

**“Realistic Romance® Guru” Dr. Mary-Lou Galician confers her  
4<sup>th</sup> annual *Dr. FUN’s Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance® Awards*  
for Mass Media Portrayals of Sex, Love, and Romance**

***“The Wedding Crashers” Gets the Overall Stupidest Cupid Award™;*  
*“The 40-Year-Old Virgin” wins the Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™*  
*for healthiest portrayal***

February 14, 2006 – Once again on 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.**

**“The Wedding Crashers” got the overall Stupidest Cupid Award** for perpetuating the most myths and stereotypes; **“The 40-Year-Old Virgin”** won the **Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™** for healthiest portrayal.

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*. Her second book on this topic, *Critical Thinking About Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Media Literacy Applications*, will be published later this year, and 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 12 Stupid Cupid Awards™** – one for each of the dozen myths that Galician's research has identified as affecting 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 and stereotypic media portrayals that Galician says people should never use as models for their own lives. A 13<sup>th</sup> 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 2005. 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: Dr. David Natharius, ASU Adjunct Professor of Visual Communication, who is also Galician's husband and Realistic Romance® partner; Tracey Franks, Liza Marques, and Katy Reno, graduate students in the Cronkite School's Master of Mass Communication degree program; and Donna Goyette, who earned her Master of Mass Communication degree in the Cronkite School. Special Hollywood judge was Marta Kos of E! Entertainment.

This is the first year that both overall awards went to R-rated romantic comedy movies.

As noted in the award citation, "The Wedding Crashers" with Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson "promotes a majority of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*© 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)."

On the other hand, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" with Steve Carell and Catherine Keener "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!), see your loved one as a total human being and equal partner, seek shared values -- and it brilliantly teaches its lessons through delicious comedy rather than a pedantic sermon."

Galician regrets that this healthy portrayal is R-rated but argues that the bawdy language and images are necessary to provide needed counterpoint to the film's real theme.

"And what's marvelous is that the men who use bad language and objectify women as sexual objects are ultimately shown to be insecure and miserable (and Keener's character is shown to be sorry about her previous promiscuity) -- all in a side-splitting scenario that is simultaneously sincere and moving without being maudlin," Galician explains. "It's a rare gem!"

In addition to "The Wedding Crashers," Galician's "Stupid Cupid" designations for the 12 individual myths include popular movies "A Lot Like Love," "King Kong," "Mr. & Mrs.

Smith," "The Family Stone," "Just Like Heaven," and "Elizabethtown" as well as television's "Grey's Anatomy," "Nip/Tuck," "King of Queens," "Still Standing," "Yes, Dear," "Boston Legal," and "The OC"; magazines *Maxim* and *Cosmo*; popular songs "Love at First Sight," "Don't Cha," "Gold Digger," "We Belong Together," and "You Complete Me"; media coverage and irrational fans of Jessica Simpson/Nick Lachey and Jennifer Aniston/Brad Pitt/Angelina Jolie, 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.]**

Along with "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," media honored with the more exclusive individual Realistic Romance® Awards™ for rarer healthier portrayals include the movies "Cinderella Man," "Diary of a Mad Black Woman," and "The Constant Gardener"; TV's "Gilmore Girls," "Commander-in-Chief," "The Cosby Show," "House," "Their Eyes Were Watching God," "Entourage" and "Extras"; *Essence* magazine; popular songs "How Kind of You," "Beautiful Soul," "Fast Cars and Freedom," "Go, Goodbye," and "Since U Been Gone," and media literacy books and materials (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](mailto: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](http://www.RealisticRomance.com)*

February 14, 2006

[NOTE TO EDITORS:

Do NOT edit the wording of the 12 numbered one-sentence copyrighted Myths.]

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid Awards™**  
**are conferred on 2005 mass media 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 2005 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©* in the listing of the 12 Realistic Romance® Awards™. The portrayal with the most myths and stereotypes gets *Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award™*.

**Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award™**

**Awardee: "The Wedding Crashers" (New Line Cinema)**

This blockbuster movie promotes a majority of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz©* 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).

**Myth No. 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.**

**Awardee: "A Lot Like Love" (Touchstone Pictures)**

Over 7 years, nothing can ultimately keep these two "fated" lovers apart -- even though they themselves admit they're poorly suited for each other.

**Myth No. 2: There's such a thing as "love at first sight."**

**Awardee: "Love at First Sight" (Michael Bubl )**

The title says it all -- but the lyrics add to the clich : "The first time I saw you, I knew love at first sight must be true, so true, oh so true."

**Dis-honorable mention: "Elizabethtown" (Paramount Pictures)**

**Myth No. 3: Your true soul mate should know what you're thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).**

**Awardee: "Grey's Anatomy" (ABC-TV)**

Title character Dr. Meredith Grey needs an internship in physician-physician communication: She always expects Dr. Derek Shepherd to understand her needs and wants simply by reading her mind as easily as if he's reading a patient's chart.

