

## Barbie Movie Discussion

By Teniyah Harris

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Georgia State faculty proposed using the *Barbie* movie as a teaching tool in gender studies and media courses during a panel discussion Monday night.

A panel of GSU faculty and licensed clinical psychologists discussed the movie's themes, such as mental health, public health and the filmmaking process.

William James was the coordinator and host of the screening and the discussion. He is a senior at GSU majoring in film and media production, as well as working full-time as a staff member of the Spotlight Programs committee.

"I wanted the purpose of this discussion to be an open environment for all students and faculty to engage in meaningful conversations about the film's impact," James said.

The panel included five speakers, among them two Georgia State professors who teach Gender and Sexuality Studies and Feminist Pedagogy, as well as the university's director of Counseling Services.

The panelists talked about how the movie uses lighting to emphasize moments of calm as well as intensity, and how that translates to the audience. They said the dull colors contrasting with the

protagonist's bright pink outfit convey the idea that their individuality and defiance are in stark contrast to the oppressive corporate environment.

"I felt this set the tone for the conversation, highlighting Barbie's struggle against the rigid, patriarchal system she was stuck in," James said. "As a film major, learning to use lighting and color symbolism throughout a film can be crucial for creating powerful visual storytelling, in which I think *Barbie* showcased perfectly."

James played an excerpt where Barbie is visually distressed, explaining that she believes everything she represents as a doll isn't good enough, and she feels unworthy of love.

"Mental health is a significant theme in the film, as it portrays Barbie's journey of self-discovery and acceptance," James said. "I wanted the panelists to address how the film portrays mental health struggles in a way that doesn't stigmatize or oversimplify the issue."

The panelists discussed how the film uses Barbie's experiences to normalize conversations about mental health, showing that even a character often associated with perfection can struggle and seek growth.

Audience members had the opportunity to ask questions and share thoughts and impressions. In response to a question about how women can practice self-accountability despite societal expectations, the panel said to set realistic goals and boundaries that align with personal values, rather than living based on external pressures. The discussion also included criticism of the lack

of diverse representation in Barbie, which an audience member said made it difficult to relate to the film.

Junior Kennedy Dunlap majors in Film and TV Production. She said the discussion provided a new perspective on the messages in the movie.

"I believe they did a good job discussing themes," Dunlap said. "Before the discussion started, event staff placed different quotes on the wall, and we had to write down how it made us feel. I feel like it helped identify some of the themes and lead the conversation."

James said he hoped the conversations would inspire attendees to think critically about the film's messages and apply them to their own lives.

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