

Abstract
**A Chorus of Silences: Teaching Women's Cinema
in the Context of Other Marginalized Cinemas**

Thomas Leitch

Movies by and about women continue to be marginalized and silenced in contemporary Hollywood, as they have been throughout Hollywood history. Female performers are offered fewer roles than male performers; those roles are less likely to be prominent; most female performers have shorter careers than their male counterparts; and women are far less likely to be active behind the camera or in the front office where decisions about movies are made. Yet women are far from the only population long silenced by Hollywood. Americans of color are even more systematically excluded from performance and production roles. So are members of the LGBTQ+ community and people with mental or physical disabilities. Despite a number of studies focusing on the overlap among these marginal populations and voices and the rise of intersectionality as a way of talking about the all-too-common strategies to deprive members of these communities of the power of subjecthood, speech, and self-definition, most college courses on these silenced communities focus on a single marginalized population instead of considering the relations among different groups neglected by Hollywood history and current practice.

This presentation considers the challenges of teaching women's cinema, Black cinema, queer cinema, and disability cinema in a single course. It focuses on the both the common tactics by which each of these groups has been marginalized and the distinctions among them that warn against easy generalizations about them. It examines the value of these very different cinemas in expanding the cinematic canon, extending the horizons of intersubjective experience audiences expect and demand that Hollywood explore, and the different ways these neglected cinemas provide of reading classic films audiences had assumed had nothing new to say about America. It places special emphasis on the virtues and limits of bringing these marginal cinemas together in a classroom whose teacher is not disabled, queer, Black, or female.

Bibliography:

- Bell, Christopher, ed. *Blackness and Disability: Critical Examinations and Cultural Interventions*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2011.
- Bell-Metereau, Rebecca. *Hollywood Androgyny*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- Bradbury-Rance, Clara. *Lesbian Cinema after Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019.
- Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016.
- White, Patricia. *Women's Cinema, World Cinema: Projecting Contemporary Feminisms*. Durham: Duke UP, 2015.

Biography:

Thomas Leitch is Professor of English at the University of Delaware, where he teaches undergraduate courses in film studies and graduate courses in literary and cultural theory. His most recent books are *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (2017) and *The History of American Literature on Film* (2019).