

“Realistic Romance Guru” Dr. Mary-Lou Galician confers her 3rd annual *Dr. FUN’s Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*[™] Awards for *Mass Media Portrayals of Sex, Love, and Romance*

**“Sex and the City” and “Friends” tie for Overall Stupidest Cupid Award;
12 individual Realistic Romance[™] Awards conferred,
but no Realistic Romance Grand Prize Winner named this year**

February 11, 2005 – Once again for Valentine’s Day, America’s favorite celebration of love and romance, Arizona State University researcher, professor and media literacy advocate Mary-Lou Galician has conferred her annual **Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance[™] Awards for Mass Media Portrayals of Sex, Love, & Romance**.

HBO’s “Sex and the City” and NBC-TV’s “Friends” shared the Overall Stupidest Cupid Award for perpetuated the most myths and stereotypes.

The Awards were established by Galician, head of Media Analysis and Criticism in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at ASU, as part of her media literacy mission to help people “get real about romance.”

The creator of *Realistic Romance*[™] and an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships, she is the author of *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and Their Influence*. She is completing a new book, *Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions for Getting Real About Romance: How Mass Media Myths About Love Can Hurt You*. Her third book on this topic, *Critical Thinking About Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Media Literacy Applications*, will be published later this year.

The 12 Stupid Cupid Awards – one for each of the dozen myths that Galician’s research has identified as affecting Americans’ perceptions of romance and that comprise her *Dr. FUN’s Mass Media Love Quiz*© (in her book and online at www.RealisticRomance.com) – focus attention on mythic and stereotypic media portrayals that Galician says people should never use as models for their own lives. A 13th Award – the Stupidest Cupid Award – is given to the most glaring example of an unhealthy media model.

The 12 Realistic Romance Awards – one for each of *Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions for Getting Real About Romance* (“antidotes” to the 12 myths and stereotypes) – honor the

rarer media portrayals of healthy coupleship. The Realistic Romance Grand Prize goes to the overall best example.

The public along with hundreds of Galician's students participated in nominating portrayals that appeared in 2004. The awardees were selected by a panel of judges who joined Galician to narrow the field of nominations as well as add a few of their own.

The 2005 judges were Dr. David Natharius, ASU Adjunct Professor of Visual Communication, who is also Galician's husband and Realistic Romance partner; Tracey Franks and Donna Goyette, graduate students in the Cronkite School's Master of Mass Communication degree program; and Josh Craig, a Cronkite School undergraduate major.

This is the first year that the Stupidest Cupid was shared by two television series that ended their highly popular long runs: HBO's "Sex and the City" and NBC's "Friends." Despite Emmys and Golden Globes, these series promoted a majority of the myths and stereotypes in Galician's *Mass Media Love Quiz* — "from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined, to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (and it doesn't matter if you have different values) and culminating in the unhealthy concept that you're incomplete without a romantic partner," Galician explained.

And unlike in past years, no portrayal earned the Realistic Romance Grand Prize for healthiest portrayal. (Last year, ABC-TV's new series "I'm With Her" was honored with the overall prize for being what Galician said was "a sparkling new sitcom with a novel and needed message in the otherwise typically mean and toxic emotional environment of today's TV: Romantic partners can be interesting, sexy, and funny without putting each other down constantly." The series was not renewed.)

Galician's "Stupid Cupid" designations for the 12 individual myths include popular movies "The Notebook," "50 First Dates," "The Last Samurai," "The Incredibles," "Along Came Polly," "A Cinderella Story," "Cold Mountain," "Little Black Book," "The Prince and Me," "Intolerable Cruelty," "Laws of Attraction," and "Van Helsing"; TV's "Sex and the City" and "Friends," as well as "Everybody Loves Raymond," "The Swan," "I Want a Famous Face," "Extreme Makeover," "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette," "Boston Legal," "King of Queens," and "Still Standing"; magazines *Maxim* and *Cosmo*; popular songs "The Reason," "If I Ain't Got You," and "You Don't Know My Name"; best-selling novel "The DaVinci Code"; media coverage and irrational fans of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, and "media critics who describe mythic and stereotypic portrayals as 'completely harmless'."

