

**FOR RELEASE ON OR AFTER VALENTINE'S DAY: FEBRUARY 14, 2015**

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**[A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL 12 YEARS' RECIPIENTS OF THE TWO "OVER-ALL AWARDS" WITH CITATIONS EXPLAINING THE REASON EACH RECIPIENT GOT THE AWARD) BEGINS ON PAGE 4 OF THIS MEDIA RELEASE; FOR THE RELATED VIDEO ANNOUNCEMENT, INCLUDING DR. FUN'S "TOP-FIVE FAVORITES," VISIT [www.RealisticRomance.com](http://www.RealisticRomance.com).]**

**In her 13<sup>th</sup> annual Valentine's Day announcement of her *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup> for the worst and best relational strategies in mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance, media literacy advocate Dr. Mary-Lou Galician provides a special 12-year retrospective.**

***Take a look back at the media portrayal that earned her two "OVER-ALL AWARDS" of each year: Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award<sup>™</sup> and Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Grand Prize<sup>™</sup> (for the very worst and very best portrayals each year).***

February 14, 2015—Like most media awards, *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup>—announced each Valentine's Day by media literacy advocate Dr. Mary-Lou Galician, creator of *REALISTIC ROMANCE*<sup>®</sup>: *The Thinking Person's Relationship Remedy*<sup>™</sup> and founding head of media analysis and criticism in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Arizona State University—are conferred on films, TV shows, songs, magazines, and ads of the previous year.

Galician's annual awards are part of her media literacy mission to focus public attention on unhealthy, dangerous myths and stereotypes about sex, love, and romance in the mass media as well as to honor the rarer portrayals that provide healthy models of coupleship that can help media consumers "get real about romance."

She's doing something different in this 13<sup>th</sup> year of bestowing her annual 12 *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid Awards*<sup>™</sup> on popular media portrayals with the worst relational strategies (one for each of the 12 Major Media Myths and Stereotypes of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*<sup>®</sup>, online at [www.RealisticRomance.com](http://www.RealisticRomance.com)) and her 12 *Realistic Romance*<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup> (one for each of her 12 *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions [Rxs]*, research-based strategies for healthy, happy relationships, each of which serves as "antidote" to one the 12 *Quiz* items).

In addition to the 24 individual awards, Galician confers two over-all award each year: *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupidest Award*<sup>™</sup> for the portrayal with multiple myths and stereotypes and *Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance*<sup>®</sup> *Grand Prize*<sup>™</sup> for the portrayals with multiple *Prescriptions*.

"Many high-rise building omit the 13<sup>th</sup> story," Galician explained, "but I'm not superstitious, so I certainly didn't want to omit my 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards.

“But because it *is* the 13<sup>th</sup> year, I thought it was fitting to focus on all 12 years of my two over-all awards, which I always think of as each year’s two 13<sup>th</sup> Awards.

“So this year, I *am* omitting the 24 individual Awards this year and instead offering a look back at all 12 years of my two over-all “13<sup>th</sup> AWARDS.” These two awards top the lists of each of the past 12 years and serve as each year’s most significant and memorable examples.

### ***“Best” and “Worst” as applied to these awards***

In these awards, “worst” and “best” refer to relationship strategies, not to artistic merit. The “worst” portrayals perpetuate examples of the 12 *Quiz* items—unhealthy messages that abound in media portrayals but which Galician says people should never use as models for their own lives.

The “best” are portrayals that present strategies encapsulated by Galician’s 12 *Prescriptions*—rarer, harder-to-find rational models of sex, love, and romance that are entertaining and appealing. That’s why the *Realistic Romance Grand Prize™*-winner is frequently an independent film (or off-beat TV show) that doesn’t follow the typical Hollywood formula and might have a smaller audience.

Similarly, the criterion for “realistic,” Galician adds, “is the portrayal’s demonstration of healthy strategies for genuine happily-ever-afters—not dramatic realism or naturalism, so even fantasies, science fiction, and animated features have earned *Realistic Romance® Awards™*.”

“And I don’t want you think that I’m telling you to lower your standards to be “realistic”: I actually want you to raise your standards (because you’re worth it) but lower your mythic and stereotypic expectations, which are unhealthy,” she explains.

### ***What can media consumers can discover from important media literacy tenets that underlie Galician’s annual awards?***

Galician believes that “the variety of examples from various media each year and over the years can help you more easily and more fully discover how to identify dysfunctional *Stupid Cupid* portrayals that could affect you, as well as to appreciate the far better role models in the *Realistic Romance®* portrayals.

“It’s also best to consider the 12 media myths in terms of their corresponding 12 *Prescriptions*—and vice versa,” she adds. “Accordingly, it’s also best to compare the awardees on ‘both sides’. That’s why I prefer to list the corresponding awards side-by-side; for example, the recipient of the *Stupid Cupid Award™* for Myth #1 with the recipient of the *Realistic Romance® Award™* for Rx #1. And the overall “13<sup>th</sup> Awards” are also side-by-side.

