**GGS 199 UB Seminar:**

**What is Feminism?**

Fall 2022

TR 11:00am-12:20pm, Park Hall 145

Professor:                     Dr. Lauren Pilcher (they/them)

Email:                           lpilcher@buffalo.edu

Office Location:            Clemens Hall 1021

Office Hours:                TR 1pm-3pm (in person or Zoom)

Dr. Pilcher’s Zoom meeting link:

<https://buffalo.zoom.us/j/9258435115?pwd=RXdDUytKbFRjUDZLK0ttZEhiQjR3UT09>

\*Passcode: officehrs

**Course Description**

In this course, we will consider the important and complex question “What is feminism?” by watching and analyzing recent documentary films that circulate on popular streaming platforms in a US context. Each week, we will watch a documentary, beginning with films trending in 2022 and moving to political docs, celebrity portraits, community profiles, and creative expressions. We will approach these recent documentary films from an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates concepts and approaches from film and media studies and gender studies.

These key questions will guide our course:

* How do recent documentaries in a US context represent and communicate about feminism? Why, and to whom?
* How does documentary film—a nonfiction form of moving image media that is growing in popularity and diversity—relate to feminism as a social movement in the US, past and present? What impact (and potential impact) does documentary have on feminism today? Feminism on documentary?
* What kinds of aesthetic and organizational trends do recent documentary films and series use to represent feminism in the US? Why, and to what end?
* Which social privileges and biases in US society affect how feminism is depicted in recent documentary films and series? Why, and to what end?
* How do notions of US nationality and culture affect documentary representations of feminism?
* What role do audiences and spectators in the US play in documentary representations of feminism?

\**Content Warning: Some course documentaries include difficult and sensitive content, which may come up in class discussion. Please do what is best for your needs as you watch docs on your own, and as you attend and participate in class discussion.*

**Required Materials**

Students will stream the documentary films for the course outside of class via streaming platforms that require either a subscription or rental fee. Most of the docs are available on *Netflix* and *Hulu*, with a few exceptions. Check the Course Schedule for more info. If anyone has a need or issue with this format for accessing the docs, please let me know.

No purchase required for readings. They will be available on UB Learns as pdfs or links to online articles.

**Assignments**

*Hot Takes* (5 x 30 pts = 150 points)

For 5 of the 14 films that we watch throughout the semester, students must write a hot take on what or how the film communicates about gender and/or feminism today. The goal is to organize and share your initial thoughts on the doc by engaging with the critical thinking questions at the core of our course. Draw on specific details from the doc, and readings if applicable. **Hot takes should be 1) 150 words in length 2) posted to the assigned discussion board—students can start their own post or reply to a peer 3) submitted by class time on the day that the documentary film has been assigned**.

*Response Paper #1* (1-2 pages) (125 pts)

Students will respond to one of the documentaries viewed during the course by analyzing how a key scene in the film speaks to societal cultural notions and/or debates surrounding contemporary feminism.

*Response Paper #2* (2-3 pages) (150 pts + 25 pts for Draft & Peer review = 175pts)

Students will respond to two documentaries viewed during the course by comparing how key scenes in each approach and/or integrate cultural notions and/or debates surrounding contemporary feminism.

*Group Presentation & Discussion* (200 points, 20-25 minutes)

In groups of 4, students will present and lead discussion on a film that we watch during Units 3 and 4 (Weeks 7-12). Presentations will contextualize the film as a recent documentary influenced by and/or related to contemporary feminism. The group will identify (& show to the class) key scenes or components of film that illuminate its relationship to feminism AND pose 3-4 critical thinking questions that prompt class discussion of these scenes and components.

*Final Research Project*(175 points + 50 pts for Proposal & Bibliography + 25 pts for Final Draft)

Students will choose ONE of three options for their final assignment for the semester:

1. Make a short documentary film (no longer than 15 min) AND write a Filmmaker Statement (1-page minimum, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced) that utilizes 2-3 peer-reviewed sources and 2 references to documentaries from the course to explain your creative approach to "feminism" and goals for the short doc.
2. Write a review (3-page minimum, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced) that evaluates any recent documentary film or series for how it engages with contemporary feminism AND write a Reviewer Statement (1-page minimum, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced) that utilizes 2-3 peer-reviewed sources and 2 references to documentaries from the course to explain your approach to recent documentary and its relationship to contemporary feminism.
3. Write a paper (4-5 pages) that analyzes how 1-2 documentaries, from the course or outside, engage with contemporary feminism. Papers need to integrate 2-3 peer-reviewed sources.