**Myth No. 4: If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.**

**Awardees (tie): "The Wedding Crashers" (New Line Cinema) and Men's and Women's Magazines (such as *Maxim* and *Cosmo*)**

"The Wedding Crashers" -- In addition to the leading ladies' beauty and goodness, it's the perfectly scintillating sex (even for a neophyte and a playboy) that seals the deals!

Men's and Women's Magazines: In today's climate, women's magazines have become as explicit as those targeted to men, with countless cover-lines screaming that sex is the most important and affirming aspect of a relationship rather than just one component.

**Myth No. 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.**

**Awardee: "Nip/Tuck" (FX Networks)**

From the plastic surgeons' "Tell me what you don't like about yourself" (as in "You're never hot enough!") to the mutilating transformation of already attractive women into Barbie-doll perfection, this series promotes unrealistic expectations in both sexes, along with inadequacy issues and a slasher-like surgical solution to relationship problems.

**Dis-honorable mention: "Don't Cha" (Pussycat Dolls) and CBS-TV sitcoms "King of Queens" "Still Standing," and "Yes, Dear" (with sloppy guy/hot-babe couples)**

**Myth No. 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.**

**Awardee: "Boston Legal" (ABC-TV)**

"Boston Legal" - In yet another witty but hegemonic series from David E. Kelley, women (even the firm's attorneys) are merely objectified eye- and arm-candy or side-kicks to the unworthy alpha males, who are portrayed as superior and admirable (despite their stupendous stupidity and boorishness).

**Dis-honorable mention: "Gold Digger" (Kanye West)**

**Myth No. 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a "beast" into a "prince."**

**Awardee: "King Kong" (Universal Studios)**

Not only does the beautiful (Do we even need to add "blonde"?) "heroine" "fix" the beast in this archetypal adventure tale (Yes: The unhealthy drug allusions are intentional in this citation!), but also she makes all the men around her better for having known her.

**Dis-honorable mention: "The OC" (FOX Broadcasting)**

**Myth No. 8: Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.**

**Awardee: "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox)**

It's "no contest" in the awarding of this *Stupid Cupid*: Violent physical fighting (to the death - well, almost) and mental abuse lead this dysfunctional couple invariably and repeatedly to passionate lovemaking to spice up their otherwise boring marriage.

**Dis-honorable mention: TV sitcoms**

**Myth No. 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.**

**Awardee: "The Family Stone" (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox)**

Both couples in this relationally challenged family wind up depending solely on baseless "love" (at first sight) to keep them together.

**Myth No. 10: The right mate “completes you” -- filling your needs and making your dreams come true.**

**Awardees (tie): “We Belong Together” (Mariah Carey) and “Just Like Heaven” (DreamWorks)**

“We Belong Together” -- This Grammy winner glorifies the dysfunctional desire to avoid becoming complete, whole, and healthy in oneself and instead fosters unhealthy enmeshment and pathetic dependence: “When you left I lost a part of me,” and “Who else am I gonna lean on?”

“Just Like Heaven” - Like “Sleeping Beauty” and “Snow White,” this movie’s comatose co-star needs the right mate to literally bring her out of dreamland and into “reality.”

**Dis-honorable mention: “You Complete Me” (Kelly Price)**

**Myth No. 11: In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.**

**Awardee: Irrational fans of Not-So-Weds Jessica Simpson & Nick Lachey and Brangelina-gate’s Jennifer Aniston & Brad Pitt who confused these stars’ reel lives with their real lives (and irrational news editors who confused “The Breakups” 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 No. 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. It’s irresponsible to label all these portrayals as completely harmless simply because they’re fluffy and vacuous.

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**The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual *Dr. FUN’s Realistic Romance*® Awards™  
are detailed on the following pages.**

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](mailto:DrFUN@asu.edu) or phone her at 480-965-5066 or 480-838-0003.

February 14, 2006

[NOTE TO EDITORS:

Do NOT edit the wording of the 12 one-sentence copyrighted Rxs.]

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Realistic Romance® Awards™**  
**honor 2005 mass media portrayals**  
**that model one or more of the 12 Prescriptions© (Rxs)**  
**of Dr. Galician's Prescriptions© for Getting Real About Romance.**

These mass media portrayals that appeared in 2005 illustrate the 12 prescriptions for healthy relationships. Each one is an "antidote" to the comparable *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*© myth or stereotype in the listing of the 12 Stupid Cupid Awards™.

**Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™**

**Awardee: The 40-Year-Old Virgin (Universal Pictures)**

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!), see your loved one as a total human being and equal partner, seek shared values -- and it brilliantly teaches its lessons through delicious comedy rather than a pedantic sermon.

