

# STAR WARS:

## FEMINISM, FANDOM AND THE FORCE

### Contact Info:

**Instructor:** Tanya D. Zuk

**Office Hours:** Weds  
9:30-12:30

**Office:** 25 Park Place, 1021C

**Phone:** (470) 333-2417

**Email:** [tzuk1@gsu.edu](mailto:tzuk1@gsu.edu)

### About Me:

I am currently earning my Ph. D. in Moving Image Studies in the Communication Department at Georgia State University. My work at GSU has focused on new media and collaborative storytelling, with a particular emphasis on LGBT and Queer self-representations in transmedia narratives. I use a cultural studies approach that leans heavily on audience reception and fan studies in my research, keeping in mind text and industrial constraints.



## Course Description

Explore galaxies far, far away (and our own) with this class examining feminist approaches to the *Star Wars* franchise and fandom. Join the debate on female representation in the extended universe, fandom backlash and toxicity, and production response. Analyze canon texts including films, cartoons, fiction, and games, and compare them to fan created texts. Finally, create your own work – through analytical writing and creative production.

*Star Wars* is an iconic American film franchise that has recently been revived with new texts including the sequel trilogy and stand-alone films. This intergenerational text has gone through major production changes with a transfer from Lucas Films to Disney (George Lucas to Kathleen Kennedy). These production changes have affected the fan community creating gendered factions, new fan texts, and debates.

The course is divided into four sections: Myth, Memory & Fairy Tale, Feminist Perspectives, Fandom & Fan Works, and Fan Activism. For each class session we will read one academic article



## Assignments

Fandom Show & Tell	200 pts
Response Papers (3)	300 pts
Final Project	
• Proposal	50 pts
• Ann. Bib/Pre-vis	50 pts
• Draft	100 pts
• Presentation	100 pts
• Final	200 pts

## Grade Scale

97-100	A+	80-82	B-
93-96	A	77-79	C+
90-92	A-	70-76	C
87-89	B+	60-69	D
83-86	B	59-0	F

The last day to withdraw and receive a "PW" is **March 5th**. Withdrawals after the semester midpoint are automatically given a grade of "WF."

or chapter, watch/read a canon text and a fanon one. Bring your passion, opinions, and questions to our discussion-based classroom. Don't forget to bring your respect for each other!

We will have weekly Fandom Show & Tell where you will post a fan text related to that class's reading and a discussion question. Additionally, you will have three response papers over the course of the semester. Finally, you will be working on a final project that includes creative production and/or academic writing.

## Course Goals

By the end of this course you should be able to...

- Identify underlying ideologies in *Star Wars* and fan works around the franchise, and various feminist and fan studies approaches
- Discuss larger issues of gender, the social contract, copyright, and activism in relation to *Star Wars* and larger culture
- Create multimedia *critical* fan works of your own that repair, reclaim, and recenter the text
- Think critically about the connections between fandom, popular memory, and feminist discourse in the media

## Course Texts

Required readings are available on iCollege. You should also have access to *Star Wars* canon, including the feature films (Episodes I – VIII, *Rogue One*, and *Solo*). Other canon texts like *Forces of Destiny*, *Clone Wars*, and fan works like *The Phantom Cut* will be linked in iCollege.

## Course Policies

### Class Environment

It is in the best interests of you as an individual and us as a classroom to create a positive, inclusive, classroom environment. One of my greatest challenges as an instructor is to provide an engaging, entertaining, and intellectual classroom experience. I need your collaboration to create the best educational experience for all involved. By participating in class discussion, being

respectful of others opinions, and preparing for class.

### *Attendance & Participation*

I will take roll on random days. While this course does not have a separate grade for attendance, repeated absences and/or tardiness can negatively impact your participation grade. You are expected in your seats promptly at 2 PM so we can begin class on time.

### *iCollege*

iCollege is your friend and has the most up-to-date version of the syllabus, including course policies, schedule, readings, and assignment guidelines. All assignment submissions and grades will be submitted and posted here.

### *Late Policy*

No assignments will be accepted late unless you have (a) the permission of the instructor; (b) jury duty notice; or (c) permission from the Dean of Students.

### *Appeals*

If you wish to appeal a grade: within a week of getting your assignment back you must hand in, along with the assignment you want re-graded, a typed one page paper explaining why you believe your grade was incorrect and should be regraded. I will respond in writing within a week. Please note, that re-grading does **NOT** guarantee a better grade.

### *Georgia State Writing Center*

There are several small papers, as well as a final project required in this class. You may find over the course of the semester, that I refer you to The Writing Studio here at Georgia State. You can sign-up for a session at: <http://www.writingstudio.gsu.edu/>

### *Disability Services*

If you need special arrangements for a documented disability, please contact Disability Services at <http://disability.gsu.edu>. If you would like to share pertinent medical information, request special arrangements for class

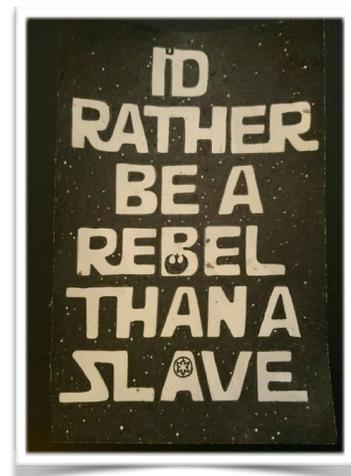
## **Fandom Show & Tell**

There are six creative assignments this semester, where we will learn new technical skills and practice storytelling, parody, criticism in the fannish tradition. For each assignment you will be provided detailed technical instructions, including tutorial videos. For larger projects we will have scheduled production time in class.

Use these assignments to flex your creative production muscles. Fan creative works and authorship is one of the many ways to practice technical and creative skills.