### ***Reminders for really great sex, love, and romance: Media portrayals of sex, love, and romance affect nearly all of us — even though we might not realize it.***

Galician’s own award-winning research examines how mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance affect nearly all of us—men and women, 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, who has been called the nation’s *Realistic Romance*® Guru, “and many of these unrealistic expectations come from media portrayals we enjoy without fully considering how they influence us at a subconscious level.

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 books and programs offer her *7-Step Reality Check-Up*® for analyzing and criticizing unrealistic portrayals. She even includes suggestions about how parents should debrief their children after they view animated feature film classics and more recent hits, which are seemingly harmless but actually perpetuate counterproductive myths and stereotypes that can be easily and unconsciously adopted as counterproductive beliefs and actual behaviors.

***Galician’s ultimate advice:  
“Get real about romance!”***

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.”

“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!”

**Dr. Mary-Lou Galician**, who is affectionately known as “Dr. FUN” because of her musical motivation program *FUN-dynamics!*®—*The FUN-damentals of DYNAMIC Living*, is an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships. She is the author of the pioneering textbook *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and Their Influence* (2004; an updated second edition will be published this Fall) and editor of *Critical Thinking About Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Media Literacy Applications* (2007). Her book for the general public—*Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions*® for *Realistic Romance*®: *The 7-Step Reality Check-Up*® to *Bust Media Myths that Ruin Real-life Relationships*—will be out soon.

Recipients of each year’s 26 annual awards for the past 12 years—which include blockbuster films, top-rated TV shows, popular songs, and major magazines—are listed with their citations (Galician’s reason for bestowing each award) at the AWARDS link Archives at Galician’s website: [www.RealisticRomance.com](http://www.RealisticRomance.com).

The two “13<sup>th</sup> AWARDS” of each of the past 12 years are listed below with their citations.

The countdown to Dr. FUN’s “Top-Five Favorites” is in Galician’s Valentine’s Day 2015 video announcement at [www.RealisticRomance.com](http://www.RealisticRomance.com).

## 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DR. FUN'S STUPID CUPID & REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDS™

ANNOUNCED ON VALENTINE'S DAY 2015

By Dr. Mary-Lou Galician  
(The Original "Dr. FUN")

A Special Retrospective Reflection on the Over-all Award Recipients of the Past 12 Years  
(A look back at each year's Over-all of the Overalls)

STUPIDEST CUPID AWARD™

REALISTIC ROMANCE® GRAND PRIZE™

*NOTE: In the first two years of the awards, to provide a baseline for awards in future years, I went back just the previous year for recipients, so awardees came from a variety of years. Starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Awards on Valentine's Day 2005, all recipients have been portrayals of the previous year—similar to media awards, such as the Oscars®, Emmy Awards®, and Grammy Awards®. You'll also notice that the citations get longer each year—with lots more information for you to consider.*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2003

*Ironically and notably, two vastly different Reese Witherspoon vehicles topped two awards lists in this first year of the Awards.*

#### **Sweet Home Alabama (film)**

This mean-spirited movie promoted just about every myth in my *Mass Media Love Quiz*® — from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined and nobody can separate you (Myth #1) to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (Myth #8).

#### **Legally Blonde (film)**

Although this film has some totally unrealistic college and courtroom aspects, it offers a good model of *Realistic Romance*® because the Valley Girl in this fantasy transforms herself into a top Harvard Law School student, turns enemies into friends, and empowers a variety of other people along the way. Wisely dumping her shallow earlier crush whose values are clearly inferior to hers (Rx #9), she ultimately and rewardingly partners with a man who shares her idealism and social activism. He's a lawyer, too, and he's her friend. These two respect and honor each other.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2004

#### **Just Married (film)**

As evidenced by the number of nominations, this mean-spirited movie (a top-grosser in more ways than one!) promoted nearly all 12 harmful myths — from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined and nobody can separate you (Myth #1) to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (Myth #8). However, despite totally different values (Myth #9), Aston Kutcher and Brittany Murphy reunite for a "happy" ending.

#### **I'm With Her (TV series)**

This sparkling new sitcom courageously communicates 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 (Rx #8). In this Chris Henchy creation based on his own life as Brooke Shields' husband, Teri Polo is a movie-star dating a teacher (David Sutcliffe). They're nice (but not goody-goody) and respectful (but real). And they actually share their feelings and wishes with each other -- gently but honestly (Rx #3). (Best example: When he tells her that her singing voice is less than stellar.) Each episode is a lesson in how to talk to someone you love, with clever dialog that is dialog -- courageous two-way communication underlined with obvious loving respect. Did I mention it's also funny?