[NOTE TO EDITORS: COMPLETE LIST WITH CITATIONS BY MYTH IS BELOW, AT THE END OF THIS RELEASE.]

Those honored with the more exclusive Realistic Romance Awards for rarer healthier portrayals include movies “Jersey Girl,” “Before Sunset,” Kinsey,” “Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason,” “Shrek 2,” and “Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!”; TV’s “Alias,” “7th Heaven,” and “The Cosby Show”; popular songs “The Remedy,” “Me, Myself and I,” “Don’t Change,” “Bad Habit,” “Knees of My Bees,” and media literacy books (like Galician’s!).

[NOTE TO EDITORS: COMPLETE LIST WITH CITATIONS BY PRESCRIPTION IS BELOW, AT THE END OF THIS RELEASE.]

The complete listing of all awards with their citations is on her website.

“Unfortunately, Stupid Cupid nominees abound in the media,” Galician explains, “but it’s much more difficult to find examples of healthy models of sex, love, and romance that are entertaining and appealing.”

Galician’s research of what she calls “The Romanticization of Love in the Mass Media” examines how mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance affect nearly everyone — men and women, young children and seniors, singles and couples — even though we might not realize it.

“People in my studies with unrealistic expectations are less satisfied in their own romantic relationships,” says Galician, known as the Realistic Romance Guru, “and many of these unrealistic expectations come from media we enjoy without fully considering how they influence us at a subconscious level.

“It’s also important to remember that when I say ‘realistic’ I don’t mean ‘normal,’” she adds, “I mean ‘healthy’. I don’t want you to lower your standards: I actually want you to raise your standards but lower your mythic and stereotypic expectations, which are unhealthy.”

Galician insists that her work “is *not* about censorship or avoiding media. It’s all about being a wise media consumer, about using the media instead of the letting media use you, and about ‘getting real about romance’ to be more successful and happier.”

She notes, “It’s important to take time to consider how mass media portrayals at the least reinforce — if not create — unrealistic expectations that most of us can’t dismiss completely. First we have to understand where they come from. Then we must learn how to analyze and critique them and, most important, how to reframe them more constructively.

Galician’s book offers her seven-step system for analyzing and criticizing unrealistic portrayals. She even includes suggestions about how parents should debrief their children after they view cartoon classics like “*Beauty and the Beast*” and “*Lady and the Tramp*,” which are seemingly harmless but filled with myths and stereotypes.

“We can still enjoy the ‘escape’ that unrealistic romantic media portrayals offer us,”

Galician says, “but it’s not wise to use them – or media celebrities – as models in our real lives.

“It’s much healthier and smarter to make yourself the hero or heroine of your own true love story.”

Her ultimate advice for Valentine’s Day – and every day: “Get real about romance!”

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For more information about Galician’s *Dr. FUN’s Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance™ Awards* or to arrange a print or broadcast interview with “Dr. FUN” (who IS indeed a very FUN interview!), contact Dr. Mary-Lou Galician at DrFUN@asu.edu or 480-965-5066 (office) or 480-838-0003 (home).

A complete listing of this year’s awards – and their citations – appears on the following pages.

This complete listing with the citations that explain why the award was made also appears on Dr. Galician’s web site: www.RealisticRomance.com

[NOTE TO EDITORS:
Do NOT edit the wording
of the 12 numbered one-sentence copyrighted Myths, below.]

The 2005 Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid Awards are conferred on portrayals that exemplify one or more of the unhealthy 12 Myths & Stereotypes of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*©.

These mass media portrayals that appeared in 2004 illustrate the 12 media myths and stereotypes of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*. It's OK to enjoy them, but make sure you're aware of the unhealthy models they promote. For each myth, see the "antidote" – the comparable *Dr. Galician Prescription* (Rx) in the listing of the 12 Realistic Romance Awards.

Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award

Awardees (tie): "Sex and the City" and "Friends"

Despite Emmys and Golden Globes, these top-rated series promoted a majority of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz* myths and stereotypes – from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined, to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (and it doesn't matter if you have different values) and culminating in the unhealthy concept that you're incomplete without a romantic partner.

Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

Awardee: "The Notebook"

Parents, war, and even Alzheimer's cannot ultimately keep these two fated lovers apart.

Dis-honorable mention: "Cold Mountain"

Myth #2: There's such a thing as "love at first sight."

Awardee: "50 First Dates"

Because of her short-term memory loss, Drew Barrymore's character can't build the basis for a genuine relationship, so it's a first date every day for Adam Sandler's character, who verges on being a stalker in this smarmy story that pretends to be about genuine caring and concern.

Dis-honorable mention: "You Don't Know My Name" (Alicia Keys)

Myth #3: Your true soul mate should know what you're thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).

Awardee: "The Last Samurai"

This beautifully photographed film is the consummate example of the "mind-reading dysfunction" – because Tom Cruise's "samurai" can't speak his Japanese beloved's language, and she can't speak English.

Myth #4: If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.

Awardee: "Sex and the City"

It's not just Samantha's over-the-top antics that earned this series the award; it's the way all four leading "Sex" characters evaluate the potential of and make choices about partners. This quartet needs to sing a different tune – in a higher key.

Dis-honorable mention: *Maxim* and *Cosmo* (magazines)

Myth #5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

Awardees: (Tie) "The Incredibles" and TV's makeover shows ("The Swan," "I Want a Famous Face," and "Extreme Makeover")

"The Incredibles" – Parents think they can "trust Disney," but they should think twice about this popular feature-length cartoon: once for the anorexic depictions of the heroic characters (especially the females), and again for the cross-promotions with McDonald's, including trading cards with the characters' death-courting height/weight ratios that could easily entice young girls and boys to follow suit;

TV's makeover shows – Making men meet the unrealistic standards that usually apply to women does not confer healthy sexual equality on these shows whose typically unnecessary surgeries butcher far more than the physical bodies of the individuals whose individuality they destroy and whose personhood they actually objectify and dehumanize while pretending to enhance self-esteem: These shows encourage men and women to think that the solution to unhappiness is external.

Myth #6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.

Awardee: "The DaVinci Code"

Although the theme purports to tout the importance of valuing women as highly as men, the narrative demonstrates a different story: At every twist and turn the heroine is mere arm candy to the novelist's super-hero alter-ego, who is superior in every way to his female "side-kick" love interest.

Dis-honorable mention: ABC-TV's "Boston Legal" (yet another witty but hegemonic series from David E. Kelley)

Myth #7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a "beast" into a "prince."

Awardee: ""The Reason" (Hoobastank)

The lyrics represent a contribution to codependency (including the standard abuser's apology for "all the pain I put you through"): "I've found a reason for me/To change who I used to be/A reason to start over new/and the reason is you." (This myth is better understood as metaphor about our own good side's overcoming our own bad side!)

Dis-honorable mention: "The Prince and Me" and "Van Helsing"

Myth #8: Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

Awardee: CBS-TV's "Everybody Loves Raymond"

What are the people in this family doing together? Their non-stop bickering, blaming, and name-calling – over the pettiest of issues – shows that they don't respect or even care for each other, despite their unmotivated making up. And why are we laughing at the scene of these relational accidents?

Dis-honorable mention: "Friends," "Still Standing," "King of Queens," "Intolerable Cruelty," and "Laws of Attraction"

Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.

Awardee: "Along Came Polly"

In the final moments of this "opposites attracts" "comedy," Jennifer Aniston's commitment-phobic free spirit discovers that she'd be happy with Ben Stiller's obsessive tightly wound and incredibly needy relationship casualty. (See also Myth #3.)

Dis-honorable mention: "Little Black Book"

Myth #10: The right mate “completes you” – filling your needs and making your dreams come true.

