

Bad Girls

Eng. 285 – Images of Women in Film and Literature

Spring 2022

Prof. Gwen Bergner

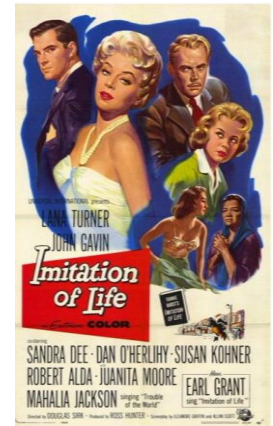
T/Th 1:00-2:15



Bad girls—who are they and what do they do? This course will explore gender roles and the politics of representation by way of the category “bad girls.” It seems that women who refuse the feminine norm have long populated literature and cultural representation in types such as the femme fatale, shrew, siren, or Lolita. However, these types often represent a cultural fantasy of the outlaw woman—one that is actually in keeping

with many conventional notions of women as sexual seductress or dominating woman. These types often reinforce the norm by making an example of the women who rebel (they die, they're killed, they lose their boyfriends and their reputations).

We'll look at some famous examples of these conventional types of female outlaws. Then we'll focus on representations of unapologetic bad girls as written by women in film, literature, and popular culture. These characters that buck the norms of gender will, we expect, help us examine issues of gender identification, the meanings of femininity, and the possibilities for changing the rules of the game. We will try to figure out what makes a woman “bad” and why. How does the exception to the feminine model help us understand how the norm is shaped and sustained? And what are the possibilities for refuting the model, subverting it, manipulating it, and changing it altogether?



Books

Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*
Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*
Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*
Michele Serros, *Chicana Falsa*
Jacqueline Woodson, *Red at the Bone*

Films

Imitation of Life
Thelma and Louise