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2005</b>	
<p><b>Sex and the City AND Friends (TIE) (TV Series)</b>                      Despite Emmys and Golden Globes, these top-rated series promoted a majority of <i>Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz</i>® myths and stereotypes -- from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined (Myth #1), to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (Myth #8) (and it doesn't matter if you have different values—Myth #9) and culminating in the unhealthy concept that you're incomplete without a romantic partner (Myth #10).</p>	<p><b>Not awarded this year (However, all 12 individual Realistic Romance® Awards™ for portrayals that fostered an individual Rx's healthy relational strategies were conferred.)</b></p>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2006</b>	
<p><b>The Wedding Crashers (film)</b>                      This blockbuster movie promotes a majority of <i>Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz</i>® myths and stereotypes -- from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined (#1) and you'll know it immediately (#2), to the formulaic beauty who attracts the man (#5) with easy and wonderful sex (#4) and the dangerous belief that the love of a good woman can change beastly male behavior (#7), and culminating in the unhealthy concept that you're incomplete (and, in this film, unable to function) without a romantic partner (#10).</p>	<p><b>The 40-Year-Old Virgin (film)</b>                      This surprising audience-pleaser delivers a healthy but rarely presented media message that embodies many of Dr. Galician's Prescriptions®, including the wise advice to take time to get to really know your partner* before falling in love and jumping in bed (and to wait for marriage!) (Rx # 2 &amp; #4), see your loved one as a total human being and equal partner (Rx #5 &amp; 6), seek shared values (Rx #9) -- and it brilliantly teaches its lessons through delicious comedy rather than a pedantic sermon.                      * The virgin (lovingly portrayed by Steve Carell) and his girlfriend (intelligently depicted by Catherine Keener) literally "consult a calendar," on which they agree to count and check off the days they've known each other under a variety of circumstances before making a more serious emotional or physical commitment.</p>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2007</b>	
<p><b>Failure to Launch (film)</b>                      This popular film starring Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew McConaughey is indeed a failure when it comes to offering healthy models of sex, love, and romance. Instead, it promotes a majority of <i>Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz</i>® myths and stereotypes: not only the film's dangerous primary theme -- the love of a good woman can fix any man (Myth #7) -- but also your perfect partner is pre-destined (#1), the objectified model-like beauty attracts the man (#5) with easy and wonderful sex (#4), and you're incomplete (and, in this film, unable to function) without a romantic partner (#10).</p>	<p><b>Date Movie (film)</b>                      Although it isn't a great movie, the parody makes us laugh at the myths and stereotypes in most romantic media -- and that's a valuable media literacy service.</p>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2008</b>	
<p><b>Enchanted (film)</b>                      An archetypal kind and handsome Prince (James Marsden) and his Cinderella-like fiancée Giselle (Amy Adams) find themselves thrust out of their idyllic Fairyland settings and fending on their own in present-day New York City. Despite its lovely musical numbers and some amusing scenes, it presents the usual age-old myths and stereotypes as the preferred reading, with Princess-Designate Giselle fixing a cynical, work-</p>	<p><b>300 (film)</b>                      Gerard Butler and Lena Headey are the King and Queen of Sparta who must defend their homeland against Xerxes and his Persians. The "300 Spartans" are vastly outnumbered, so their courage is admirable, but was relevant here is that the Greek couple display several <i>Prescriptions: Rx #3, #6, #8, and #9.</i></p>

a-holic single dad (Patrick Dempsey) [Myth #7] who should be arrested by child protective services: Even though he's a high-priced lawyer, his apartment is literally crawling with vermin. Of course, Giselle happily serves as unpaid cleaning woman (assisted by singing birds, like Snow White).

Ultimately, the lawyer dumps his assertive 21st Century girlfriend—a very nice person and successful professional (Idina Menzel)—and marries the sweetly innocent child-like Giselle, who dumps her more appropriate and genuinely charming Fairyland Prince, who then marries the lawyer's cast-off girlfriend and takes her to Fairyland. Of course, both couples should have followed Rx #2 to take time to get to know each other first. Marriage montages of Giselle and her husband end the film—always a sign that the writers couldn't create a workable script to demonstrate a happily-ever-after for this mis-matched couple, even in a fantasy.

Although the secondary couple is actually far healthier relationally (and, therefore, might be the real winners), the messed-up message to little girls and women is: To get the favored guy—which the preferred reading insists is this dirt-bag lawyer [Myth #9] rather than the far nicer and more appropriate Prince—a woman has to be (or act) meek and mild and childish [Myth #6]. And the message to little boys is to be a “bad boy” and dump women who are your equals.

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2009**

***Sex and the City: The Movie (film)***

The cancelled wedding isn't the only disaster in this product-placement-populated popular film sequel of the HBO series about four vacuous material girls who continuously show suggestible audiences that all relationship problems can be solved with two “L-words”: labels and liquor.

To pretend to know who they are, they have to be designer-labeled (even Carrie's gift to a valued assistant—who quits her job to return to a boyfriend who mistreated her—is received with the film's convoluted conspicuous-consumer formula: “Love = Louis Vuitton”), and they gratuitously gulp down designer cocktails to forget who they actually are.

Sadly, the real L-word—love—is rarely demonstrated (and never by the Carrie and Mr. Big). At 4 x 40+ years old, you'd think they'd grow up, but they continue as always and yet expect different results.

