

# Critical Film Analysis as a Pedagogical Tool for Feminist Family Scholars: Research & Theory

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**BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER**



**#MeToo**

**#OscarsSoWhite**





**Feminist Critical Film  
Analysis & Theory**

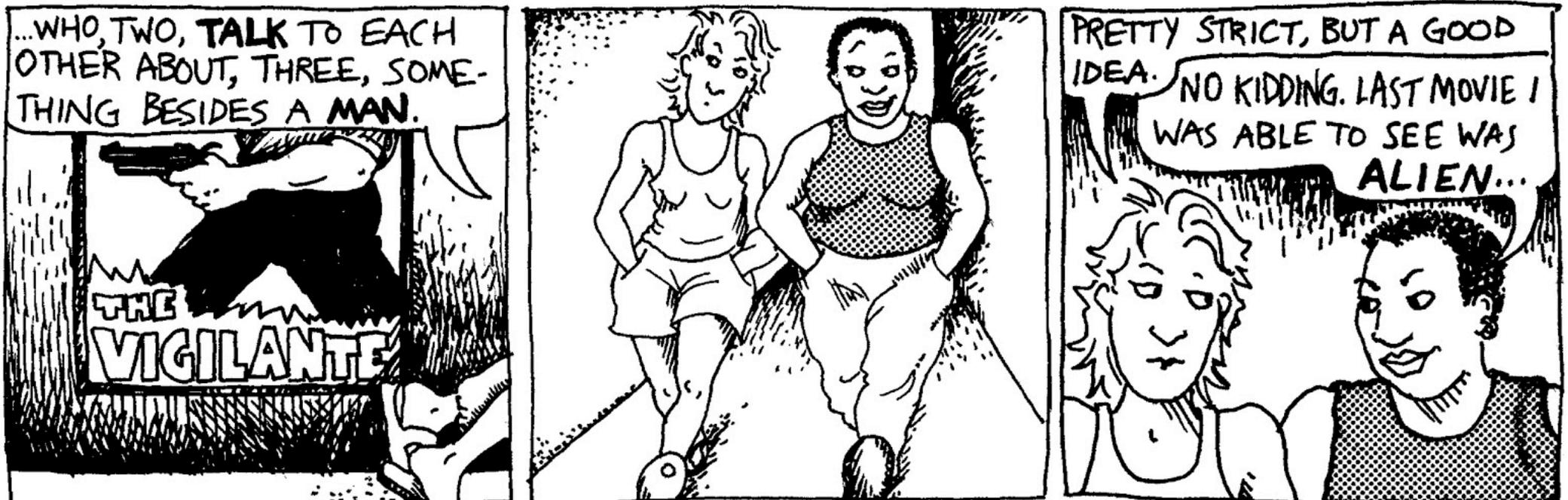
Laura Mulvey (1973)  
The Male Gaze



# Bechdel Test



Bechdel (1985) *Dykes to Watch Out For*



**bell hooks (1992)**



**The Oppositional Gaze**

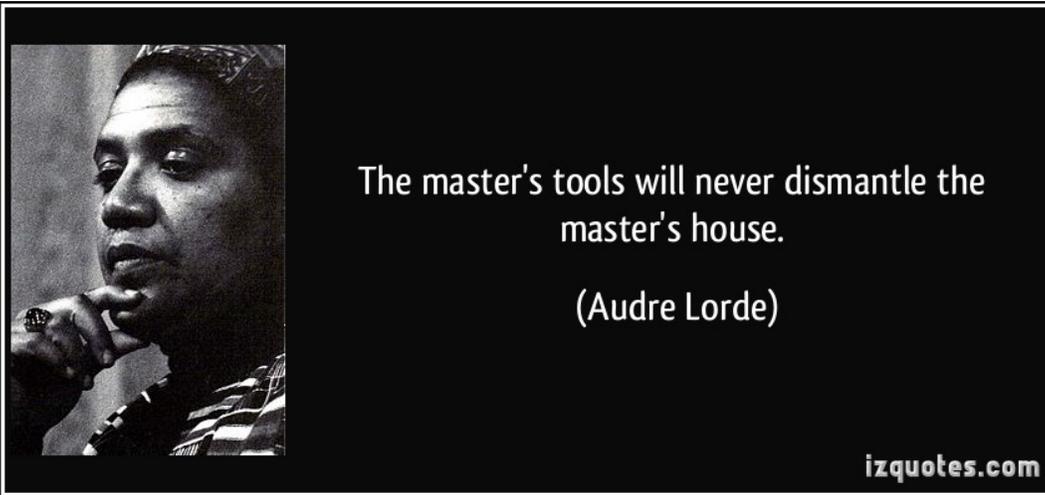
# Themes of Feminist Film Theory

Quantity and quality of representation in

- **Movies**
- **Film production process**
- **Recognition (e.g., awards)**



# Themes of Feminist Film Theory



- **Sexuality/objectification/gaze/violence**
  - **Agency/passivity**
  - **Positive/negative images**
- 
- **Intersectionality**
  - **Deceptive transgression**
  - **Alternative cinema** (e.g., women/feminist films; black films)