\*Written portions of all projects should use a citation style consistently and accurately (MLA is fine, so are others if you’re familiar with them)

*Participation*(100 points)

Participation will be graded based on a students’ preparation for class, demeanor during class, and attendance record.

**Grades**

Final grades will be evaluated using a 1000-point system. If you receive 850 total points on all assignments, you will receive an B in the class.

*Grading Scale*

A 940-1000 points

A- 900-930 points

B+ 870-890 points

B 830-860 points

B- 800-830 points

C+ 770-790 points

C 730-760 points

C- 700-720 points

D+ 670-690 points

D 630-660 points

D- 600-620 points

F 590 points and below

**Course Policies**

*Class Preparation and Participation*

I expect all students to keep up with assigned materials and to participate actively during each class. Cell phones should be silenced and stowed away. Laptops are allowed for accessing class materials and completing activities. If using a laptop, I expect you to remain attentive and engaged. Inappropriate use of a laptop or device will reduce your Participation grade and may result in dismissal from class.

*Attendance*

Class attendance is important for success in this course**. Students are allowed 5 absences**. **For each absence after the 5th, 20 points will be deducted from a student’s total points for the course (out of 1000 possible points).** Absences for minor illnesses, conflicts, personal needs, and unforeseen circumstances will count toward the allowed 5 absences. If a serious issue arises that results or will result in numerous absences, contact me about the situation. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to communicate with me about them.

*Late Assignments and Extensions*

Late work for Responses and the Final Research Project will be penalized by a letter grade for each day that the submission is late. I will consider extensions for an assignment due date if you request one at least 24 hours before the due date. No late work is accepted for Hot Takes, Drafts, or Group Presentations.

*Discussion Decorum*

Students should respect classmates and their perspectives, reflect upon their own positions and perceptions, and behave appropriately for an academic setting when participating in in-class and online discussion.

*UB Learns*

Please use UB Learns to view the syllabus, course schedule, assignment sheets, and rubrics AND to submit ALL assignments.

*Preparing and Submitting Written Documents*

All written assignments should be formatted according to MLA guidelines OR another format with which you are familiar. This includes general layout, in-text citations, and a Works Cited/Bibliography page. Please submit a Microsoft Word document or pdf file when turning in written assignments on UB Learns. Be sure check that the file is correct and accessible. **If I cannot open your file or you submit an incorrect file, you may receive a reduced grade.**

*Plagiarism*

It is crucial that you learn to distinguish your own, original work from the ideas of others (authors, online writers, classmates, and friends) in this course and throughout your time at UB and beyond. If you have questions or concerns about engaging with or citing sources, please let me know so that we can resolve any issues before they arise. **ALL instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the** assignment and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity to determine a resolution.

Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:

* Not placing quotation marks around a quoted words or lines from a source
* Not providing parenthetical citations for quotations
* Paraphrasing via changing a few words. This is plagiarism whether you provide a citation or not.
* Not including a Works Cited page
* Cutting and pasting from the Internet or ebooks
* Having your friend, family member, significant other, or any other person write any portion of your paper
* Copying, even a sentence, from your classmate
* Buying a paper from a person, organization, or service, and turning it in as your own effort and/or having your classmate write a paper for you is cheating
* Resubmitting writing that has already been submitted and graded in another class

UB's academic integrity policy can be found [here](https://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/integrity.html). UB defines plagiarism as "copying or receiving material from any source and submitting that material as one’s own, without acknowledging and citing the particular debts to the source (quotations, paraphrases, basic ideas), or in any other manner representing the work of another as one’s own." Students suspected of violating the University's academic integrity policy face a range of sanctions including, at minimum a reduced grade on the assignment, and including a reduced course grade, failing the course, and academic probation

*Communication with Professor*

If you have major questions about assignments, your work, or your progress in the course, please drop-in or schedule a meeting with me during my office hours (in person or over Zoom). If you have quick questions about clarifying a detail or deadline, feel free to email me.

**Campus Resources**

***Accessibility Resources***

We want to do everything we can to make sure that everyone can fully participate in our class. *Please let us know during the first week of class if you are registered with UB's Accessibility Resources Office and need any special accommodations in terms of the curriculum, instruction or evaluation procedures.* If you are interested in registering with this office or need more information, you can contact them through their [website](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/accessibility.html).

***Sexual Violence***

UB is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), UB has resources to help. This includes academic accommodations, health and counseling services, housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and assistance with reporting the incident to police or other UB officials if you so choose. Please contact UB’s [Title IX Coordinator](https://www.buffalo.edu/equity/obtaining-assistance/sex-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment/title-ix.html) at 716-645-2266 for more information. For confidential assistance, you may also contact a Crisis Services On-Campus Advocate by calling or texting 716-796-4399, or emailing campusadv1@crisisservices.org.