For example, Carrie complains that Mr. Big is a very bad man who has hurt her for 10 years, but when he suddenly says, “You're the One” (Myth #1), the audience is supposed to be as thrilled as his foolish fiancé.

There's more teen-like jumping and screaming by this over-the-hill gang of four than at a Miley Cyrus concert, and these self-centered conspicuous consumers never look beyond their own tightly bonded foursome to do anything for anyone else: “To us” is their hallmark toast.

But fickle Carrie takes only a second to show that their supposed bond of friendship/sisterhood is as fake as their on/off hair extensions: When Miranda utters just one off-hand sentence that jeopardizes Carrie's already fragile ability to

***Definitely, Maybe (film)***

In a year of stale cookie-cutter “romantic comedies” filled with garbage-ready characters and plots, this original, witty, and warm Valentine's Day 2008 release was a sweetheart of a surprise, as was its fresh ending—proof that love story characters and plot can be engaging and entertaining without stooping to the gutter or affecting intellectual banality alarmingly contaminating this genre.

From beginning to end, this sweet but not sugary film treats us to rarely offered healthy and upbeat media messages featuring many of *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions*®.

In fact, it's so genuine, it even avoids the fake “555” phone exchange and, more important, avoids unhealthy myths and stereotypes. It's not preachy, yet it manages to slip in a caution about smoking.

And it's still funny and fun, as well as tender and touching. (Bonus: A sensitive and sensible presentation of discussing divorce with a child.)

In this “mystery romance,” Ryan Reynolds stars as Will Hayes, a dedicated dad reviewing his past with his 11-year-old daughter (Abigail Breslin), who has asked about the three women he's loved (Rx #1) (including her mother, whom he's divorcing). It's refreshing that over the decades spanned, all four adults genuinely evolve and act like adults.

Raising the tone of the debased romantic comedy genre, this unusual film demonstrates that we don't have to be slaves of fate—thanks to layered portrayals of each of the three women (Rx 6) in the romantic past of realistic/idealistic Will Hayes as multi-dimensional worthy women, with each of



<p>“win” the man of her dreams (he may be mean and hurtful—but he does own the keys to the multi-million-dollar condo of her dreams), Carrie instantly drops Miranda.</p> <p>And MOH Samantha—Carrie’s mirror in so many dysfunctional way—demonstrates once again that whenever a truly decent, kind, attractive, committed man appears, these women will be sure to shun him.</p> <p>A majority of <i>Dr. FUN’s Mass Media Love Quiz</i>® myths and stereotypes are promoted, including: your perfect partner is pre-destined (#1), the objectified model-like beauty attracts the man (#5) with easy and wonderful sex (#4), and you’re incomplete (and, in this film, unable to function) without a romantic partner (#10), particularly if he’s richer and more successful (#6).</p>	<p>whom he retains a friendship (Rx #8 &amp; 9) and with one of whom he’s ready to begin a new relationship, based on how they’ve evolved over years (Rx #2) (not the sudden change of heart and mind typical of this too often trite genre).</p>
<p><b>8<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine’s Day 2010</b></p>	
<p><b>This year, the <i>Stupidest Cupid Award</i>™ &amp; the <i>Realistic Romance</i>® <i>Grand Prize</i>™ were each shared by three portrayals rather than the usual single one. These six overall award recipients and citations (the reason for their award) are presented here in three separate “pairings”—with a caption that explains the pairing.</b></p>	
<p><b>FIRST PAIRING OF 3 TIED SETS OF RECIPIENTS OF THE TWO OVERALL AWARDS: <i>A Man You Have to Hate and a Man You Have to Love</i></b></p>	
<p><b><i>The Ugly Truth (film)</i></b></p> <p>It is ugly, but there’s not a lot of truth, because it’s all about being a total phony, with the emphasis on the superficial over substance. The Neanderthal primary theme promotes nearly every one of <i>Dr. FUN’s Mass Media Love Quiz</i>® 12 myths and stereotypes, including: only objectified model-like beauties can attract men (Myth #5), easy and wonderful sex signals a meant-to-be partner (#4), men must be (or feel!) superior to women (#6), and bickering and fighting symbolize underlying passion and true love (#8).</p> <p>In the film’s final minutes, everything that’s so totally wrong about this mis-matched couple (an annoying looking-for-love TV producer played by Katherine Heigl and the boorish advice man-you-have-to-hate played by Gerard Butler—neither of whom is ready for a healthy relationship) is suddenly made to seem totally right, and the audience is encouraged to applaud this unholy union.</p>	<p><b><i>I Love You, Man (film)</i></b></p> <p>This rare type of blockbuster—charming, touching, and also very funny—features many of <i>Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions</i>® for healthy sex, love, and romance. The focus is a healthy, well matched engaged couple (Paul Rudd as a decent and caring man and Rashida Jones as his independent-minded but fully committed partner) who communicate courageously about everything from sex to sofas (<i>Prescription</i> #3; also Rx #4) and treat each other courteously (#8). Even their single pre-wedding-jitters quarrel is brief and without the usual trite battle of the sexes motif; in fact, Myth #8 is parodied here—further adding to the healthy message.</p> <p>This man-you-gotta-love, who genuinely loves women but has no male friends, learns the importance of importance of not expecting your romantic partner to fill all your needs (Rx #10)—thanks to the wisdom of his fiancée and a truly hilarious “bromance” with a nuanced character played by Jason Segel.</p>
<p><b>SECOND PAIRING OF 3 TIED SETS OF RECIPIENTS OF THE TWO OVERALL AWARDS: <i>Death vs. Life</i></b></p>	
<p><b><i>The Twilight Sage: The New Moon (film)</i></b></p> <p>This series’ legions of mostly suggestible adolescent and teen fans get another dose of a dreadful role model, as boring Bella—specifically and utterly stupidly taking a page from the icons of disastrous romance, Romeo and Juliet—decides that even suicide is a great option for reunion with her supposed soul mate, the vampire Edward (Myth #1, 3, and 10).</p> <p>It’s not only dopey: It’s dangerous, because unlike some campy and satiric sci-fi, this franchise takes itself deadly seriously. And now she has two super-human protectors to lean on (Myth #6)—though it’s obvious she knows which one is her pre-destined partner, from whom neither dads nor death can separate her (#1).</p>	<p><b><i>Away We Go (film)</i></b></p> <p>The focus of perhaps this past year’s healthiest pop culture couple (played by John Krasinski and Maya Rudolph) is on life: the first child they’re expecting, in whose interest they’re touring the United States to decide where best to re-locate.</p> <p>Throughout this warm and witty film, they demonstrate the kind of good coupleship the media rarely present. They communicate courageously (Rx #3), don’t fight (#8), share power (#6) and values (#9), and focus on inner beauty and long-term commitment (#2, 4, and 5) rather than merely on sex appeal or externals. And they’re still very real. Here’s a loving couple media consumers of all ages should model—though you need to find the DVD of this limited-release winner.</p>

