

Social Media should come with a health warning!

Media & Culture

University of Worcester

Dr Barbara Mitra (Course Leader)



Some statistics

- 31% of 1,118 UK teenagers felt ashamed of their body image (Mental Health Foundation 2019)
- 40% of teenagers noted that images on social media caused them to worry about their body image
- Eating Disorders – The Priory group warn about the rise of eating disorders and fitspiration posts on Instagram
- Dawn (14 years) noted ‘80% of the people [she knows] worry about how they look’
- [Do you think social media influences you?](#)

Social Media

- Young people engage with Social media
- Provide discourses of the self
- ‘Omnipresent and available anywhere and anytime’ (Williams and Ricciardelli, 2014, p.389) – **how many hours have you spent on social media already this week?**
- Appearance-focused content (Burnette et al. 2017)
- ‘Social media like Instagram kinda make you like portray another side of yourself’ (Ben, 14 years)



Body Image Concerns

- Body image = internal perception of one's own physical appearance
- Based on self-observation and reactions of others to one's self
- Comparing ourselves to others – self-exploration
- Social media focuses on physical appearances



Comparisons

- Upward social comparison = images and posts are perceived as better than oneself = negative consequences and more body dissatisfaction
- Downward social comparison = where images/posts are perceived as worse than oneself = less body dissatisfaction
- 'You see a picture and you immediately think I should look like that, even though it doesn't look like a person' (Amanda 15 years)

Dancer, 18, who said she hates her body says 'all ballerinas have some sort of body dysmorphia'

 [Comment »](#)



Faima Bakar Monday 11 Mar 2019 5:11 pm



102
SHARES



(Picture: Instagram/Luna Montana)

Luna Montana is an 18-year-old ballerina from Los Angeles, California, who has been documenting her dance journey on YouTube.

What do you think about this?

Idealised bodies

- Instagram 'perfect bodies, perfect lives and perfect relationships' (Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2019, p.3)
- Images are often adapted from mainstream media
- 'I always get worried if I want to post a picture of myself on social media because that has to be like a really good picture or I won't post it' (Katharine, 17 years)
- **Do you post up pictures of yourself?**

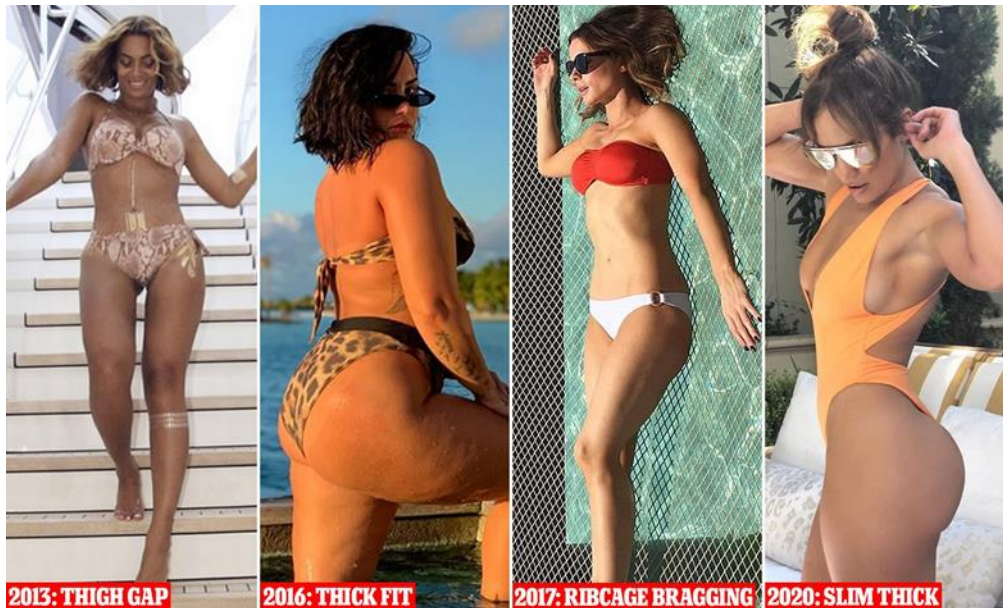


Idealised bodies - female

- Image for women 'sleek, slender images of female beauty' (Perloff 2014:366)
- Emphasise ideal feminine body as physically lean and thin
- Thin waist – despite other changes
- 'I wouldn't say there's pressure to be like mega thin but like slim or not overweight' (Abigail, 14 years)
- **What about the corset that's come back into fashion?**

Images

- Social media – stereotypical images of women
- ‘Everyone wants to be skinny and there’s oh I’ve lost so much weight’ (Kath, 17 years)
- Exposure to media messages can impart expectations in relation to looks and body image (Perloff, 2014, p.363)
- Images – visual dominate social media



Idealised bodies



- Males – increasingly body conscious/surveillance
- Focus on muscles for males, wide shoulders, well-developed chest and arm muscles
- Fitspiration – fitness linked to increasing body dissatisfaction
- Muscle-enhancing supplements
- ‘I think you see other guys online and the way they are...I do think it has an impact’ (Christian, 17 years)
- Women are more used to engaging in appearance comparison (**male gaze- is female gaze the same**)?

