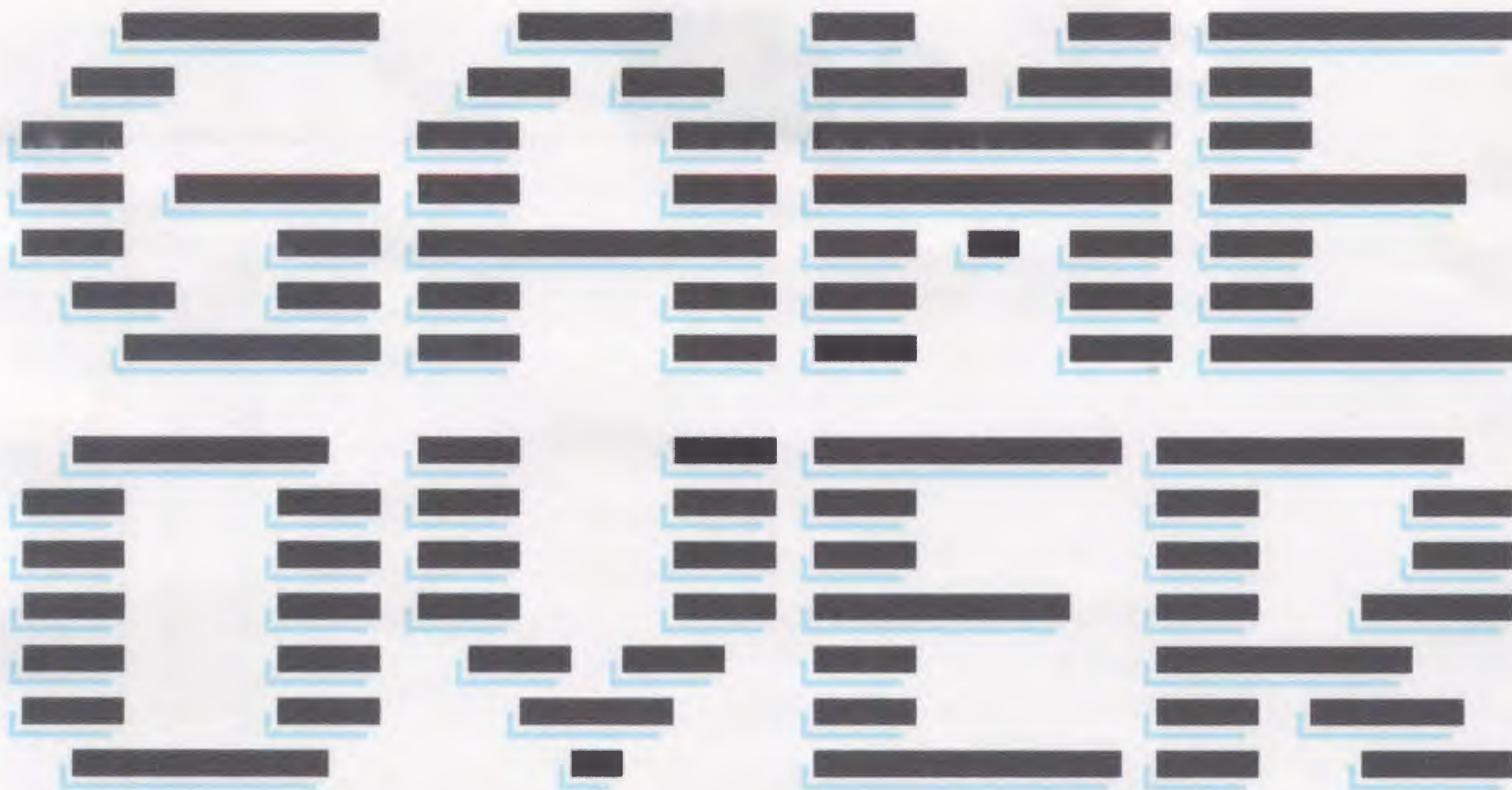
GENDER, RACE & VIOLENCE IN VIDEO GAMES

this friday 19 march, 1 - 3pm • SN 2018

The military learned the hard way that most people don't really like killing other people, not a good situation if you find yourself at war, and so they came up with various training techniques to overcome this problem. One of them was the video game, introduced as a training device for the military now in the hands of millions of kids worldwide. Maybe it is all fun and games... but then what's so fun about electronic blood and gore anyway? (Video length 41 min)