**THIRD PAIRING OF 3 TIED SETS OF RECIPIENTS OF THE TWO OVERALL AWARDS:  
All About Sandra (Bullock), who ironically stars in both the worst and the best**

**The Proposal (film)**

Sandra Bullock is a mean-spirited top editor loathed by everyone, including her nice-guy male assistant (Ryan Reynolds) in this gender-reversal of the Beauty and the Beast myth (#7). Despite their totally different values (#9) and constant battles (#8), at the very end of this top-grossing film, his goodness changes her from a witch to a princess who realizes it's his way or the highway (literally, as she'll be deported if she doesn't marry him), so they prepare for a wedding that's just as sham as the fake one they concocted to fool U.S. immigration (#10).

**The Blind Side (film)**

A real marriage (dramatizing a well known real-life one) with real love is demonstrated in this film, for which Bullock has earned a Best Actress Oscar nomination and Golden Globe Award as a wife, mother, businesswoman, and social activist. Although the marriage isn't the focus of this heart-warming film, this loyal husband and wife illustrate many of the *Prescriptions*, including courageous communication (#3) and shared values (#9) in a committed long-term romantic relationship (#2 and 4) with shared power in a 21st Century coupleship (#6).

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2011**

**Love and Other Drugs (film)**

If love is merely one of many "drugs" for this film's couple, they need to head to re-hab.

A manipulative Viagra salesman and serial seducer (played by Jake Gyllenhaal) is himself instantly seduced (Myth #2: "Love at first sight") by the sight of the perfect bare breasts of an apparently non-commercial artist and part-time coffee-shop waitress played by Anne Hathaway.

Her increasingly debilitating Parkinson's disease is not so debilitating that it has the slightest impact on her perfect chest ... or perfect face ... or perfect figure (Myth #5: To attract and keep a man, a woman must be perfectly gorgeous).

Also hewing to out-dated hegemony (Myth #6: The man must be the strong, successful, and superior provider), he makes loads of money—while she apparently has very little, despite living alone in a huge loft apartment right in the city, where non-committed perfect sex ensues—a signal these two are meant for each other (Myth #4)—together with instances of many of last year's portrayals' increasingly prevalent nasty bickering and fighting, which we're supposed to believe means they love each other passionately (Myth #8).

At the end, this couple who have no shared values (except hook-up sex) realize they "love" each other (Myth #9) and that their love fills their needs and makes them complete (Myth #10): He convinces her he'll stick by her side and happily take care of her—even when her disease becomes tragically worse. I'm all for redemptive behavior, but here it's as gratuitous as the nudity because this movie conveniently ends before this commitment has to be actually demonstrated.

But that's not all! As the credits are about to roll, he voices-over his decision to quit his lucrative job and go to medical school—where he seems to imagine he'll have the time and the funds to fulfill his promise to take care of her when she becomes totally dependent on him.

**Going the Distance (film)**

It's always hard to find a worthy popular media example for this overall award, because there are so few truly healthy media portrayals of sex, love, and romance.