Awardee: “Sex and the City”

The entire series misused the opportunity to demonstrate (genuinely rather than gratuitously) that true friends are more satisfying and important than inappropriate and unhealthy romantic relationships, and the series finale cemented the media myth that you’re incomplete without even the wrong mate – proving that it really was just about sex in the city.

Dis-honorable mention: “If I Ain’t Got You” (Alicia Keys), “The Bachelor,” “The Bachelorette,” and “Cinderella Story”

Myth #11: In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.

Awardee: Irrational fans of this year’s Jennifer (Aniston) and Brad Pitt who confused these stars’ reel lives with their real lives (and irrational newspaper editors who confused “The Breakup of (this year’s) ‘B-enifer” with Real Breaking News)

Many fans become disappointed when their superstar idols resemble fallible human beings. And, reinforcing the mythology, news editors eagerly seeking these readers and viewers covered the couple’s breakup not only with entertainment features but also alongside serious national news.

Myth #12: Since mass media portrayals of romance aren’t “real,” they don’t really affect you.

Awardee: Media critics who describe mythic and stereotypic portrayals as “completely harmless.”

Although we can still enjoy mythic portrayals of sex, love, and romance in the mass media, research shows they can lead to harmful unrealistic expectations. To label all these portrayals as completely harmless simply because they’re fluffy and vacuous is irresponsible.

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For more information about Galician’s *Dr. FUN’s Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance™ Awards* or to arrange a print or broadcast interview with “Dr. FUN” (who IS indeed a very FUN interview!), contact Dr. Mary-Lou Galician at DrFUN@asu.edu or 480-838-0003.

**The 2005 Realistic Romance™ Awards
are detailed on the following pages.**

**[NOTE TO EDITORS:
Do NOT edit the wording
of the 12 numbered one-sentence copyrighted Rxs, below.]**

The 2005 Realistic Romance™ Awards honor portrayals that model one or more of the the 12 Prescriptions (Rxs) from Dr. Galician's Prescriptions® for Getting Real About Romance.

These mass media portrayals illustrate the 12 prescriptions for healthy relationships. Each Rx is an “antidote” to the comparable mythic or stereotypic portrayal in the Stupid Cupid Awards listing.

Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance™ Grand Prize

Awardee: (Not awarded this year.)

Rx #1: Consider countless candidates.

Awardee: “Jersey Girl”

Although devastated by the loss of his wife, single dad Ben Affleck learns that there can be more than one great love in your life.

Rx #2: Consult your calendar and count carefully.

Awardee: “The Remedy” (Jason Mraz)

Although a bit on the “don't worry, be happy” side (purportedly written in response to a friend's cancer diagnosis), the winning lyric offers this antidotal counter to the love-at-first-sight myth: “When I fall in love/I take my time/There's no need to hurry/When I'm making up my mind.”

Rx #3: Communicate courageously.

Awardee: “Before Sunset”

This sequel to “Before Sunrise” offers the decade-more-mature lovers (Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy) engaging in nearly nonstop gutsy and engaging dialog that truly is dialog, providing conversation that is honest and meaningful.

Rx #4: Concentrate on commitment and constancy.

Awardee: “Kinsey”

Although the movie portrays (often graphically) the perverse sexual behavior of the controversial pioneering sex researcher and educator, the winning aspect of the biopic is the depiction of what sparked the interest of the repressed Harvard-educated Midwest professor: The initially dimly unsuccessful sexuality in his own marriage, and the couple's search for difficult-to-discover (in the 1930s) solution to their physical problems. As Alfred and Claire, Liam Neeson and Laura Linney demonstrate the prescription.

Honorable mention: WB TV drama “7th Heaven” (now on ABC Family)

Rx #5: Cherish completeness in companions (not just the cover).