## **Response Papers**

Alongside each creative project is a reflection assignment. This is a traditional writing assignment and you will be expected to use proper grammar, syntax, and structure. Each of these assignments (there are seven) will have specific prompts that you will need to respond to. Additionally, you will find it necessary to leverage course materials and potentially even outside research.



seating, or need special assistance in the event of a building evacuation, please contact me in the first week of class. I endeavor to make this class accessible to every student, and will do my best to make this class fit your needs.

### *Academic Honesty*

Please note that by staying in this class you are agreeing to abide by all the standards of academic honesty in the **GSU Student Handbook** and by **standards specific to film classes** in the Department of Communication.

### *Subject to Change*

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade scale, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.



## Final Project

There are two options for your final project, regardless of your choice an analysis of a *Star Wars* text, either canon or fanon, will be required. Additionally, both options require a progression of work, revision, and a presentation.

### **Creative Project**

You may choose to create a fan production for your final project. This could be a fan activism campaign, a fan edit, a fan film, podcast/vlog, or even a video game that relates back to *Star Wars* and a social issue (gender, sexuality, race, class, political protest, environmentalism). Given the nature of creative projects and the breath of work, you may work in groups. However, if groups are used a peer evaluation will be completed by each member, and each member will complete their own individual short analysis that relates to the creative work and a *Star Wars* text of your choice (1000-1200 words).

### **Term Paper**

If you opt to complete a term paper, you may choose any combination of *Star Wars* texts as objects for your analysis (canon and fanon). You must also include a social issue (gender, sexuality, race, class, political protest, environmentalism) as a theoretical framework for your analysis. Your final draft should be between 2000 and 2500 words excluding your bibliography and any images. It may be written in an informal style, but must include some form of citation as needed.

# Course Schedule

All readings, screenings, and assignments are due by the start of class on the date below.

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1	<b>1/15 - Course Intro</b>	<b>1/17</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cook &amp; Kellen, "How we should understand the new <i>Star Wars</i>"</li> </ul>
	<b>Myth, Memory &amp; Fairy Tale</b>	
Week 2	<b>1/22</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berger, "Is <i>Star Wars</i> a Modern Fairy Take?"</li> <li>Deyneka, "May the Myth Be With You"</li> </ul>	<b>1/23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brabazon, "<i>Star Wars</i> and Writing Popular Memory"</li> </ul>
Week 3	<b>1/28</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lyden, "Whose Film Is It Anyway?"</li> </ul>	<b>1/30</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kinnucan, "Pedagogy of (the) Force: The Myth of Redemptive Violence"</li> </ul>
	<b>Feminist Perspectives: Canon &amp; Fanon</b>	
Week 4	<b>2/5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smelik, "Feminist Film Theory"</li> <li>Brooker, "<i>Star Wars</i> Chicks"</li> </ul>	<b>2/7</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simpson, "Thawing the Ice Princess"</li> <li>Travis, "From Bikinis to Blasters"</li> </ul>
Week 5	<b>2/12</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ellis, "New World, Old Habits"</li> <li>McMahon, Docile Bodies &amp; Viscous Force: Fear of the Flesh in <i>Return of the Jedi</i>"</li> </ul>	<b>2/14</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Floxman, "Imperfect Ideals: The Women's Question"</li> </ul>
Week 6	<b>2/19</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merlock-Jackson, "Lightsabers, Political Arenas &amp; Marriages"</li> </ul>	<b>2/21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bowman, "Pregnant Padmé &amp; Slave Leia: <i>Star Wars</i>' Female Role Models"</li> </ul>
	<b>Fandom &amp; Fan Works</b>	
Week 7	<b>2/26</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brooker, "Fan Films"</li> <li>Jenkins, "Textual Poachers"</li> </ul>	<b>2/28</b> Joly-Corcoran & Ludlow, "Fan Fics & Films... Thank the Makers"
Week 8	<b>3/5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bonstetter et al., "Re-Writing Mary Sue"</li> </ul> <p><i>Midpoint - Drop Deadline</i></p>	<b>3/7</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willis, "Fanfiction and the Myth of Myth"</li> </ul>
Week 9	<b>3/12</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hills, "<i>Star Wars</i> in Fandom, Film Theory &amp; the Museum"</li> </ul>	<b>3/14</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phillips, "<i>Star Wars</i> Fan Edits"</li> <li>Wille, "Legacy of <i>The Phantom Edit</i>"</li> </ul>

	Tuesday	Thursday
	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
	<b>Fan Activism</b>	
Week 10	<b>3/26</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Johnson, "Fan-tagonism: Factions, Institutions, and Constitutive Hegemonies of Fandom"</li> <li>Stein, "<u>Fandom/Resistance</u>"</li> </ul>	<b>3/28</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brown, "#WheresRey: Feminism Protest and Merchandising"</li> <li>Yodavich, "Destigmatization Strategies Among Women Fans"</li> </ul>
Week 11	<b>4/2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hoffman &amp; Park, "Carrie Fisher's Mental Health Advocacy"</li> </ul>	<b>4/4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kinnecott, "Space Mom"</li> </ul>
Week 12	<b>4/9</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sang, "A Woman's Place is in the Resistance"</li> </ul>	<b>4/11</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zuk, "Carrie Fisher Sent Me"</li> </ul>
	<b>Presentation Weeks</b>	
Week 13	<b>4/16</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation Schedule TBD</li> </ul>	<b>4/18</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation Schedule TBD</li> </ul>
Week 14	<b>4/23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation Schedule TBD</li> </ul>	<b>4/25</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation Schedule TBD</li> </ul>

***Final papers are due NO LATER than midnight Friday, May 3rd.***

***No late papers excepted.***

***No exceptions.***