Equal Pressure?

- 'I'd say there's more pressure on women to be thin than there is on men to be muscly' (Dawn 14 years)
- 'Girls have to think about their hair and their makeup but boys all they have to really care about is their hair and that's it' (Zara 15 years)



Fitspiration



25 Side plank cross crunches



20 Push up plank with alternating hip drop



15 Knee touch and arabesque exercise

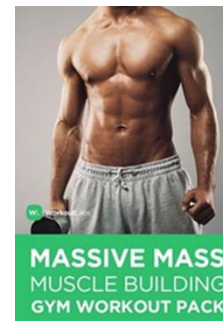


‘I want to look nice so I can feel good about myself and then others can see that I like how I look’ (Lisa 16 years)

Do you worry about how others see you?

Fitspiration

- Fitspiration 'I cheated. But from afar no one can tell. 6% bf actually and dehydration isn't a joke....but dehydrated physique looks the best, after you get over the headaches' (Male Instagrammer)
- 'The pain of being overweight is far worse than the pain of working out' (Female Pinterest)
- 'There is no shortcut. It takes time to build a better, stronger version of yourself' – **what does this suggest?**



Fake Images

- Fake images/Thinspiration
- Addictive feedback – likes and endorsements
- Self- esteem
- ‘I’ll take lots of pictures and then decide which one is like the best, and then go through the filters....I would like to get a lot of likes’ (Zara 15 years)



Para-social relationships

- Celebrities/influencers
- Para-social relationships – similar to interacting with friends
- ‘There’s like celebrities on there [social media] and you see them and you think - Oh I want to look like them’ (Loise 15 years)
- ‘I know that celebrities have, like advert deal things with those tea brands that are meant to make you lose weight and waist trainers (Abigail 14 years)
- **Do you follow influencers at all?**



Body positivity

- These might not protect against upward social comparison
- Women are socialised to self-objectify from an early age
- Love your body discourses
- Disagreement about these as they still link identity to one's body
- **What do you think?**



Eating Disorders

- Limiting intake of food, binge eating, purging, intense workouts
- Anorexia, Orthorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and other eating disorders
- Internet – pro-anorexia, pro-bulimia, clean eating, dieting, fitspiration websites/images
- Support groups for growing self-esteem not based on appearance
- 'It's easy to look people up on Instagram and Facebook...and then look at the pictures of themselves looking perfect....I think wow you're really thin and so I look them up and look through all their pictures and think I'll never be like that' (Eating Disorders research, 2020)



Our Responses



- Our responses – preferred, negotiated, oppositional (Stuart Hall)
- Different media in different ways
- Body image replicated in particular ways – social media
- Perhaps making it harder to resist the messages
- But must recognise our specific contexts, dispositions etc.
- ‘I used to but I haven’t posted for like three years...I used to be really self-conscious back then’ (Jarred 15 years)
- ‘I try to avoid going on it, but often click out of habit (Eating Disorders research, 2020)

Areas of Study

- **Texts/representations**
 - Analysing images, social media, television, film, popular culture
- **Audiences/consumption**
 - Why people watch/follow these
- **Production/institutions**
 - How some advertisers, organisations (e.g. Netflix, Hollywood) dominate



Syllabus – Year 1

■ Studying Media and Culture

- Examples: Music, Gender, Disabilities, Race, Class, Fashion, Moral Panics, Emotion, Happiness Industry, News, Surveillance, Advertising, Celebrity

■ Digital Cultures

- Examples: The Internet and Identity, Fake News, Posthumanism, Podcasting, Influencers, Gaming Cultures, Streaming Services



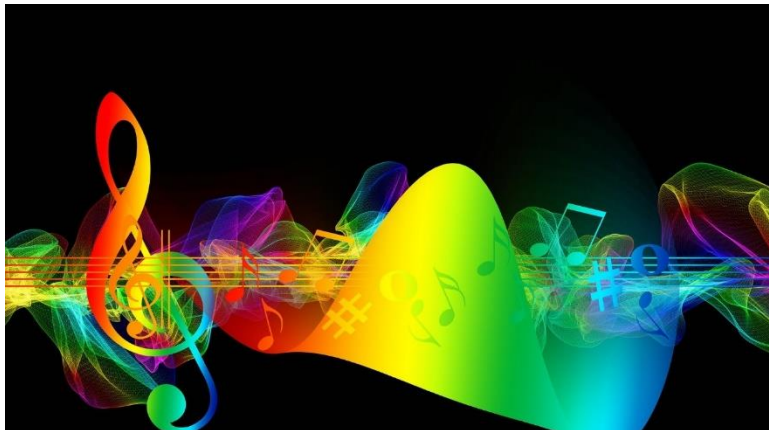
Syllabus – Year 2

- Popular Cultures
- Social Media
- Gender, Philosophy and Popular Cultures
- Diversity in Film and Television
- Work Projects