**Rx No. 1: Consider countless candidates.**

**Awardee: "How Kind of You" (Paul McCartney)**

Through this upbeat apparently autobiographical ballad, widowed and now remarried Sir Paul suggests that there can be more than one great love in your life if we're open to the possibility.

**Honorable mention: "Diary of a Mad Black Woman" (BET Pictures)**

**Rx No. 2: Consult your calendar and count carefully.**

**Awardee: "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" (Universal Pictures)**

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.

**Honorable mention: "Gilmore Girls" (The WB)**

**Rx No. 3: Communicate courageously.**

**Awardee: "Commander-in-Chief" (ABC-TV)**

Despite their most difficult public position (She's the President of the United States; he's a top politician who is now the country's first "First Gentleman"!), series star and producer Geena Davis and Kyle Secor demonstrate important business and personal conversations that are honest and to-the-point communications -- courteous, sincere, and productive. (And the President's mother -- played by Polly Bergen -- is also a clear and cordial communicator who is refreshingly respected and loved by her daughter and by her son-in-law.)

**Rx No. 4: Concentrate on commitment and constancy.**

**Awardee: "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" (Universal Pictures)**

Again, this *Realistic Romance*® Grand Prize™ winner uses hilarious humor to pleasantly present this prescription -- and to show the consequences of the usual pop culture approach to juvenile sexual intimacy without mature emotional intimacy. In one of the rarest portrayals, this couple actually waits for marriage to consummate their love -- and the audience actually appreciates that.

**Rx No. 5: Cherish completeness in companions (not just the cover).**

**Awardees (tie): "Beautiful Soul" (Jesse McCartney) and "Fast Cars and Freedom" (Rascal Flatts)**

"Beautiful Soul" -- The young former soap star is anything but stereotypic in his lyrics: "I don't want another pretty face; I don't want just anyone to hold; I don't want my love to go to waste; I want you and your beautiful soul."

"Fast Cars and Freedom" -- Likewise, these lyrics honor the whole woman, not just her outward appearance: "Staring at you taking off your makeup; Wondering why you even put it on; I know you think you do, but baby, you don't need it; Wish that you could see what I see when it's gone."

**Honorable mention: *Essence* magazine's fashion spreads with diverse and normal-figured women**

**Rx No. 6: Create coequality; cooperate.**

**Awardee: "The Cosby Show" (now airing on Nick at Night/TVLand)**

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. May it air for another 20 year!

**Honorable mention: "The Constant Gardner" (Focus Features)**

**Rx No. 7: Cease correcting and controlling; you can't change others (only yourself!).**

**Awardee: "House" (FOX Broadcasting)**

Instead of trying to change the gruff and often rude Dr. House, Dr. Cameron realizes that she will not be able to change him simply by showering him with her kindness. Though disappointed, she wisely realizes that only he can change himself.

**Honorable mention: "Gilmore Girls" (The WB)**

**Rx No. 8: Courtesy counts; constant conflicts create chaos.**

**Awardee: "Go, Goodbye" (Brie Larson)**

Sick of the "big, big fight" and its "confusing state," the singer wisely acknowledges what "we've got to accept": "U can't stay cuz u bring me down; It's probably the hardest thing to do; Go, goodbye to u."

**Rx No. 9: Crave common core-values.**

**Awardees (tie): "'Cinderella Man" (Universal Studios) and "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (ABC-TV)**

"Cinderella Man" -- In this story "inspired" by the life of boxing legend Jim Braddock, Russell Crowe and Renee Zellweger play a married couple whose shared core values are so strong that not even the financial poverty of the Great Depression can impoverish their love.

"Their Eyes Were Watching God" -- Halle Barry portrays the Zora Neale Hurston classic heroine Janie, who comes to realize that her earlier first mythic loves are no match for the true partnership of a love based on shared values.

**Rx No. 10: Cultivate your own completeness.**

**Awardee: "Since U Been Gone" (Kelly Clarkson)**

The Grammy-winning performance of Kelly Clarkson even warns against believing media myths and stereotypes: "I even fell for that stupid love song" -- and offers a healthy alternative: "But since you been gone I can breathe for the first time; I'm so movin' on."

**Honorable mention: "Gilmore Girls" (The WB)**

**Rx No. 11: Deconstruct celebrities.**

**Awardees (tie): "Entourage" (HBO) and "Extras" (HBO)**

These humorous spoofs of movie stars attempt to show the differences between the on-screen roles and real lives of actors and actresses -- and why it's important for fawning fans to appreciate their idols' acting talents but to stop conflating reel life with real life (and, perhaps, get a life of their own).

**Rx No. 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 of all ages to 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. These annual awards are a small but salient step in that direction.

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