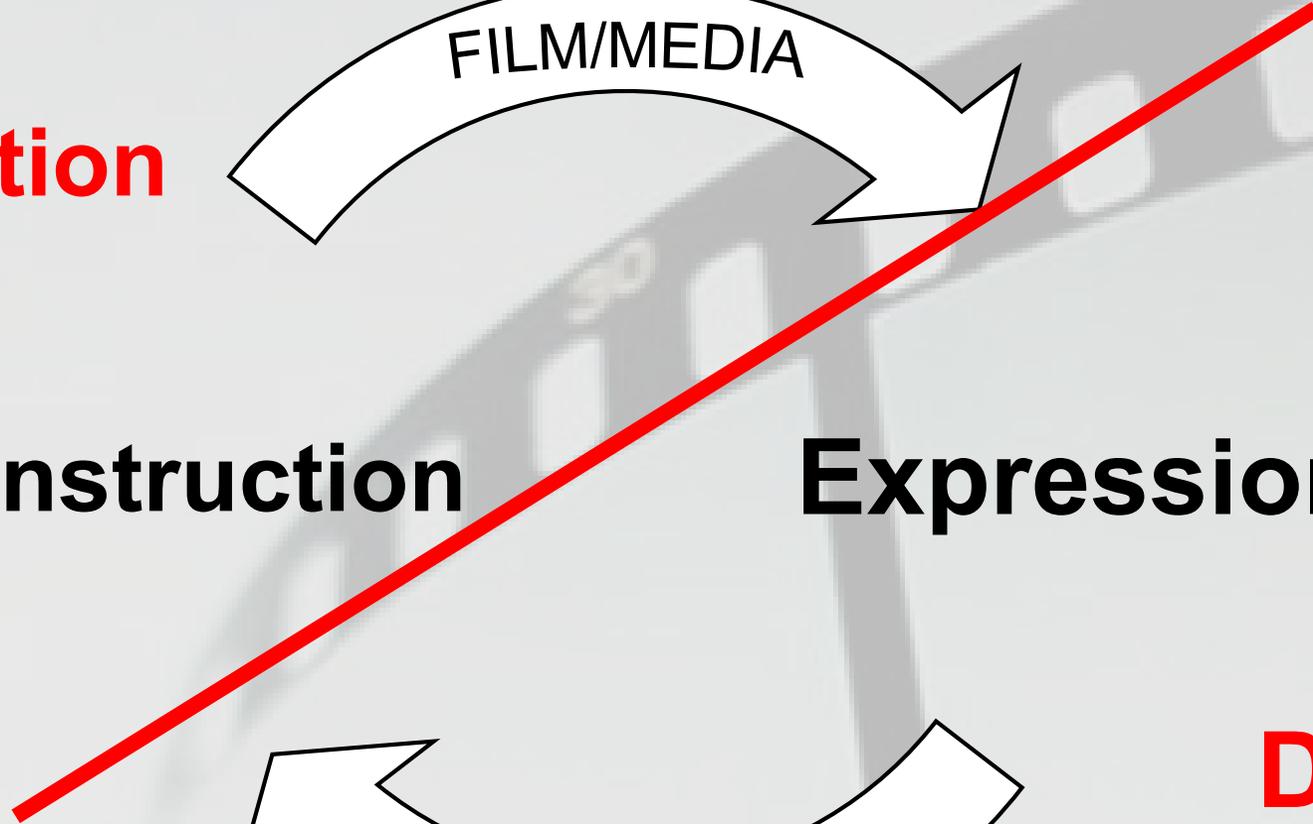
# Themes of Feminist Film Theory

**Deconstruction**

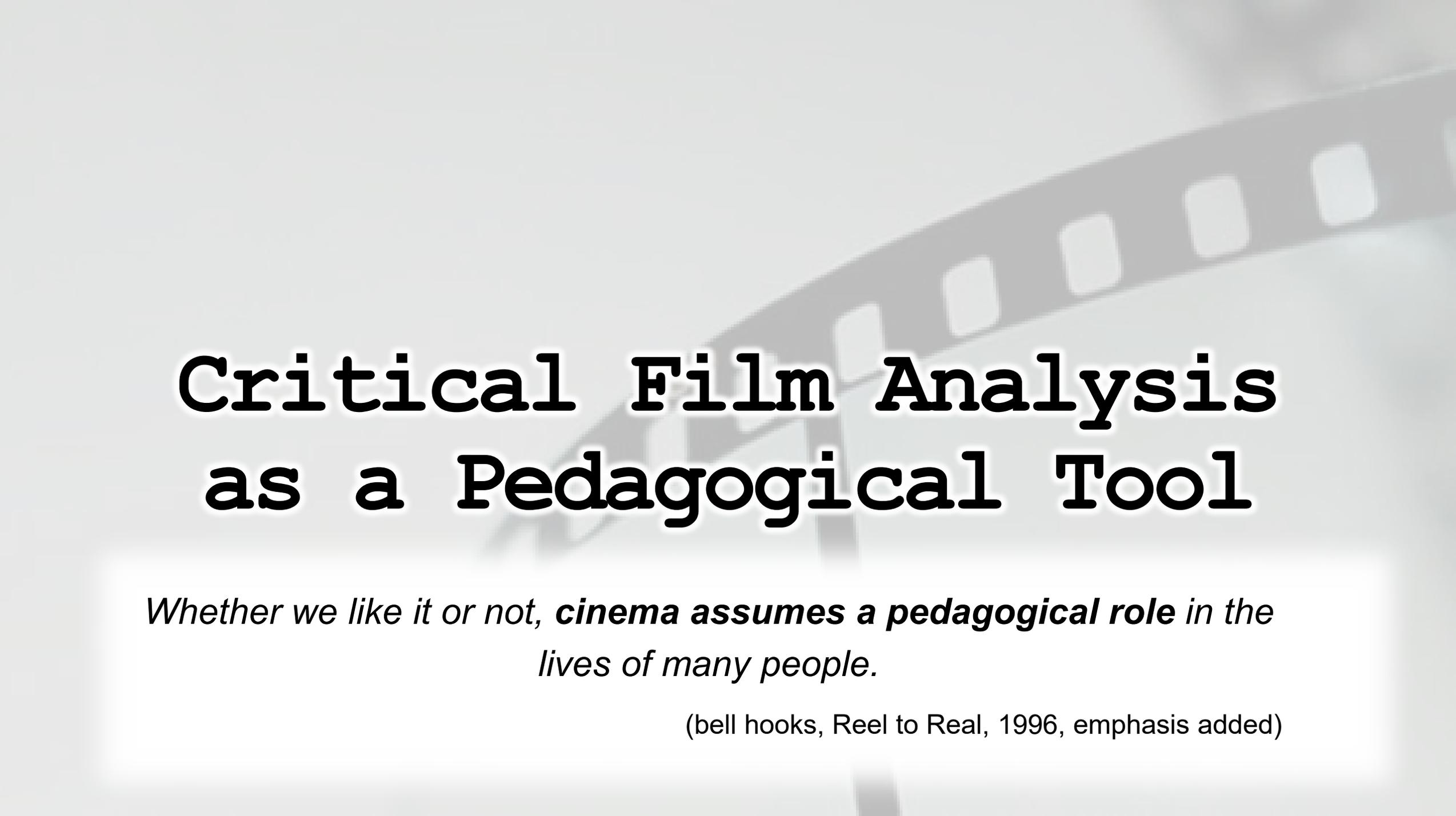


