Film and literature (and, unfortunately, sometimes life) are filled with young women and girls who are “mean,” ranging from characters who derive power from leading cliques (like Regina George of Mean Girls) to characters who are shown as shrewish nonconformists (like Kate Minola of Taming of the Shrew).

This course will use selections from foundational gender studies texts to ask questions about the representations of gender roles in films and books that center around young women and girls who are cliquish, shrewish, conniving, bossy, gossipy, backstabbing, catty, defiant, ruthless, or otherwise “mean.”

The course will begin by comparing a film adaptation to its canonical version (10 Things I Hate About You and Taming of the Shrew by Shakespeare) and progress into pairing literary works with movies based upon thematic links. Likely authors include Daphne Du Maurier, Sylvia Plath, Jeanette Winterson, Dorothy Allison, Margaret Atwood, and Edith Wharton.