---

sixth screening in the series, every friday 1-3 pm SN 2018

sponsored by women's studies and philosophy. for further info contact Danielle Devereux

media + culture
screening + discussion series

The Overspent American

WHY WE WANT WHAT WE DON'T NEED

↓ ↓

this friday 26 march, 1 - 3pm • SN 2018

'Keeping up with the Joneses' next door is no longer enough for many North Americans; we've got to keep up with the Joneses (and Rosses and Rachels) we see on TV. Drawing on her academic research, Juliet Schor explains the cultural forces compelling us to work longer hours and spend more than we have so we can participate in a consumption competition. The video draws attention to – and raises serious questions about – the costs (both financial and societal) of relentlessly searching for happiness and identity through consumption. (Video length 55 min)

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final screening in the series, every friday 1-3 pm SN 2018

sponsored by women's studies and philosophy, for further info contact Danielle Devereaux, devereaux@mun.ca

media + culture
screening + discussion series

Spin the Bottle

Sex, Lies & Alcohol

↓ ↓

this thursday 14 October, 12-2pm • SN 2018

From TV shows to TV ads both the media and alcohol industry frame high-risk drinking as 'normal' student behavior. But why should what it means to be a college or university student be decided by industries with something to sell? Sure alcohol is linked to good times and fun, but it's also linked to sexual violence, addiction and death. This MEF video looks at the ties between North American media representations of alcohol and our cultural attitudes toward high-risk drinking, and includes interviews with media critics, health professionals and students themselves. Video length: 45 min. Open discussion follows screening.

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fourth screening in the series, every thursday 12-2 pm SN 2018

sponsored by women's studies. for further info contact Danielle Devereaux. devereaux@mun.ca

media + culture
screening + discussion series

Waiting for Martin

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this thursday 28 October, 12-2pm • SN 2018

Following the tradition of documentaries like Michael Rubbo's Waiting for Fidel and Michael Moore's Roger and Me, independent filmmaker Magnus Isacsson and animator Sophia Southam follow activist David Bernans on his mission to dialogue with Paul Martin; seems Bernans is still waiting. A unique film about democracy, political accountability, the corporatization of government and the politics of protest in Canada. (Video length 55 min). Open discussion follows screening.

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sixth screening in the series, every thursday 12-2 pm SN 2018

sponsored by women's studies, for further info contact Danielle Devereaux, devereaux@mun.ca

media + culture
screening + discussion series

From: Danielle Devereaux <devereaux@mun.ca>
Date: Mon, 25 Oct 2004 14:24:05 -0330
Subject: Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series

Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series

Every Thursday, 12-2pm in SN 2018.

All welcome. Admission free.

This Thursday 28 October:

Waiting for Martin

Following the tradition of documentaries like Michael Rubbo's Waiting for Fidel and Michael
Moore's Roger and Me, independent filmmaker Magnus Isacsson and animator Sophia Southam
follow activist David Bernans on his mission to dialogue with Paul Martin; seems Bernans is still
waiting. A unique film about democracy, political accountability, the corporatization of
government and the politics of protest in Canada. Video length: 55 min.

Open discussion follows all screenings. This week Keith Dunne and Kevin Hehir of the Number
Three Research Group will co-facilitate the discussion.

Next week, Thursday November 4: Advertising and the End of the World

Despite its prevalence, despite the vast amounts of money, time and creative energy spent on
advertising, we often dismiss it as trivial. This video turns an analytical eye on the world of
advertising, and insists that far from being unimportant, advertising plays a powerful social role in
today's society. Ultimately, advertising works to help create and maintain a consumer culture that
insists we can indeed buy our way to happiness, even if the end result may indeed be the end of
the world.

