

Feminist Film Theory

Must Reads by Prof. Susan Potter

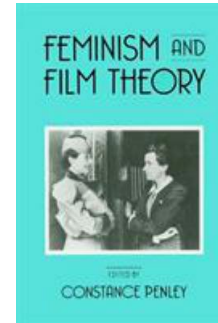
[Feminism and film theory / Edited by Constance Penley](#)

(1988)

Description: A collection of seminal and lesser known essays in feminist film theory, including Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

Feminism and motion pictures

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[The desire to desire: the woman's film of the 1940s / Mary Ann Doane](#)

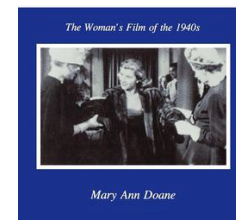
(1987)

Description: In the context of early feminist film theory which struggled to theorise a place for female spectatorship, however compromised, Doane's book explores the apparent paradox of the Hollywood 'woman's film', a genre that imagines itself as addressing a specifically female audience.

Contemporary Australian Muslim art; identity & migration; time & change in art

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THE DESIRE
TO DESIRE



[Home is where the heart is: studies in melodrama and the woman's film /](#)

Edited by Christine Gledhill (1987)

Description: Marking concentrated feminist interest in gendered genres (the woman's film) and undervalued because feminised filmic modalities (melodrama), the collection is notable for Gledhill's extraordinarily wide-ranging and agenda-setting introductory essay on melodrama.

Melodrama in motion pictures

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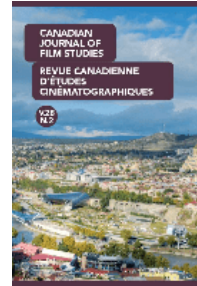


[In the realm of pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the masochistic aesthetic / Gaylyn Studlar \(1988\)](#)

Description: An important challenge to Laura Mulvey's influential psychoanalytical model of Hollywood spectatorship, Studlar expands the theoretical language for thinking about the perverse pleasures of film spectatorship that are often less visible and not socially condoned.

Motion pictures -- United States -- Aesthetics

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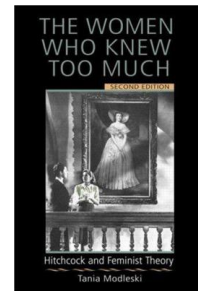


[The women who knew too much: Hitchcock and feminist theory / Tania Modleski \(1988\)](#)

Description: Now in its third edition (2015), Modleski's book engages with the films of auteur, Alfred Hitchcock, to develop a feminist theory of gendered spectatorship, demonstrating how an attention to gender uncovers its layered complexities, instabilities and motility.

Feminism and motion pictures

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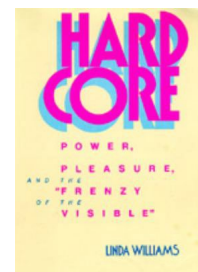


[Hard core: power, pleasure, and the 'frenzy of the visible' / Linda Williams \(1989\)](#)

Description: From a leading feminist film theorist, the book that can be said to have established porn studies as a field, setting out a compelling and theoretically deft account of one of the most prolific if illegitimate genres in analog and digital cinema.

Filmstrips

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[The woman at the keyhole: feminism and women's cinema / Judith Mayne \(1990\)](#)

Description: Considers from a feminist perspective, cinema spectacle and narrative, and film authorship. Revisits the early so-called 'primitive' cinema of the early twentieth century, and how the aesthetics of 'primitive' or 'cinema of attractions' are taken up by women filmmakers of the avant-garde.

Performing arts

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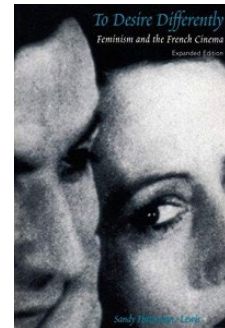


[To desire differently: feminism and the French cinema / Sandy Flitterman-Lewis \(1990\)](#)

Description: Seeking to establish an alternative tradition of feminist cinema, Flitterman-Lewis examines the work of three film directors: Germaine Dulac's silent films, the co-directed early sound films of the relatively unknown Marie Epstein, and Agnès Varda's seminal feature films.

Feminism and motion pictures

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[Femmes fatales: feminism, film theory, psychoanalysis / Mary Ann Doane \(1991\)](#)

Description: An influential feminist theorisation of an enduring cinematic and cultural figure, the femme fatale.

Feminism and motion pictures

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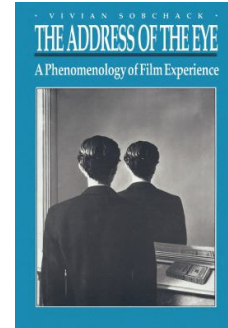


[The address of the eye: a phenomenology of film experience / Vivian Sobchack \(1992\)](#)

Description: Introduces phenomenology to feminist film theory, re-centring and framing the body of the spectator and of the film itself in a compelling account of the affective and carnal dimensions of film viewing. Best read together with Sobchack's follow up *Carnal Thoughts: embodiment and moving image culture* (2004).