**Construction**

**Expression**



**Disruption**



# Critical Film Analysis as a Pedagogical Tool

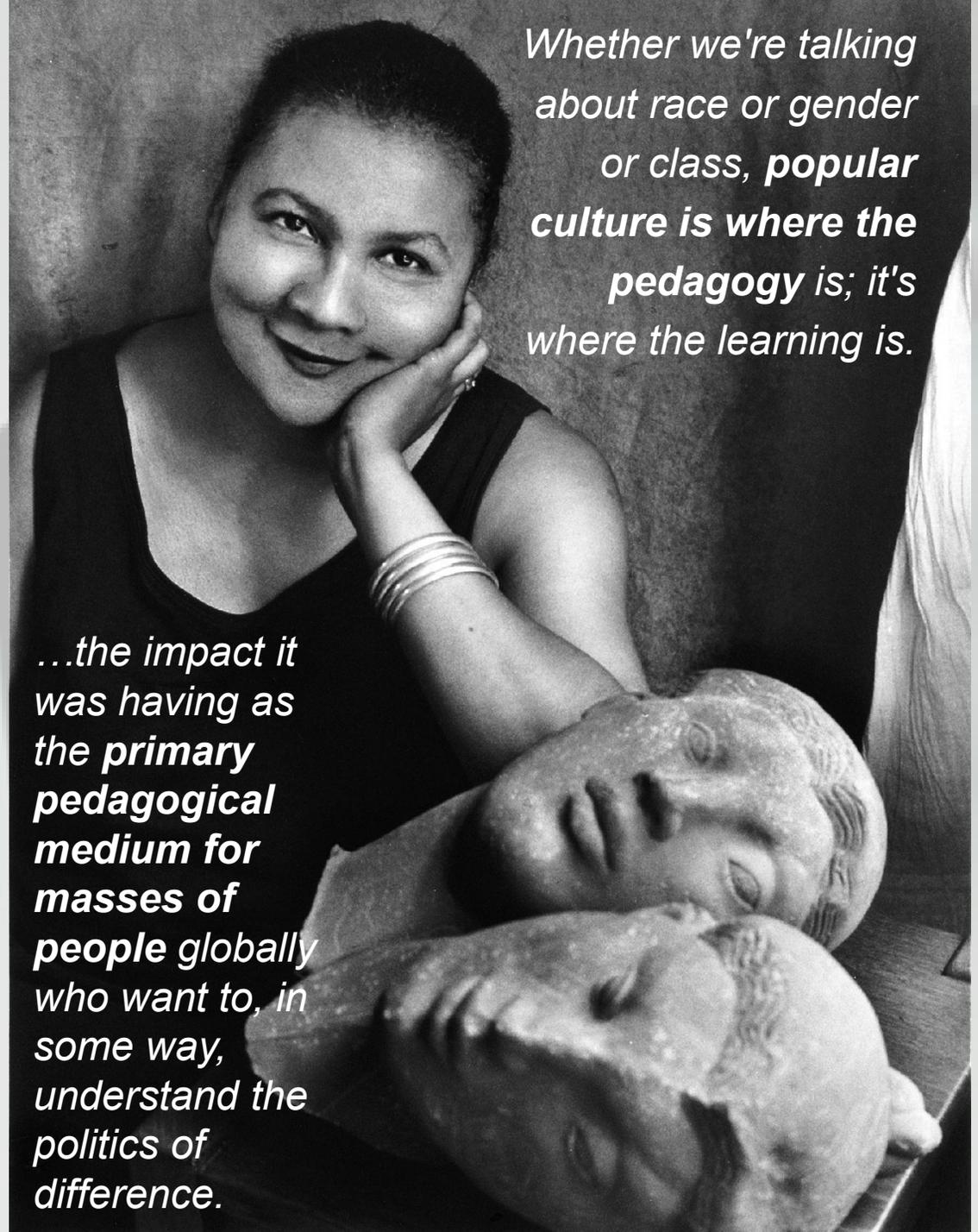
*Whether we like it or not, **cinema** assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people.*

