Images of working women in film both reflect American culture and help shape new cultural standards. There are surprisingly few films about the workplace and even fewer films that focus on women and their work lives. However, these films have presented iconic images. The workplace is more prevalent on the television screen, but even here is usually the setting for personal relationships. Film and television creators have been accused of stereotyping and marginalizing women as workers. This brief course will give us an opportunity to view some of these films and television shows and how they portray working women in the factory, the office, and the home. We will analyze how the tools of film and television—scripts, dialog, camera work, music—communicate a specific vision of "women at work", and discuss if this vision has changed over the years and the relationship of this vision with the reality of women in the workplace.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

Learn a framework with which to critically analyze films, television, and other visual media. Acquire knowledge about the history of significant labor films and television programs and about the gender, economic, and racial issues that they explore. Become aware of how working people and unions are portrayed in popular culture.
**Attendance is critical.** All absences must be excused and you will be responsible for making up the work and getting class notes. If you miss a film screening, you will be responsible for viewing the film on your own.

Grades will be based on:

1. **Attendance.** This includes arriving in class on time and staying for the full class period. All Cell Phones turned off in class. No social media.

2. **Contributions to class discussion (quantity AND quality).** You will be expected to listen to and respond to other student comments and questions as well as articulating your own views.

3. **Film Analysis (writing assignment).** The analysis will be graded on content and writing quality.

4. **Group Discussion and Presentations.** You will be asked to discuss specific questions involving the films we have seen in class and present your summarized views to the class during the last session. It is therefore essential that you attend the last class.

5. **Short Exam.** There will be a brief exam (no essays) on the last day of class to test your comprehension of the readings and class discussions.

If you feel that your final grade should be changed, please submit this request by email with a detailed explanation as to why it should be changed.

**Required Readings:**

Readings will be available on Sakai or handed out in class. Readings will be taken from film studies and labor and gender studies literature.

**Short Film Analysis**

View a film or one season of a television program not viewed in class (a list of possible titles will be provided). The film/television show must center on a woman who works and portray her in the workplace. Write a critical analysis of the film or program, focusing on how it portrays gender roles and the work process. The paper should be 2-4 pages long, double-spaced. More specific guidelines for the paper will be distributed in class.

This is NOT a research paper, I am interested in what you have to say. It is acceptable to read articles about the background and history of the film and filmmaker(s). Please do not read reviews. If you do use any articles, web sites, etc., they should be documented according to MLA or APA style sheets.

**Class One, November 5th**

**Hollywood and the “Working Girl”**
How do we view films critically?

Hollywood’s early images of working women.

View In Class:

**His Girl Friday**, 1940, directed by Howard Hawks or

**The Devil and Miss Jones**, 1941, directed by Sam Wood

Assignments for Week 2:

(1) Readings:

       - Chapter 1: Mise en Scene, pp. 11-37 & 37-60. (Sakai, uploaded in 2 parts

   (b) Zaniello, 171 – 173 (Sakai).

(2) Select film title for Film Analysis, email selection to instructor at donna.schulman@gmail.com. Use subject heading Film Analysis. [Suggested film and television titles are listed at the end of this syllabus. Additional titles are welcome, be prepared to explain how they relate to the topic of this course.]

**Class Two, November 10th**

**The Union Maid: Norma Rae**

View in Class: *Norma Rae*, 1979, directed by Martin Ritt.

Assignments for Week 3:

(1) Readings:


   (b) tba

(2) – Get Film or Television Program for Film Analysis assignment. View it!
Class Three, November 17th

The Hostile Workplace: North Country

View in class: *North County*, 2005

Assignments for Week 4:

(1) Readings:

   Ch. 9: Alternatives to Live-Action Fictional Films, pp. 299 – 317 (Sakai).

(b) tba

Class Four, December 3rd

A Documentary Look at Working Women

View in class: *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*.1980, directed by Connie Field.

What is a documentary?

Compare fictional and documentary portrayals of working women.

The stereotype and reality of “Rosies.”

Assignments for Class Four:

Finish Film Analysis, to be handed in electronically by e-mail by 11pm, 12/10. Document should be in Word format, sent as an attachment. Send to donna.schulman@gmail.com/

Class Five, December 10th

Putting It All Together

Short Exam.

Group discussion and presentations on themes explored during course. Depending on
the number of students in the class, we will either have brief presentations about the film or television show you critiqued in your paper or a group discussion on working women in television.

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Suggested Films for Film Analysis

These titles should be available through Netflix, Amazon.com, or other film sources. Some are available for in-library viewing at the Carey Library. If you have a film in mind not listed here, you must get the instructor’s approval. You may also analyze a television program; if you decide to do that, you must view one complete season of that program.


Bread and Roses (2000, directed by Ken Loach, the fictional story of two Mexican sisters who become involved in a union organizing drive of janitors in L.A., based on the real-life Justice for Janitors campaign.)


Desk Set, 1957.

The Devil Wears Prada, 2006.

Live Nude Girls Unite! (2000, documentary about organizing the first Exotic Dancers Union)

Made in Dagenham (2010, A dramatization of the 1968 strike at the Ford Dagenham car plant, where female workers walked out in protest against sexual discrimination.)

Nine to Five, 1980.


Salt of the Earth, 1954.

She Married Her Boss, 1935.

Silkwood, 1983.


With Babies and Banners: The Story of the Women’s Emergency Brigade (1979, directed by Lorraine Gray, documentary on the role of the Women’s Emergency Brigade in the famous 1936 Flint sit-down strike.


Television Shows
The Good Wife
Mad Men
The Mary Tyler Moore Show
Murphy Brown