***Counseling Services (Mental Health)***

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. These might include strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, health concerns, or unwanted sexual experiences. Counseling, Health Services, and Health Promotion are here to help with these or other concerns. You learn can more about these programs and services by contacting:

[Counseling](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/counseling.html): 120 Richmond Quad (North Campus), phone 716-645-2720

[On campus crisis situations](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/life-on-campus/health/mental-well-being/counseling/appointment.html): University Police can be reached at 716-645-2222 or Counseling at 716-645-2720 and ask for a crisis counselor (press 2 after hours)

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Dial or text 988, or dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

[Crisis Text line](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/life-on-campus/health/mental-well-being/counseling/appointment.html): Text “HOME” to 741-741 The crisis text line provides 24-hour support for people experiencing a mental health or situational crisis. Users are connected to a trained Crisis Counselor, who will help them develop a plan to stay safe. Messages are confidential, anonymous, and secure. Data usage while texting the Crisis Text Line is free and the number will not appear on a phone bill.

[Health Services](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/health.html): 4350 Maple Rd at Sweet Home Rd phone: 716- 829-3316

[Health Promotion](https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/health-promotion.html): 114 Student Union (North Campus), phone: 716- 645-2837

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| **Course Schedule** |
| **DATE** | **READING & SCREENING DUE** | **ASSIGNMENT DUE** |
| **Week 1 — Unit 1: Amid Trends in Tension** |
| T, 8/30 | **Course Intro** |  |
| R, 9/1 | ***Read***: 1) [Judy Berman, “How Docu-Mania Took Streaming by Storm, From](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/) *[Tiger King](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/)* [to](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/) *[WeWork](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/)*[,”](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/) *[Time](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/)* [(April 1, 2021)](https://time.com/5951774/new-documentaries-streaming/)2) [Imani Perry, "It's More Than Sexism: Reflecting on Women's History Month," The Atlantic (March 10, 2022)](https://newsletters.theatlantic.com/unsettled-territory/6229ddd9c42c790021157e5b/womens-history-month-about-more-than-sexism/)***Watch during class***: doc shorts & clips |  |
| **Week 2**  |
| T, 9/6 | ***Read***: 1) Bill Nichols, excerpt from *Introduction to Documentary* (2017): p. 1-102) Brian Winston, Gail Vanstone, Wang Chi, excerpt from The Act of Documenting: Documentary in the 21st Century (2017), p. 1-10. |  |
| R, 9/8 | ***Watch before class***: [*The Tinder Swindler* (2022, dir. Felicity Morris)](https://www.netflix.com/title/81254340?source=35) [114 min, *Netflix*]***Read***: [Melanie McFarland, “Is ‘The Tinder Swindler’ one of those true crime tales that might strengthen relationships?” *Salon* (Feb. 6, 2022)](https://www.salon.com/2022/02/06/is-the-tinder-swindler-one-of-those-true-tales-that-might-strengthen-relationships/) | Hot Take: *The Tinder Swindler* |
| **Week 3**  |
| T, 9/13 | ***Watch before class***: [*The Janes* (2022, dir. Emma Pildes, Tia Lessin)](https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn%3Ahbo%3Apage%3AGYnLUBAj-sZN_YgEAAAHN%3Atype%3Afeature?source=googleHBOMAX&action=play) [101 min, *HBOmax*]***Read****:* [Kate Erbland, “‘The Janes’ Review: An Intimate and Informative Look Back at a Radical Underground Abortion Group,” *IndieWire* (Jan. 24, 2022)](https://www.indiewire.com/2022/01/the-janes-documentary-abortion-group-1234690268/) | Hot Take: *The Janes* |
| R, 9/15 | ***Read****:* [Chris Lindahl, “The Future of Documentary Filmmaking is Bright, But It Remains a High-Risk Endeavor,” *IndieWire* (Dec. 11, 2021)](https://www.indiewire.com/2021/12/the-future-of-documentary-filmmaking-1234673206/) |  |
| Sun, 9/18 |  | **Response #1** |
| **Week 4 — Unit 2: On Politics & People** |
| T, 9/20 | ***Read***: Bill Nichols, excerpt from *Introduction to Documentary* (2017): p. 29-47 |   |