(bell hooks, Reel to Real, 1996, emphasis added)

# "decolonizing our minds"

(hooks, 1996)

- Film is a **prevalent** media in the lives of **most** Americans.
- **Film teaches**, whether we like it or not.
- Opportunity to exercise **critical thinking**
- **Accessibility**
  - **Concrete examples** of abstractions
  - **Familiar** to lived experience
  - **Inclusive**
  - **Shared experience** through watching film
- **Dissociation** → less threatening/defensive
- **Fun**
- **Applicable outside of classroom**



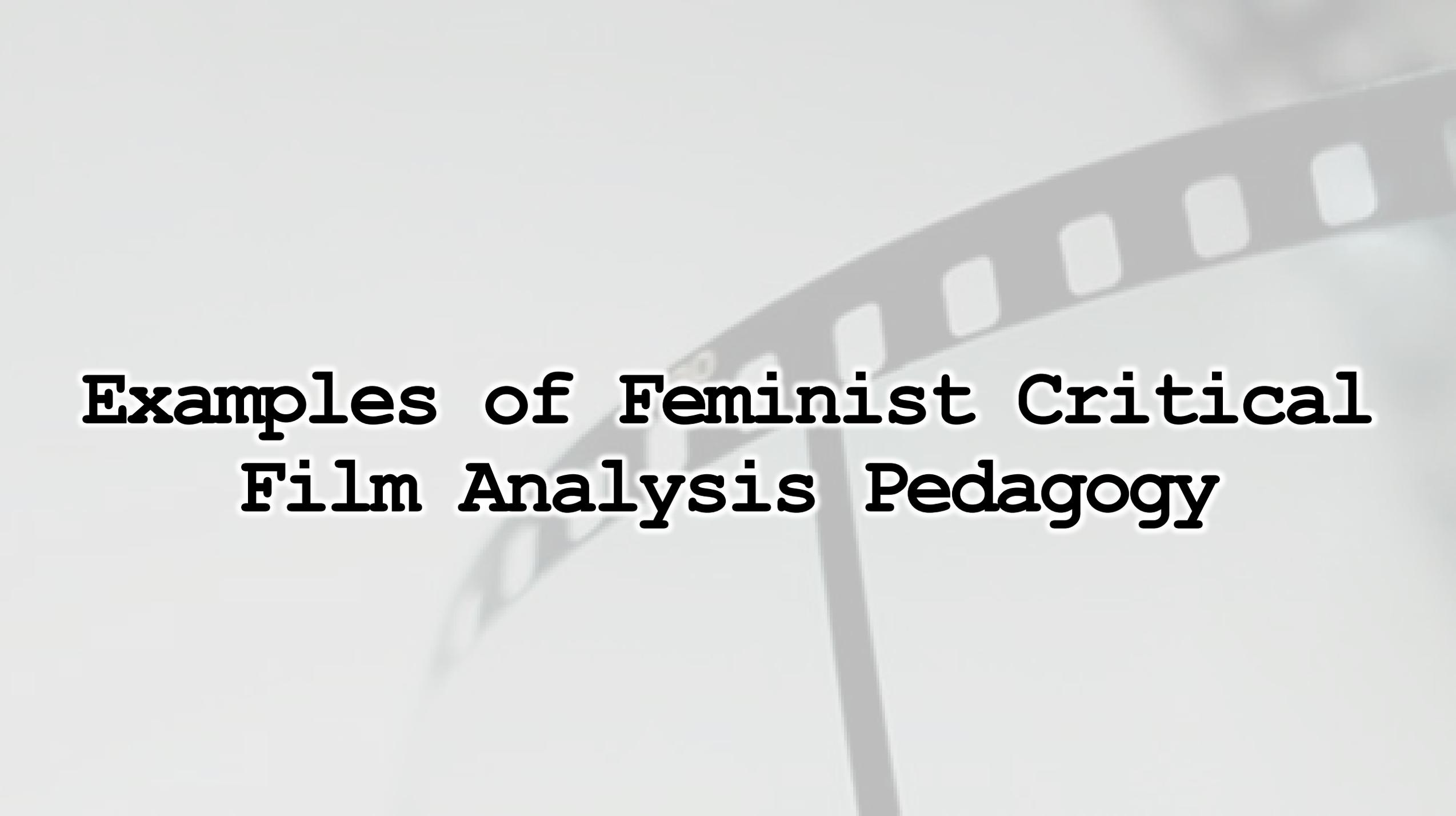
*Whether we're talking about race or gender or class, **popular culture is where the pedagogy is; it's where the learning is.***