Awardees (tie): “Don't Change” (MusiQ) and “Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason”

“Don't Change” (MusiQ) - It's a special treat to hear a hit rap that honors women (and, in so doing, the male rapper) with lyrics like “See I'll love you when your hair turns gray/I'll still want you if you gain a little weight” and “Cause I'm not impressed, more or less/By them girls in the TV and magazines/'Cause honestly I believe that your beauty/Is way more

than skin deep” – intelligently acknowledging “We gonna both physically change” but that doesn’t matter as long as their love doesn’t change.

“Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason” – The sequel to the original blockbuster is a bit of a dud, but it’s rare and refreshing to see a major Hollywood star break a variety of stereotypes (and without a “fat suit”) as a genuinely larger-than-life single who has not one but two handsome men pursuing her

Rx #6: Create coequality; cooperate.

Awardees (tie): TV’s “The Cosby Show” (now airing on Nick at Night/TVLand) and ABC-TV’s “Alias”

“The Cosby Show” – For 20 years, the husband and wife in this still running and still popular television classic (which shattered many stereotypes) have been a rarity: an evenly matched peer couple who model loving respect and cooperation. Cliff Huxtable (Bill Cosby) is a respected gynecologist; Clair (Phylicia Rashad) is a successful attorney. They share the duties and responsibilities of child-rearing, income-producing, and housekeeping – and they still find time to keep their own romantic fires lit.

ABC-TV’s “Alias” – Buff CIA agent Sydney Bristow (series star Jennifer Garner) and fellow agent and romantic interest Michael Vaughan (Michael Vartan) are fairly evenly matched physically and intellectually – and they take turns rescuing each other from tight scrapes.

Rx #7: Cease correcting and controlling; you can’t change others (only yourself!).

Awardee: “Bad Habit” (Destiny’s Child)

This wise lyrics acknowledge that despite the “hold” the lover might have on the singer(s), there comes a time when you “gotta break this bad habit” – even though you still might “love” the inappropriate partner. Instead of trying to change the lover, the singer explains the realistic solution: “I gotta move on now.” In fact, the song offers healthy advice: “Ladies, do you feel me (do you feel me)/Have you ever loved somebody/So much that you went against the right things that you should do?/Then it's time to make a change.”

Rx #8: Courtesy counts; constant conflicts create chaos.

Awardee: “Shrek 2”

Shrek and Fiona demonstrate courteous and caring communication and action as newlyweds who don’t have to rely on bickering and fighting to create cheap humor based on conflict and cruelty (which comes instead from the supporting characters) – so viewers young and old get a rare and welcome media demonstration of a respectful and loving husband and wife.

Rx #9: Crave common core-values.

Awardee: “Knees of my Bees” (Alanis Morissette)

The first words set the keynote: “We share a culture/Same vernacular” – and the resultant respect and admiration of actual desirable healthy qualities follows (not without the equally delightful emotional high of love: “You make the knees of my bees weak, tremble and buckle”).

Rx #10: Cultivate your own completeness.

Awardee: Pop song “Me, Myself and I” (Beyonce)

Inviting listeners to “help me sing it now,” Beyonce explains that “It took me some time/But now I am strong/Because I realized I got/Me myself and I/That's all I got in the end” and – fully cultivating her own completeness, she adds: “I took a vow that from now on/I'm gonna be my own best friend.”

Rx #11: Deconstruct celebrities.

Awardee: "Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!"

This pleasant spoof of star-struck fans who conflate Hollywood images of celebrities and the real people (actors) behind the Dream factory's images makes the point that it's important to deconstruct these images and take these idols off their pedestals (except to appreciate their artistic talent). As the movie's producer noted: "People worship the movie stars they see on the screen, but if they ever got to meet their idol, they might think very differently."

Rx #12: Calculate the very real consequences of unreal media.

Awardee: Media literacy books and materials

Media literacy offers foundational concepts and applicable strategies for helping media consumers stay in control of the media they use and enjoy - rather than allowing the media to control them. We can and should still enjoy the media, but it's important to learn how to "dis-illusion" ourselves and our media! Media literacy education in other English-speaking nations is far ahead of the United States. It's high time for us to catch up.

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