| R, 9/22 | ***Watch before class***: [*Knock Down the House* (2019, dir. Rachel Lears)](https://www.netflix.com/title/81080637?source=35) [86 min, *Netflix*]***Read***: [Alessa Dominguez, “This New Documentary Shows Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Before She Was AOC,” *BuzzFeed News* (May 3, 2019)](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/alessadominguez/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-knock-down-house-netflix) | Hot Take: *Knock Down the House* |
| **Week 5** |
| T, 9/27 | ***Watch before class***: [*Boys State* (2020, dir. Amanda McBain, Jesse Moss)](https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/boys-state/umc.cmc.1aatz9gwjhnpfqqt8noafagq?action=play) [109 min, *AppleTV*] | Hot Take: *Boys State* |
| R, 9/29 | ***Skim, focus on p. 25-26***: *Boys State* Film Discussion Guide | **Draft of Response #2** |
| **Week 6** |
| T, 10/4 | ***Watch before class***: [*Aftershock* (2022, dir. Tonya Lewis Lee, Paula Eiselt)](https://www.hulu.com/movie/aftershock-c1414fdf-0741-4bd2-b62c-554db3d8f643) [89 min, *Hulu*]***Read***: [Beandrea July, “‘Aftershock’ Review: A Moving Ode to the Black Family,”](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/19/movies/aftershock-review.html?unlocked_article_code=Ra6KwlS_8HxeMJy2nNkhXHKbwQa_caIv-pl0tlx5h_5nned01VdWItnELQ3isLBTGRgVEA2aVQlq5LjS_Ti2cfN_IqUXir0YVLu0wUlnmuhq3Yg7X63V7GUM8IS5QRxpwhhT3zqbYGxQLj0vjn_pdkM5VhThreR9C9CF75NLoSp6TPZ_OfKXn7zPYzwJq9T0_CtQkl79aGAVWxCsv20PbbzOY1hpcX9KZ5JmwWrlUqibMKcjK1sayMKTKrfFJdDLZBrT_WUtDurZIjA_N2JGJRKSkXxD1J7dj333vnwAFB8hq8VJv_v0c_1FPO8cvIBWgWK9_Vr2U99pSyE&smid=share-url) *[The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/19/movies/aftershock-review.html?unlocked_article_code=Ra6KwlS_8HxeMJy2nNkhXHKbwQa_caIv-pl0tlx5h_5nned01VdWItnELQ3isLBTGRgVEA2aVQlq5LjS_Ti2cfN_IqUXir0YVLu0wUlnmuhq3Yg7X63V7GUM8IS5QRxpwhhT3zqbYGxQLj0vjn_pdkM5VhThreR9C9CF75NLoSp6TPZ_OfKXn7zPYzwJq9T0_CtQkl79aGAVWxCsv20PbbzOY1hpcX9KZ5JmwWrlUqibMKcjK1sayMKTKrfFJdDLZBrT_WUtDurZIjA_N2JGJRKSkXxD1J7dj333vnwAFB8hq8VJv_v0c_1FPO8cvIBWgWK9_Vr2U99pSyE&smid=share-url)* [(July 19, 2022)](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/19/movies/aftershock-review.html?unlocked_article_code=Ra6KwlS_8HxeMJy2nNkhXHKbwQa_caIv-pl0tlx5h_5nned01VdWItnELQ3isLBTGRgVEA2aVQlq5LjS_Ti2cfN_IqUXir0YVLu0wUlnmuhq3Yg7X63V7GUM8IS5QRxpwhhT3zqbYGxQLj0vjn_pdkM5VhThreR9C9CF75NLoSp6TPZ_OfKXn7zPYzwJq9T0_CtQkl79aGAVWxCsv20PbbzOY1hpcX9KZ5JmwWrlUqibMKcjK1sayMKTKrfFJdDLZBrT_WUtDurZIjA_N2JGJRKSkXxD1J7dj333vnwAFB8hq8VJv_v0c_1FPO8cvIBWgWK9_Vr2U99pSyE&smid=share-url) | Hot Take: *Aftershock* |
| R, 10/6 | ***Read***: Bill Nichols, “The Political Documentary and the Question of Impact,” from *Speaking Truths with Films: Evidence, Ethics, Politics* (2016) |  |
| Sun, 10/9 |  | **Response #2** |
| **Week 7 — Unit 3: In Frame & Fame** |
| T, 10/11 | ***Read***: Bill Nichols, excerpt from *Introduction to Documentary* (2017): p. 48-58 |  |
| R, 10/13 | ***Watch before class***: *This Changes Everything* (2018, dir. Tom Donahue) [95 min, [*Kanopy*](https://www.kanopy.com/en/buffalo/video/5768811) and [*Netflix*](https://www.netflix.com/title/81110773?source=35)] | Hot Take: *This Changes Everything***Group Presentation #1** |
| **Week 8** |
| T, 10/18 | ***Watch before class***: [*Homecoming: a film by Beyoncé* (2019, dir. Beyoncé, Ed Burke)](https://www.netflix.com/title/81013626?source=35) [137 min, *Netflix*] | Hot Take: *Homecoming: a film by* 19**Group Presentation #2** |
| R, 10/20 | ***Watch before class***: *Framing Britney Spears* (The New York Times’ Presents, season 1, episode 6, 2021) [74 min, [*Hulu*](https://www.hulu.com/watch/d0c999d9-c8a1-4519-b560-3b9644f9eed6)and [*NYTimes.com*](https://www.nytimes.com/video/NYT-Presents/100000007712697/framing-britney-spears.html) | Hot Take: *Framing Britney Spears***Group Presentation #3** |
| **Week 9**  |
| T, 10/25 | ***Watch before class***: [*Halftime* (2022, dir. Amanda Micheli)](https://www.netflix.com/title/81031929?source=35) [95 min, *Netflix*] | Hot Take: *Halftime***Group Presentation #4** |
| R, 10/27 | ***Read***: [Shirley Li, “J. Lo’s Tragic Fame Cycle,” *The Atlantic* (June 24, 2022)](https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2022/06/jennifer-lopez-halftime-netflix/661376/) |  |
| **Week 10 — Unit 4: All for One, One for All** |
| T, 11/1 | ***Read***: Bill Nichols, excerpt from *Introduction to Documentary* (2017): p. 69-88 |  |
| R, 11/3 | ***Watch before class***: [*Changing the Game* (2019, dir. Michael Barnett)](https://www.hulu.com/watch/71bcd7f5-63b4-485c-b4ee-ed41517484d1) [91 min, *Hulu*] | Hot Take: *Changing the Game***Group Presentation #5** |

