Inspired by the NWSA’s 2024 conference theme of “(Re)thinking Feminist Movements”, the Popular Culture Constituency Group is proposing the following panel for the 2024 Conference. We invite paper submissions from members and non-members of our group, and we look forward to meeting in Detroit.

Greta Gerwig’s Barbie made impressive waves in mass media in 2023, touted as a ‘feminist film’ delivered with shades of pink and a bit of girlhood magic. Arguably, Barbie represents the feminist movement that is occurring in mass media, the use of media and storytelling as an act of what we may consider to be consciousness raising. But, criticisms of Barbie included everything from it being just ‘feminism 101’ to encouraging stereotypes. This conflict of response to the film opens up a space for rich conversation around the intertwining of feminism and mass media.

This panel would like to approach the question of using mass media as an epistemic tool for feminist movements - what knowledge is being transferred and what responsibility does the media have towards the quality of this knowledge? Barbie seemed to have a goal of consciousness-raising and community-building, especially if we consider America Ferrara’s character’s speech in the film, and this aim is something that this panel proposes to consider; what can we hold filmmakers and writers and actors to, if the aims are more than entertainment? Did Barbie meet that aim and, if not, what are the consequences of that failure?

We invite conversations about the film, comparisons to other films and/or fandoms, and commentary on the use of mass media as a whole through the lens of the film. We also invite conversations around discussions of gender representation, sexuality (or absence of), intergenerational feminism, motherhood, and masculinity alongside the film.

Please submit a 300-word abstract and a 100-word bio to aestamson@gmail.com, by March 29th, 2024. Accepted abstracts will be notified by March 18th, and the panel will be submitted to the NWSA before April 1st. We welcome papers from faculty, graduate students, community organizers, and independent scholars.