COURSE NAME: Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Film

COURSE NUMBER: 8714G

PROFESSOR: Levit, Rostron, O’Malley, Ferguson & Thompson

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES: None

DESIRABLE PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE BOOKS: None. Professors will provide course materials.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF COURSE: This course focuses on the ways in which facets of identity (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation and religious beliefs) are illuminated in films and other popular media that have implications for law and public policy. Readings and discussions will focus on the ways various media both feed, and at times test, societal assumptions about identity characteristics. The class will address how public sentiments are influenced by movies and other media and how movie portrayals of these identity characteristics shape popular conceptions of what the law should be in relation to them.

METHOD OF GRADING & APPRAISAL OF STUDENT FOR GRADE: Students will be assigned to work (in teams of four) with one of the professors to develop discussion points that expand the “movie reviews” into ramifications for law and policy, bringing in, for example, legal cases that illustrate the themes of the movies. The final project requires students to:

1. Choose a film (other than those chosen by the professors) that raises issues relating to gender, race, religion or orientation
2. Write a critique of the film addressing how the narrative (storytelling) and character development (parties) challenges or reinforces assumptions/biases and what public policy arguments might be made based on the film
3. Select a statute or case from any jurisdiction and summarize how it relates to the film’s theme(s)
4. Make a brief oral presentation (with the use of clips if desired)

**As an alternative to choosing an actual film a student could propose (or “pitch”) an original film idea with a character and plot outline that includes the same information as Paragraphs 2 and 3.

Grading will be pass/fail based on student team presentation with a professor, individual student daily participation, and the final film critic or “pitching” a story (as a producer and as a lawyer) project.

COURSE CONTENT: Each of the faculty members will be responsible for assigning a movie and accompanying reading. We will watch the movie for the next day’s discussion each day beginning at 11:00. Students may stay and watch the movie here or may arrange to rent the movie and watch it on their own.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR CAREER PURPOSES: The course will be helpful for students who desire to understand how popular culture influences the formation and enforcement of law and policy. This course is relevant for any law student who plans to work with a diverse group of colleagues and clients.