That's why I was very impressed with "Going the Distance"—a charming but not cloying film in which Drew Barrymore and real-life boyfriend Justin Long portray a healthy, well-matched couple who model many of *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions*®.

They meet while she is completing a brief summer internship at a New York City newspaper, and when it's time for her to return to graduate school at Stanford, they decide to endure a lengthy long-distance romance so each can pursue a budding career on opposite coasts of the country.

They commit to (and demonstrate) working on a complete, long-term, monogamous relationship—not just easy sex (*Prescriptions* #2 and #4). In fact, though they have passionate chemistry when they do get together, they can laugh when their attempted phone sex is futile.

During their long separations, they daily communicate courageously (#3), and—unlike too many disheartening rom-coms—they treat each other courteously and respectfully, with appreciation of each other's talents and successes (#8).

They don't try to change each other (#7) because they share values (#9), and both sexes share power in their 21st Century peer coupleship (#6) in which they cultivate their own completeness rather than expecting their partner to fill all their needs and make their dreams come true (#10).

CAUTION: Even *Realistic Romance*® Award™-winning portrayals usually include at least one unhealthy myth or stereotype (such as this couple's bong-use and intercourse the night they first meet), because media narrative traditionally relies on these techniques. However, the key themes strongly reflect prescriptions for good coupleship that are demonstrated throughout, not just slapped on in the final moments.

**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2012**

**The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1 (film)**

**Bridesmaids (film)**



Like all previous *Stupid Cupid Award*™-winning installments of this blockbuster franchise, this episode—covering the much-anticipated wedding of human Bella and vampire Edward—perpetuates multiple dopey and dangerous myths and stereotypes while selling a fortune of its branded wedding paraphernalia to the gullible:

MYTH #1: Now that Bella is 18, not even Jacobean werewolves, vampire wars, or understandably concerned parents can keep her from her “cosmically pre-destined perfect partner”—through whose honeymoon love-bites she longs to exchange not only her last name for his (What IS his real last name?) but also—and eternally—her human existence for his undead state. (Seriously: How much more lifeless could this young woman be?)

MYTH #2: Cheesy flashbacks via musical montages remind us about this couple’s love-at-first-sight (bite?). (See also two soundtrack songs that got *Stupid Cupids*: Christina Perri’s “A Thousand Years” and Bruno Mars’ “It Will Rain”—and note also Jacob’s Pedophila-at-First-Sight, below.)

MYTH #10: In this case, the “right mate” not only “completes” Bella but nearly (though unintentionally) completely kills her through what is presented as the best sex Edward has had in centuries (MYTH #4).

MYTH # 6: The sad and sick message to its legion of impressionable adolescents is the out-dated sexist trope glamorized by this pathetically weak damsel-constantly-in-distress and repeatedly rescued by not one but two super-human creatures (and their packs). Edward is fabulously wealthy and powerful and centuries older than his child-bride Bella. The mega-messed-up media message: Get married at 18 without a real education or a profession and get pregnant immediately (even though it’s life-threatening) while lying to your parents and brushing off physical abuse during honeymoon sex.

The most appalling if-not-illegal demonstration of MYTH #6’s antiquated “Me-Tarzan-You-Jane” power imbalance this series sells combined with MYTH #2: Bella’s other faithful-as-a-“dog” rescuer (Jacob) is essentially turned into a pedophile who “imprints on” Bella and Edward’s newborn daughter—that is, due to a beastly sexual attraction he falls in love at first sight with an infant! This is more revolting than the buckets of blood and gore involved in birthing her! How did this series get a PG-13 rating? And why does it take itself so deadly and dangerously seriously?

It’s always hard to find a worthy popular media example for this overall award, because there are so few truly healthy media portrayals of sex, love, and romance.

This year’s winner—a blockbuster Oscar® nominee (and purported “most popular video-on-demand title of all time”)—might seem surprising because it’s a raunchy (R-rated) gut-splittingly hilarious comedy. However, it truly takes the (wedding) cake for surprisingly offering a number of *Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions*® (as well as demonstrating the foolishness of subscribing to media myths in real life).

When we first meet the central character “Annie” (played by the film’s co-writer and “Saturday Night Live” regular Kristin Wiig), she’s certainly not a youngster (and she’s clearly been around-the-block), but she’s immature. In fact, she’s a mess—professionally and personally.

But in her earnest (if not always successful) efforts to be an honorable maid-of-honor for her best friend, she gradually learns lessons that move her from being mired in media myths and stereotypes to adopting their corresponding Rx’s (that empower her to grow and grow up).

Finally, she wakes up from her nightmarish (though admittedly uproariously comic and originally comedic) unhealthy and non-productive lifestyle to a touching and genuine “breaking dawn”—succeeding, through her own hard work, to return to an entrepreneurial profession at which she excels: running her own bakery.

And personally, she comes to recognize and appreciate the value of a decent, devoted boyfriend (Rx #4 and Rx #5)—a kind and gentle law officer played by Chris O’Dowd, who himself has learned to patiently apply Rx #7, while both of them have demonstrated Rx #2: taking time to get to really know each other as friends.