*...the impact it was having as the **primary pedagogical medium for masses of people globally who want to, in some way, understand the politics of difference.***



## Negative Impacts of Media

- 🎬 Media objectifying women → Objectifying attitudes, supporting violence against women (Wright & Tokunaga, 2015).
- 🎬 T.V. Fiji → Disordered eating and body image concerns (Becker, 2004).
- 🎬 Network News → Racist stereotypes of Black people as poor, intimidating (Dixon, 2008)



**Examples of Feminist Critical  
Film Analysis Pedagogy**

1. Do partners share equal power?  
 No



- Respect in sexual & physical intimacy
  - Non-threatening communication
  - Respectful negotiation & shared decision-making about money, resources, children, needs, sex
  - Trust & support
  - Honesty & accountability
  - Acknowledged privilege around gender, age, race/ethnicity, ability, politics, access to institutional knowledge (e.g., Greek Life)
- If the relationship does not contain these attributes, continue to question 2.**

Equal power

2. Is power used by one partner to control the other?  
 Yes



- Sexual violence
- Physical violence
- Misuse of privilege, including treating partner like a servant, defining rigid roles, making all the decisions
- Controlling the finances & resources
- Isolation, including expected social and sexual exclusivity
- Coercion, threats & intimidation, including pressured sex
- Emotional abuse, including name calling, humiliation & putting partner down based on age, race/ethnicity, ability, etc.
- Minimizing, denying & blaming, including blaming partner for sexual interactions that don't go well