Please feel free to forward this announcement to other lists and to announce in classes.

The Media & Culture Screening & Discussion Series is sponsored by the Women's Studies
Program.

If you are getting this email it's because you are on the Media & Culture Screening & Discussion
Series email list, so you either signed up for it or someone who thought you might be interested in
it signed you up. You will get a weekly email announcing the video of the week and from time to
time you'll get information related to topics discussed at the screenings. If you'd like to be taken
off the list please email me at devereaux@mun.ca and I'll take you off (this is not a trick, I'll really
take you off, I promise.)

Hope to see you at the series!

Danielle

Danielle Devereaux
Master of Women's Studies Candidate
Memorial University of Newfoundland
devereaux@mun.ca

Appendix 5

The best course you'll never take

In some ways, university has turned into a job factory. As students, we can absorb facts without question. We take courses like we're standing on a conveyor belt, picking up requirements as we go, and we expect nothing but a piece of paper at the end. Then we can forget all we learned in class in a fog of stories about good parties and all-nighters. Honestly though, it's hard to pull your face out of the pillow at 7 a.m. and make breakfast, let alone give a prof an insightful answer to a philosophical question.

By Lacy O'Connell

Sometimes it's easier to hand over the grammar homework and never again think about gerunds. Logarithms be damned, I'm going back to bed.

While walking around in a daze after a three day essay-writing blitz a few weeks ago, I noticed a poster for the Media and Culture Screening and Discussion series. I'd never been to one before, but the prospect of watching a free movie and then getting to talk about it sounded like a good idea. The film started at 12, and I was almost awake. It began to sound like a great idea. So I hopped off of the job factory conveyor belt and, of my own free will, went to watch the screening of *The Laramie Project*. After that I saw *Spin the Bottle*, a documentary about college students and alcohol. Rarely have I seen films so thought-provoking.

Danielle Devereaux, the woman behind the project, told me that these films come from an internship she did with the Media Education Foundation. Upon coming home from the internship, she discussed the idea of screening her new movie collection with Dr. David Thompson.

"I called it my distraction project ... it was distracting me from my thesis," said Ms. Devereaux, a graduate student in Women's Studies. The series was a hobby last year until Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Ms. Devereaux's supervisor, suggested turning it into a master's project. Because of this, there are comment cards at each session so that the series can be improved. There aren't, however, any real negative comments. The positive response shows that once people start coming, they enjoy themselves and keep coming back. One student said that part of the enjoyment is that topics are discussed that normally aren't touched in class.

The problem with many of our classes is that we don't get to voice our opinions during lectures. Of course lectures are important, but discussions are what teach us, as educated people, how to think. Ms. Devereaux has used her project as a medium for people at Memorial to talk about critical issues. "It's not like we're making the hard stuff up ... it's not going to go away because we don't think about it," she said. "My goal is to have a space where critical thinking is encouraged."

The films provoke critical thinking because of the content. The Laramie Project is the story of a hate crime against a gay man in Wyoming – he was beaten to death several years ago and left tied to a fence. This is an extreme example, but each movie shown challenges stereotypes and biases against minorities. It is unfortunate that the Media and Discussion screening series isn't a course, because many students would eagerly sign up for it. Although since it's not, the screenings are open to anyone who enjoys good discussions and good movies. For those of us who prefer to sit quietly and listen, it should be clarified that discussion

Top Stories

- New chair for Board of Regents
- Time to remember

- Memorial's leaders report to white paper commission
- Studying the cultural landscape

- Take me to your leaders
- Tribute to outstanding alumni
- Public opinion survey gives Memorial high marks
- Getting organized
- A first for nursing

- Connecting to the international community
- Celebrating excellence

Next issue: November 25, 2004

Questions? Comments?
E-mail our editor.

is encouraged, but not mandatory. The important thing is that you reflect on what you've seen.