Ultimately, they model a 21st Century peer coupleship (Rx #6) in which they faithfully and lovingly support each other while cultivating their own completeness rather than expecting their partner to fill all their needs and make their dreams come true (Rx #10).

CAUTION: Although even healthier portrayals usually include one or more unhealthy myths or stereotypes (because media narrative typically relies on them), the key themes of *Realistic Romance*® Award™ winners strongly reflect *Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions*®—research-based relational strategies for successful coupleship that benefit both women and men.

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine’s Day 2013**

***The Vow (film)***

Gorgeous Rachel McAdams and gorgeous Channing Tatum fall in love at first sight (Myth #2) and marry at The Chicago Art Institute in this moody melodrama. Tragedy strikes when a wintry auto accident sends Paige face-first through the windshield and leaves her with presumably permanent amnesia that erases every memory of the last five years of her life, including her husband Leo, though it doesn’t mar her model-perfect looks one bit (Myth #5). It also changes her

***Celeste and Jesse Forever (film)***

This delightful independent film is funny and moving indie production co-written by its star, Rashida Jones, who plays “Celeste,” the wife of Andy Samberg’s “Jesse.” They’re high school sweethearts who’ve been drifting in different directions: She’s a highly motivated partner in a marketing firm; he’s an unemployed artist and a bit of a man-child—a stereotype we see in many rom-coms. But the formula ends there, quite early in the film.

back into her former self: a rich, preppy law student who's once again attracted to her before-Leo boyfriend.

In fact, Leo now seems like a stranger: She rejects his clumsy advances (which seem almost like sexual harrassment) and even Leo's rather vigorous tickling that she used to enjoy (Really?!), now annoys the heck out of her, so we're given very little sense of any believable physical or mental connection between these two beyond some brief pre-accident musical montages that resemble pseudo-hip restaurant commercials—not real life.

And that's ironic, because this film boasts that it's "inspired" by a real-life couple (I guess that means the writers fictionalized even more than for a film "based" on a real-life couple). But it's not at all "inspired"; it's a rip-off of Nicholas Sparks' "The Notebook" (an earlier McAdams vehicle) with a sentimental formula that's apparent from the get-go (and from the movie's posters). And most ironically, it doesn't feel real at all. A vague connection to real people doesn't make a dramatization "real"—or make it qualify for *Realistic Romance® Awards*, which are not based on dramatic realism or so-called naturalism but rather on evidence of healthy relationship strategies as a dominant theme. ("Realistic" in my media literacy program means "rational": sex, love, and romance with a balance of feeling and thinking. (For a good example, see this year's *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize-winner*.)

This *Stupidest Cupid Awardee* demonstrates multiple myths and stereotypes but no sense of the long and difficult real rehab necessary or how these two would handle it, which would genuinely speak to some prescriptions about honoring marriage vows and commitment that goes beyond pure sex. Instead, artificial conflicts are clumsily introduced that only serve to make this story that is "inspired" by a real-life couple feel fake.

Admittedly, Leo is faithful, and that's commendable—but is he there for Paige or for himself?

After trying everything he can think of to change Paige (again!) back into the woman he married, Leo finally agrees to a divorce because he's "leaving it to fate" to bring her back to him as she was (Myth #1: "Your perfect partner is cosmically pre-destined, so nothing and nobody can ultimately separate you."). Predictably but ploddingly, not even the cardboard caricatures who are her snooty parents or her equally snooty old boyfriend (or her uncured amnesia!) can keep them apart at the end (Myth #10).

Honestly: I'd be happy if I have no memory of the sappy music and montages that substitute for intelligent dialog and motivated development in this film.

Like the couple in "The Vow," this no-longer well-matched couple has recently separated, but C & J still best friends who love and demonstrate genuine caring concern for each other. In fact, they're together every day until a casual post-separation one-night-stand makes Jesse a father-to-be, and he finally decides to man-up to the pregnant Veronica, who's also a lovely individual—smart and attractive and kind, like the majority of the characters in this thoughtful investigation into what it means to be a committed couple in a complicated world. This movie does feel real.

Although Celeste can be controlling and pushy, she's not a mean or bad person. Interestingly, she seems mature—compared to Jesse—but like Jesse, she also has some growing up to do—and the demonstration of their accomplishment of it is what makes this a *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize-winner*. Jesse's also the emotional one, and Celeste is the more rational-intellectual one. But over the course of this film, each comes to develop a repertoire of relational tools that include a better balance of those qualities that are too often polarized in media portrayals. And unlike "The Vow," this film doesn't stereotypically insist that all artistic individuals are worthier than business types (even though it does take place in L.A.).

