

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

**“Just Married” Gets Overall Stupidest Cupid Award;  
TV’s “I’m With Her” Honored as Realistic Romance Grand Prize Winner**

February 8, 2004 — Valentine’s Day, America’s favorite celebration of love and romance, is at hand and Arizona State University media researcher and media literacy advocate Mary-Lou Galician has conferred her annual **Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance™ Awards for Mass Media Portrayals of Sex, Love, & Romance**.

The Awards were established by Galician, head of Media Analysis and Criticism concentration 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™*, she is an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships as well as 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*.

The 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](http://www.RealisticRomance.com)) -- focus attention on mythic, stereotypic media portrayals that Galician says people should never use as models for their own lives. The Stupidest Cupid Award is given to the most glaring example of an unhealthy media model.

The 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 best example.

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This year, the public participated in nominating current and classic portrayals. The winners were selected by a panel of judges who joined Galician to consider their own nominations as well as the public's.

The 2004 judges were Dr. Joel Hutchinson, Director of Student Counseling at ASU East; Sam Mittelsteadt, *East Valley Tribune* Style and Assistant Features Editor; and Dr. David Natharius, ASU Adjunct Professor of Visual Communication, who is also Galician's husband and Realistic Romance partner. Amber Hutchins, a graduate of the Cronkite School's Master of Mass Communication degree program, coordinated the nominations and served as teller.

The movie "Just Married" received the Stupidest Cupid, while ABC-TV new sitcom "I'm With Her" earned the Realistic Romance Grand Prize for healthiest portrayal.

"As evidenced by the number of nominations, 'Just Married' with Aston Kutcher and Brittany Murphy deserves the Stupidest Cupid because this mean-spirited movie (a top-grosser in more ways than one!) promoted nearly all 12 harmful myths in my *Mass Media Love Quiz* — from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined and nobody can separate you to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other," Galician explained.

"Realistic Romance Grand Prize winner 'I'm With Her' is 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," Galician said.

"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. (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."

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Galician's "Stupid Cupid" designations for the 12 individual myths include popular movies "Sleepless in Seattle," "Titanic," "Something's Gotta Give," "Beauty and the Beast," "Two Weeks Notice," and "Cinderella"; TV's "Average Joe," "Everybody Loves Raymond," and music videos; *Playboy*, *Maxim*, *Cosmo*, and *Seventeen*; popular songs "Love at First Sight" and "When You Say Nothing At All"; coverage of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, and "media critics who describe mythic and stereotypic portrayals as 'completely harmless'."

Those honored with the more exclusive Realistic Romance Awards for rarer healthier portrayals include movies "Lost in Translation," "The Wedding Singer," "Hairspray," "28 Days," and "Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, & Blonde"; TV's "Seventh Heaven" and "The Cosby Show"; popular song "Cinderella" and two different songs entitled "Celebrity," as well as Alanis Morissette's music video, "Precious Illusions."

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, "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'. Bear in mind that I'm asking you to lower your unrealistic expectations but to raise your standards."

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 annual *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](mailto:DrFUN@asu.edu) or 480-838-0003.**

***A complete listing of this year’s awards — and their citations — appears here in separate documents.***

***This complete listing with the citations that explain why the award was made is linked to Dr. Galician’s web site  
[www.RealisticRomance.com](http://www.RealisticRomance.com)***