Motion pictures -- Philosophy

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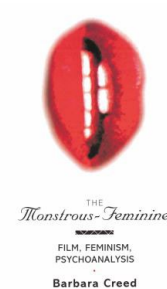


[The monstrous-feminine: film, feminism, psychoanalysis / Barbara Creed \(1993\)](#)

Description: Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, a groundbreaking and still influential theorisation of women in horror film as effects of patriarchal ideology; explores their complex, powerful and terrifying instantiations as mothers, possessed monsters, monstrous wombs, vampires and witches.

Horror films

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[Window shopping: cinema and the postmodern / Anne Friedberg \(1993\)](#)

Description: Friedberg brilliantly weaves feminist film theory into a broader historical account of cinema spectatorship as a mobile, virtual gaze, including the rise of shopping and a feminised consumer culture, among other mass culture phenomena of the nineteenth century.

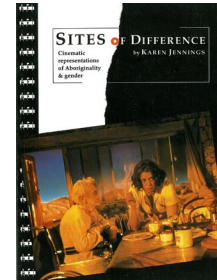
Feminism and motion pictures

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[Sites of difference: cinematic representations of Aboriginality and gender / Karen Jennings \(1993\)](#)

Description: Typically not on the readings lists of Anglophone feminist film theory, Jennings analyses the distinctive racialized and gendered forms by which Aboriginal women are represented in Australian cinema, from *Jedda* (1950) onwards.

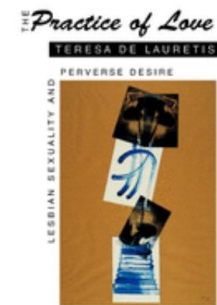


Aboriginal Australians in motion pictures

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[The practice of love: lesbian sexuality and perverse desire / Teresa De Lauretis \(1994\)](#)

Description: An insightful though theoretically dense challenge to feminist film theory's sexual blind spots, notable for a brilliant reading of the British film *She Must Be Seeing Things* (Sheila McLaughlin, 1987) and its invention of a lesbian viewing position.

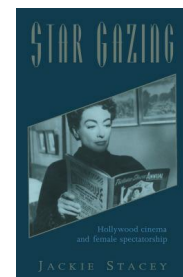


Lesbianism -- Psychological aspects

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[Star gazing: Hollywood cinema and female spectatorship / Jackie Stacey \(1994\)](#)

Description: Intervening in what had become moribund debates in feminist film theory distanced from real audiences, Stacey interweaves a revisionist psychoanalytical account of female spectatorship with the memories of 1940s and 50s cinema-goers.



Feminism and motion pictures

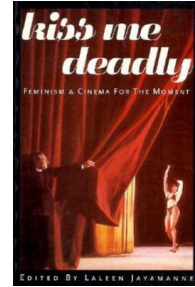
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[Kiss me deadly: feminism and cinema for the moment / Edited by Laleen Jayamanne \(1995\)](#)

Description: Published by the Power Institute, a wide-ranging collection of essays by leading Australian-based scholars that breaks with the canon of feminist film studies.

Women in motion pictures

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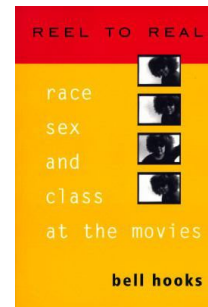


[Reel to real: race, sex, and class at the movies / bell hooks \(1996\)](#)

Description: Approachable, grounded in lived experience and a teaching philosophy oriented to liberation, the writing of bell hooks spans popular feature films like *Pulp Fiction* to documentaries. Includes her two influential and provocative essays, “The oppositional gaze: Black female spectators” and “Is Paris burning?”, on the Jennie Livingstone directed documentary on the Black and Latinx culture of voguing, *Paris is Burning* (1990).

Motion pictures -- Social aspects -- United States

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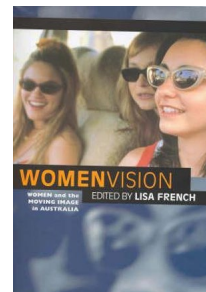


[Women vision: women and the moving image in Australia / Edited by Lisa French \(2003\)](#)

Description: A collection of essays from scholars in film studies, history, and Australian indigenous studies, as well as filmmakers and critics, that examines the history of women and cinema since early film technologies arrived on the shores of the continent.

Women in the motion picture industry -- Australia

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[Women, Islam and cinema / Gönül Dönmez-Colin \(2004\)](#)

Description: A small but significant book from a Turkish independent film scholar that examines the place of women in cinema in diverse Islamic countries and cultures of West, Central and South Asia, spanning histories and issues of representation (including sexual violence), cinema-going and film-making (from acting to directing).

Motion pictures and women -- Religious aspects -- Islam

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