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| **Week 11**  |
| T, 11/8 | ***Independent Work Day*** —In-class conferences (by appt) |  |
| R, 11/10 | ***Final Project Prep*** | **Final Research Project Proposal & Bibliography** |

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| **Week 12** |
| T, 11/15 | ***Watch before class***: [*Heroin(e)* (2017, dir. Elaine McMillion Sheldon)](https://www.netflix.com/title/80192445) [39 min, *Netflix*]2) *Blackfeet Boxing: Not Invisible* (2020, Kristen Lappas, Tom Rinaldi) [29 min, [*ESPN+*](https://www.espn.com/espnplus/catalog/f878f955-0394-42c3-9b42-f59c0bc1937c/blackfeet-boxing-not-invisible)and Disney+ bundle on [*Hulu*](https://www.hulu.com/watch/b9685f1c-afdf-4ce7-b255-e5c3dd4d6ad9)] | Hot Take: *Heroin(e)& Blackfeet Boxing***Group Presentation #6** |
| R, 11/17 | ***Watch before class***: [*Ovarian Psycos* (2016, dir. Joanna Sokolowski, Kate Trumbull-LaValle)](https://www.wmm.com/catalog/film/ovarian-psycos/) [72 min, *Women Make Movies* rental] | Hot Take: *Ovarian Psycos***Group Presentation #7** |

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| **Week 13 — To Create & Connect** |
| T, 11/22(Zoom) | ***Watch before class***: *Stories We Tell* (2012, dir. Sarah Polley) [109 min, free w/ ads on [*YouTube*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGQoS3c30WU) and [*Amazon Prime*](https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.08b19502-e3cc-204a-811b-63266218cfb6?autoplay=0&ref_=atv_cf_strg_wb)] | Hot Take: *Stories We Tell* |
| R, 11/24 | **NO CLASS**  |  |

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| **Week 14** |
| T, 11/29 | ***Watch before class***: *I Am Another You* (2017, dir. Nanfu Wang) [82 min, free on [*PlutoTV*](https://pluto.tv/en/on-demand/movies/i-am-another-you-2017-1-1?utm_medium=textsearch&utm_source=google) and [*Roku Channel*](https://therokuchannel.roku.com/watch/46f17c0655f555d195b9d1919c1f62c1?source=google)] | Hot Take: *I Am Another You* |
| R, 11/31 | *Final Project Prep* | **Final Research Project Drafts** |

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| **Week 15** |
| T, 12/6 | ***Watch before class***: TBA | Hot Take: TBA |
| R, 12/8 | *Course Wrap-up & Final Project Prep* |  |
| **Week 16** |
| **TBD** |  | **Final Research Project (by 11:59pm)** |