Syllabus – Year 3

- TV Times
- Commercial Uses of Social Media
- Immersive Media
- Green Media
- War Reporting
- Dissertations



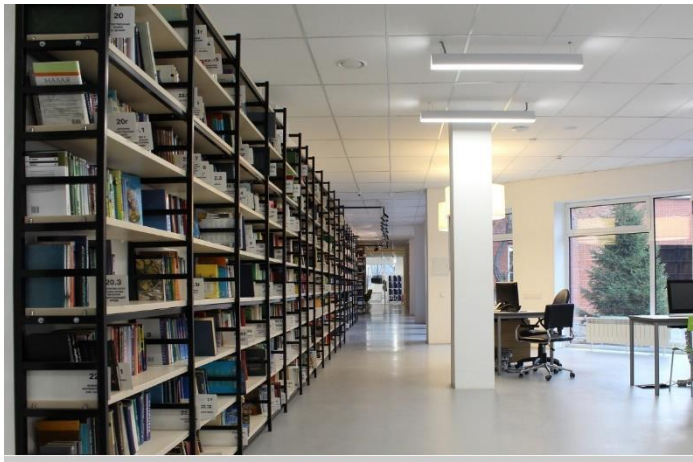
Why I like Media & Culture

- Choose what you want to focus on depending on your interests
 - ranging from football and gaming to body image and social media
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking



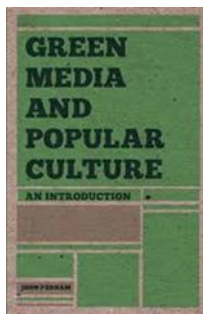
Teaching

- VLE support
- Small Classes
- High quality teaching - student nominations 2020:-
 - Outstanding Lecturers Award (3 team members)
 - Module Excellence Awards (various modules)
 - Exceptional Personal Academic Tutoring



Research

- Hardy, S. (2015) From Black Lace to Shades of Grey In K. Philips (ed.) *Shattering Releases*, McFarland and Co.
- Mitra, B., Taylor, L., Milburn-Curtis, C. and McCarron, J. (2018) [Gendering Worcester News](#), *Journal of the Association for Journalism Education*. Vol. 7 (1), pp. 29-38.
- Parham, J. (2017) (co-edited with Dr Adeline Johns-Putra and Dr Louise Squire). *Literature and Sustainability: Exploratory Essays*. Manchester University Press
- Wareham Morris, K. (2018). *Cutting The Green Ribbon*, published by Hesterglock Press.



Single/Joint Combinations

- Single Honours
 - Media & Culture
- Popular Joint combinations ([see website](#))
 - Film Studies
 - Creative Media
 - Journalism
 - Sociology
 - English Language
 - English Literature
 - Creative Writing

Student Comments

- 'The Media and Culture course gives you excellent opportunities that help prepare you for the workplace.'
- This includes interactive sessions with guest speakers from industries including marketing and PR, social and youth work and social media-based technology companies.'
- 'From day one I felt supported in my learning. As the class numbers were smaller, I felt that I was able to have more support throughout lectures, seminars and tutorials.'



Student Comments

- 'Media and Culture introduced a huge spectrum of topics and information that I had never considered before.'
- It gave me a deep interest in Media & Culture and encouraged me to try and pursue a career in Media and Culture.'



Careers

- Content creator YouTube (Rosie and Rosie)
- Broadcast Journalist at BBC Hereford & Worcester
- PR & Marketing Officer for Speller Metcalfe
- Presenter/Sport Team at The Bridge Radio
- Head of Global Implementation Bybox
- Head of Operations at AmeriCamp
- Digital Marketing Director at Initiative
- Business Analyst at Lanyon
- Support advisor at Natural England
- Start-up marketing company
- Postgraduate studies: MA, MSc, PhDs
- Teaching in a variety of organisations



Any Questions?



Further Questions



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Thank you for watching

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References

- Burnette, C.B. et al. (2017) I don't need people to tell me I'm pretty on social media' A qualitative study of social media and body image in early adolescent girls. *Body Image*, Vol. 23:114-125.
- <https://www.priorygroup.com/blog/the-dangers-of-social-media-and-advice-on-eating-disorders>
- Mental Health Foundation (2019) *Body Image Report*. YouGov/Mental Health Foundation <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/body-image-report/intro#:~:text=In%20a%20second%20new%20survey,concerns%20about%20their%20body%20image> (Accessed 3rd November 2020).
- Perloff , R.M. (2014) Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research. *Sex Roles*. 71:363-377.
- Tiggemann, M. and Anderberg, I. (2019) Social media is not real: The effect of 'Instagram vs reality' images on women's social comparison and body image. *New Media and Society*, 1-17.
- Williams, R.J. and Ricciardelli, L.A. (2014) Social media and Body Image Concerns: Further Considerations and broader perspectives. *Sex Roles*. 71, 389-392.