

UCINTHON32 – Spring 2021

Femina Universalis: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Sexualization of ‘The Woman’

Students involved:

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Building this course out of nowhere except for the knowledge of our own disciplines and finding common grounds with each other as well as centralizing feminism and the sexualization of the woman seems to be a challenge. However, the combination of self-research and cooperation helped to not only delve deeper in one’s own discipline and shed a light on aspects not discussed before, but also on the perception of other disciplines. Our individual and collective willingness to ask questions and remain sceptical to answers helped us to formulate various approaches to why there is a sexualization of the woman, how this invades notions of femininity and masculinity, and how this is positioned and overlapping in our various disciplines.

The wide range of knowledge that all of us possess inside, but also outside our disciplines seems intimidating at first, but the environment we created for each other was everything but intimidating. Everyone was very open to each other’s opinion, and everyone got the opportunity to talk when they wanted to. Over the weeks, we got more comfortable with each other, and in the second half of the course we also got to teach the classes together. It was a challenge to combine certain disciplines, but working together in a class like that and seeing everyone loving the topic and participating in the discussions is a very rewarding feeling.

We also think that the various personal backgrounds have influenced the course. Our academic/intellectual opinions and personal experiences have made the course more concrete, e.g., by looking at why certain behaviour is in place. By including personal experiences, we have learned about how our findings are manifested in real life. This makes us understand our experiences much better, enables us to contextualize why certain types of behaviour occur, and equips us with tools to tackle problems of sexualization/discrimination.

Having such a little group with each their own disciplinary knowledge results in incredibly creative projects such as the [video](#) that we created for the symposium and the free assignment. With the freedom we had for the symposium and the free assignment, we wanted to do something that we do not get any opportunity for in other courses, as that is also what this course is for. We did our regular essays and presentations, but we also wanted to add some things that were a little different. That is something that we really appreciate about a course format like this, and it is also something we really encourage other people participating in honors courses to do; use the freedom you get by giving yourself opportunities for doing this you really want to do before leaving UCU, such as creating a video project or a painting. Allowing everyone to perform their creativity outside of the rather traditional paper shows not only the intellectual side of the person, but also how everyone can express themselves in creative ways which are nevertheless making important points.

We do really believe that having this community feeling we were talking about during the course and during the symposium is something that we achieved. We have grown closer as a group and were not afraid to speak up when someone could be putting in a little more effort, but we were also always showing the appreciation we had for each other when we were giving the presentations. It is unfortunate that we were not able to do this course in real life and to have the guest lecturers with us in our class, but even online we succeeded in creating our little community. We are very content with how this course turned out and we would love to see it becoming an actual course at UCU. Additionally, we think that a course, or the inclusion of some of the topics on our course, can help to understand what is happening and where this stems from. Thus, by understanding the history as well as contemporary discussions about the importance of feminism not only for understanding the (societal) role of women, but also in a broad aspects such as gender, sexuality, dominance of masculinity, our course contributes to increasing knowledge about the origins of these norms and what can be done to tackle these. On the other hand, we think that our course can grow, extend, and include more topics than those we have discussed.