Critical thinking is imperative in our society, and we all forget it in our nine am classes. But screenings like this are a way for us to leisurely look at the media in our free time and to figure out what it's saying about us and the place we live in. What are the biases in the media? Why are women objectified so often? What influences hate crimes? How do we stop these injustices?

Well, the first step is to go to something like the Media and Culture Screening and Discussion series. Every Thursday from 12-2 p.m. in room SN-2018, people are meeting to think about the images that are thrown in our faces every day. Come on, pull your face off of the pillow and wipe away the drool. Hop off of the conveyor belt for a few hours and try something different. You can always get back on in time for your two o'clock class and get your piece of paper on schedule. And you may just walk away from the Memorial Job Factory having learned something about life.

Information all around us

Media education –
Helping us think about the message

By ADAM RIGGIO

We find ourselves surrounded by moving pictures and sounds on our televisions, computers, and cinema screens. They expose us to more information about the world than any other generation in human history. But there is often more to these seemingly simple images than may first appear. Media education is the art of teaching people to decode the video, and the practitioners of that art are looking to establish themselves at Memorial University.

It all began in Massachusetts. In 1991, Sut Jhally, a professor of communications at the University of Massachusetts, sat down in front of MTV and noticed a large number of women in skimpy costumes, gyrating. But his reaction was not that of a stereotypical middle-aged man watching MTV. Jhally recorded clips of some of the music videos that stood out as especially exploitative, and compiled them into an educational video.

The hour-long documentary was called *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Music Video*. It examined the impact of the sexual way that women are portrayed in popular music videos. The documentary was also extremely critical of the ways the continual stream of these images could affect impressionable adolescent women. As Jhally showed it in his classes, his colleagues asked for copies to show in their own classes. Word of mouth quickly spread about the controversial documentary, and soon Jhally sent over 100 copies to media studies and women's studies departments at universities across America.

When word reached the MTV executives, Jhally was served with a lawsuit from the cable network for copyright infringement. The press quickly came to Jhally's aid, vilifying MTV for suing a professor who merely cut and pasted together material publicly available on television.

MTV dropped its court action, but the widespread public outcry in his favour and the demand across the country for media-critical documentaries impressed the professor. In response, he founded the Media Education Foundation (MEF) to create, market, and distribute just this kind of product.

Dreamworlds has since sold two million copies through MEF, and spawned a sequel documentary in 1995. Jhally is the executive director of MEF, which has since expanded to a regular production staff of 15, and has released over 50 documentaries about the various ways that visual media affect us. Its board of advisors contains such notable authors and intellectuals as Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*, and famous dissident Noam Chomsky, author of *Manufacturing Consent*.

How the products of the MEF came to Memorial University starts with a graduate student named Danielle Devereaux. She first became intrigued with the Massachusetts production company a few years ago, when she saw *Advertising and the End of the World* in a class. It was an exploration into how advertising encourages us to consume beyond our needs and even our capacities, and she was amazed with the eloquence and ease with which the video dissected the daily images that surround her. She was so impressed that she kept returning to the video for use in writing papers and teaching classes.

Last winter, she discovered an internship program on the MEF website. The internship was geared towards students in their fourth year of undergraduate studies as a work experience program. The internship was unpaid, which meant she would have to live in Massachusetts at her own expense. The program was supposed to last three months, and students would work

for MEF a few hours a day, a few days a week. Needless to say, their Canadian visitor did not find herself in a normal situation.

Instead, Devereaux worked eight-hour days for four weeks at MEF, mostly writing study guides to accompany the documentaries in the classroom. One of the people she worked with was MEF's founder, Sut Jhally.

"I was kind of nervous to meet him," said Devereaux, "because the first time I had seen him was on a video. So it was something like meeting a movie star, but a movie star in a different sense. But he was really friendly."

Since she was unpaid for her efforts, Jhally and his colleagues at MEF gave Devereaux several videotapes of their more recognizable documentaries, including the inspiration that brought her to Massachusetts, *Advertising and the End of the World*. Last month, she returned to Memorial to continue her graduate studies, tapes in hand. Together with David Thompson of Memorial's philosophy department, they are publicly screening these videos to offer an alternative view of modern media.