Acidity:  
Unequal power, control, harm & possible abuse

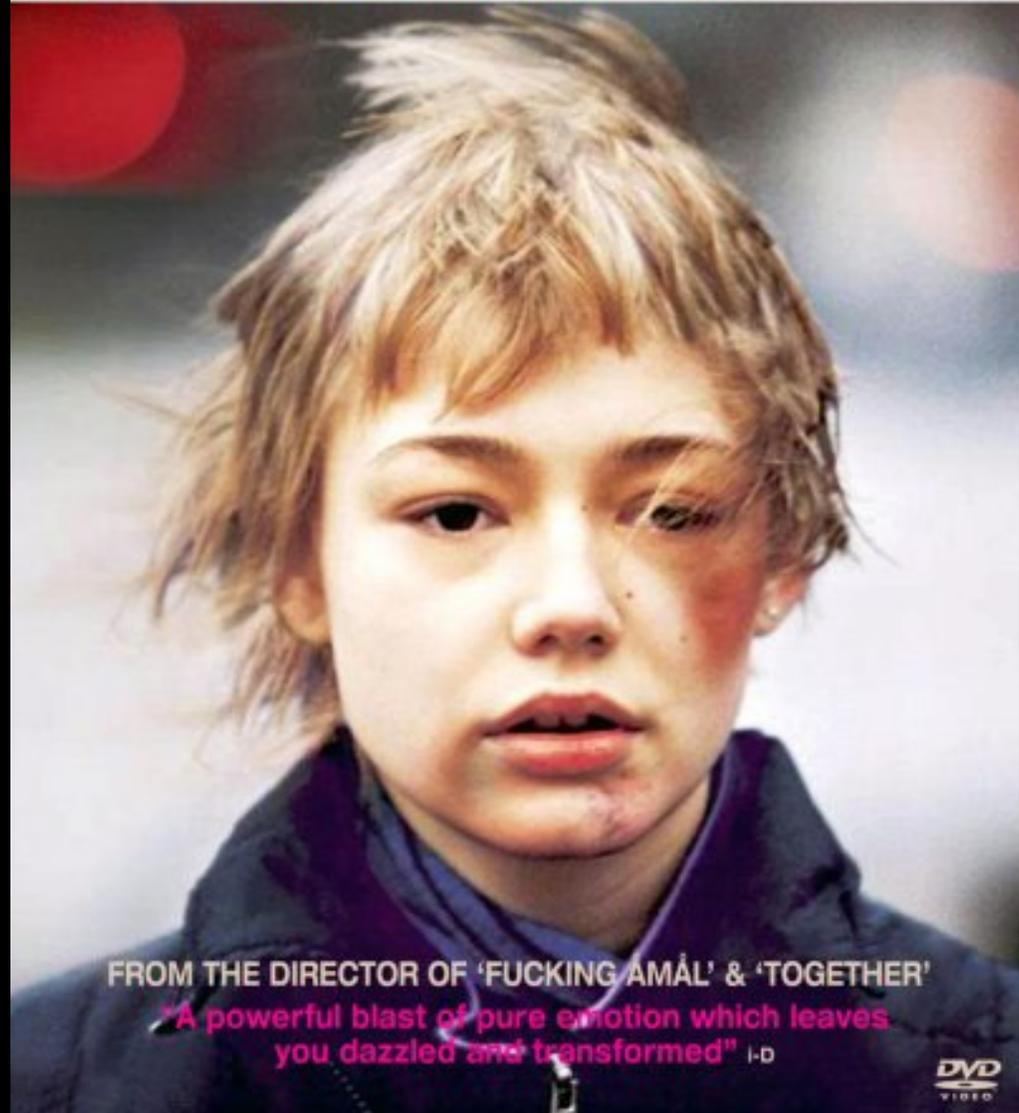
3. Is harm suffered?  
 Yes

- Fear & dread
- Behavior change to cope & reduce risk of abuse
- Lost identity & sense of self
- Entrapment, including feelings of not being able to escape
- Disempowerment, including pressure to modify lifestyle to respond to partner's rules/expectations
- Other harms, such as physical injury, depression, stress

Barajas (2010)

A FILM BY  
LUKAS MOODYSSON  
**LILYA 4-EVER**

OXSANA AKINSHINA ARTYOM BOGUCHARSKY ELINA BENENSON LYUBOV AGAPOVA  
LILIA SHINKARYOVA PAVEL PONOMARYOV TOMAS NEUMANN



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'FUCKING AMAL' & 'TOGETHER'  
"A powerful blast of pure emotion which leaves  
you dazzled and transformed" I-D



sandra bullock don cheadle  
matt dillon jennifer esposito  
brendan fraser  
terrence howard  
chris "ludacris" bridges  
thandie newton  
ryan phillippe  
larenz tate  
michael peña

A FILM BY PAUL HAGGIS

# Crash

Ross et al. (2011)

TILDA SWINTON JOHN C. REILLY EZRA MILLER



WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT **KEVIN**



UN FILM DE LYNNE RAMSAY



Purcell, Oldham, Weiser, & Sharp (2017)



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Join us at **Alamo Drafthouse** for the last film in the Fall 2016 Sexism | Cinema Film Series:  
**We Need to Talk About Kevin**

Following the film will be a discussion co-led by:

**Dana Weiser, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor  
Human Development  
& Family Studies  
Women's Studies Affiliate Faculty



**John Purcell**

Graduate Student  
Human Development  
& Family Studies  
Marriage & Family Therapy

“[Cultural studies] enabled students to enter passionately a pedagogical process firmly rooted in education for critical consciousness, a place where they felt recognized and included, where they could unite knowledge learned in the classrooms with life outside.. Everyday folks from all walks of life were eager to share thoughts and talk critically about popular culture.. Thinking critically about popular culture was a powerful way to share knowledge, in and outside the academy, across differences, in an oppositional and subversive way.” (bell hooks, 1992, p. 4-5)