What make this portrayal the *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize-winner* is the demonstrated validity of several of Dr. Galician's Prescriptions (Rx) in the evolution both Celeste and Jesse experience as they move on to other worthy mates (Rx #1 instead of Myth #1), with Jesse manning up to the consequences of a one-night stand (Rx #4) and Celeste (who starts dating and has to kiss a few toads to get to a more princely candidate) taking time (Rx #2) to get to know and value a new appropriate partner—Paul—a smart and gracious businessman who's a true peer (Rx #6) and who shares her values (Rx #9). She also learns to work on changing herself instead of others (Rx #7) and to concentrate on her own completeness (Rx #10) to be a more healthy candidate for her new romantic relationship with Paul. Best of all, Celeste and Jesse remain good friends. Many characters demonstrate Rx #3 and #8—open honest and courteous communication that media consumers would be wise to emulate.

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**12<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards—Valentine's Day 2014**

***Safe Haven (film)***

The title this film—which was released on Valentine's Day 2013—refers to the small photogenic seaside town where a so-called "mysterious" woman (played by Julianne Huff) with a secret, a fake name, and a gorgeous body has arrived looking

***The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (film)***

In comparison with this year's *Stupidest Cupid Award™* recipient, it's ironic that in the dystopian future world of the second installment of "The Hunger Games" trilogy there's no idealized small town "safe haven" to which to escape from

for work and privacy.

The secret she's hiding from her new community is one the audience knows from the start: She's on the run from her abusive husband.

Now it's almost like shooting fish in a barrel to discuss the problems with this film (based on a Nicholas Sparks book)—and nearly every critic has already done that. But its impressionable audience liked it.

Despite its absolutely absurd plot twists, it's incredibly predictable. The despicably abusive husband is presented as a villain who'd be right at home twirling his moustaches in a 19<sup>th</sup> century melodrama. And, sadly, that actually diminishes the seriousness of this very serious and very real issue of spousal abuse.

Of course, when this victim arrives in her new town and alights from the bus she's been riding all night after running and running and running (in the rain!)—she's neat and clean and gorgeous, and even the hair she'd hastily chopped up and colored the night before (to disguise herself) is perfectly arranged. (That's my Myth #5: A leading lady must look like a model or centerfold).

Within moments of her arrival, she gets a job at the local café (despite her lack of experience and her suspicious behavior)—and a handsome, kindly storeowner (Josh Duhamel)—a father of two little ones whose wife died of cancer a few years ago (This is Nicholas Sparks, remember!)—falls instantly in love with her (Myth #2).

She's slow to allow him into her life, but once she does she's quick to allow him into her bed, where they discover they're meant to be (Myth #4).

Please understand: It's certainly commendable that the heroine finally made her escape (although she did stay with her husband until he practically killed her), but there are better exit and recovery strategies than those presented here—as even the movie bears out—because the crazed husband rather easily does find her and nearly burns down the whole picturesque town while also nearly killing the hero's little girl.

But our tall, strong, courageous hero does indeed rescue his daughter and his damsel in distress (Myth #6)—while the villain is conveniently disposed of (literally). And then it turns out (Can you believe it?) that the equally mysterious local woman who immediately befriended the heroine...is actually the hero's dead wife—or ghost thereof—and she graciously gives her blessing to the new couple, who are apparently cosmically predestined (Myth #1), completing each other (Myth #10). (I did mention this is Nicholas Sparks?)

violence—although there is fire...and fantasy.

As those of you who follow my annual awards know: the *Realistic Romance Grand Prize*™-winner is frequently an independent film (or song or off-beat TV show) that doesn't follow the typical Hollywood formula and might have a smaller audience. So I'm thrilled that this year is an exception—because this winner (a personal favorite of mine: I'm a fan of the books and the films) is also the number one movie box-office hit of 2013. That means lots of people—including many young media consumers—experienced its healthier role models of sex, love, and romance.

You probably know the story: a strong and caring young woman—"Katniss Everdeen" (played by Academy Award™-winner Jennifer Lawrence) is forced to participate in national last-person-standing (alive) games. In the first installment, she not only wins but also manages to enable her local partner Peeta Mellark to survive with her. In this second film, their victory tour suddenly leads to a second games into which they are both forced by a nasty but powerful villain—the nation's president, who fears Katniss' courage, charisma, and revolutionary spirit.

In this film (which is quite faithful to the book), you see nearly all my *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions*®. Katniss has two boy-friends—Peeta and Gale Hawthorne—who are her long-time good friends. And she's upfront and honest with them about not being ready for a serious relationship (Rx # 1 and Rx #2).

As has been widely (and unfairly) discussed, the talented star is not your typical Hollywood leading lady (Rx #5—though she is very attractive), and rather than me-Tarzan/you-Jane stereotypes that hurt men as well as women, this story's heroine teams with strong males who appreciate a romantic interest who shares power as a peer (Rx #6).

So it's no wonder that for the most part she and her two boy-friends avoid bickering and fighting because they share values (Rx #8 and Rx #9) and work together for the common good and for a peaceful life.

As a side note about the graphic violence, which includes the murder of children by children in the survival games: the author of "The Hunger Games" trilogy—which was initially targeted to so-called "young adult" readers—has explained that her goal is to show the consequences of violence rather than to glorify it. Thus, her heroine does not rejoice when rivals die. But we rejoice at such an admirable and interesting role model.

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