MEF makes documentaries to teach people about how the media manipulates the way we think about our physical, social, and cultural environment, without even realizing it. But even as we watch these critical videos, could they be trying to manipulate us into conforming to their own beliefs about the world and the media?

"Understanding yourself logically is the exact opposite of being manipulated by someone who hypnotizes you," said Thompson. "Whether it's a physiologist who manipulates your brain or a psychologist who manipulates you into doing something you didn't think through – I think advertising does that. And not only advertising,

war propaganda does it too. . . . People manipulate by means of emotions, by false information, and often by just symbolic things, which influence people's beliefs without their really knowing they're being influenced."

"It seems to me that television, above all, but other mass-media as well – perhaps the Internet, perhaps newspapers – try to influence people without making it rational," he continued.

Thompson noted two prominent theories about what modern media does. "[Marshall] McLuhan has a theory that goes like this: the notion of rationality, of sitting back as an individual and making up your mind on your own beliefs and standing for them on the basis of reason, is intimately tied to writing as a form of communication."

"Video does not have that facility. So from his point of view, visual media automatically undermines rationality no matter who uses it." Therefore, the very documentaries he and Devereaux are showing undermine our rational thought and manipulate us.

"The alternative approach," he said, "is that the main problem is not so much with the form of the media, as with the content and control of the media. If the corporations control it for profit, they will manipulate us. But it's possible to use exactly the same media and use it to increase people's rationality, if you do it for a different purpose."

Like any good philosopher, Thompson thinks neither theory to be completely right, and that the truth is more complex than either of these clear-cut descriptions make it out to be. Devereaux, however, is clear on where she stands.

"[The media] is only detrimental to thought when we're not allowed to think back," she said. "It's the difference in getting only one message all the time . . . than getting many different messages and being able to decide for yourself. I do think the audience can make up [their] own minds. But it's hard to make up our own minds if the messages we get are not from many different points of view. It's not even a matter of seeing both sides of the story. There are a huge number of sides to many different stories. The views that we're presenting here, yes, they are a point of view. But they certainly are not the point of view that we are being exposed to all the time in the mainstream media. I don't think it's manipulative in that way, because it is the alternative."

There's a reason [why] we see things over and over again in the media," said Devereaux. "And it's because of how it's controlled. It's controlled to make money, and if it doesn't make money, then you're not going to see it. The Media Education Foundation wants people to buy their videos, but it's certainly no Time Warner. They sell their videos so they can make more videos."

Devereaux and Thompson both believe that education is the most important part of their media studies. As Thompson said, "If people could think about how they are influenced, how the television and the media influence them, then their very thinking about it is becoming rational about the technique. It, in effect, saves them from it."

"If you know that someone is trying to manipulate you [in] a certain way, then you have an immediate buffer or a cushion that separates you from it. So the solution to the ideological problem seems to be not censorship in some way, but above all, public education. So I would love to see a society in which everyone was educated and made aware of what the manipulative forces around them were precisely, so they could overcome them. Now ideally, this would happen in schools. But for that, you need teachers who themselves were aware of the problem and could also make their students aware of it. Some people have tried to do that and the field is called media education."

No Logo

Based on the book by Naomi Klein, who sits on the Media Education Foundation board.

She analyses the process of branding and the notion that what the advertiser is selling is not so much the product, but the brand, because the brand will enable them to make profits further off the name. She relates that to global things, such as the anti-globalization protests. None of these protestors are really against all globalization, mind you, they just want the right kind.
– David Thompson

Playing Unfair

[The documentary] is about women in sports, and covers age of women's sports. It's kind of interesting because it talks about how many women play sports. And there are lots of women who play

NO LOGO

The Media Education Foundation Presents

BRANDS GLOBALIZATION RESISTANCE

NAOMI KLEIN

mef