

ETHNICITY, GENDER, SOCIAL CURATION IN DIGITAL MEDIA

Instructor: Amir Aziz

Level: Beginner- to intermediate-level undergraduate course

Enrollment size: 20-25 students, once or twice weekly

Keywords: Gender and Women's studies; Ethnic Studies; Media Studies; Cultural Studies

COURSE DESCRIPTION

With the digitization of everyday life where increasingly everything must be rendered visible online in order to be real, we have to ask new questions about the forms of being that are being produced by the interaction of the digital and the non-digital.

Curation – a task historically associated with museum professionals – has now become a quotidian chore in our digitally driven lives. This interdisciplinary course investigates the relationship between the representations and constructions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, and ability in technologies of digital media. Central to the course are questions of materiality and embodiment in the digital age: how do gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, and difference translate from IRL to URL to IRL? How does the digital reproduce or subvert dominant articulations of power? Students will engage with theories of new media, as well as critical scholarship on gender, race, sexuality, and ability.

This course is highly collaborative, discussion based, and reading intensive. The majority of the work of this course will be conducting the reading and participating in discussion during class.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn and adopt transfeminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial approaches to understanding the construction of identity. After completing the course, students will be able to critique and contribute to our understandings of gender, sex, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and social curation. Students will improve their critical thinking skills as informed readers and cultural critics.
2. Identify, analyze, and critique the formation and reproduction of social, economic, and political hierarchies grounded in race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality. Through their study in transfeminist, queer, and decolonial scholarship, students will develop the capacity to interrogate cultural stereotypes and naturalizations of hierarchies of differences;
3. Recognize the complexity of gendered and racialized experience in a transnational frame; analyze both micro and macro distributions of power;
4. Identify the politics of issue framing and knowledge production; undertake innovative research; devise creative strategies to promote social change; and, collaborate across difference.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Class Participation (40%): Each student is expected to complete the assigned reading for each course and actively participate in class discussion. Students should come to class with 2-3 questions about the readings for class discussion. Participation is measured through your active engagement during class time. This means offering your thoughts about course material during discussions, attentively listening to your classmates while they are speaking, and responding to them. Students are required to bring assigned readings with them to class. All course materials are provided on Canvas.

Class Presentation (20%): Each student is expected to serve as a discussant during the semester on one or more of the sources of a particular week. Students do not need to prepare PowerPoint presentations. They simply need to talk about: a) core arguments of selected material; b) analysis of how material relates to the themes of the course; and c) several brief, thought-provoking questions to encourage discussion. The discussant role should last between 10-15 minutes. The discussant role is less a 'formal' presentation and more an informal role where you elaborate your thoughts, pose questions, and interact with classmates. There is no right or wrong method to carrying out the role of discussant. On the day of the presentation the student is required to submit one response paper.

Response Papers (40%) By the end of the course students are required to submit three 3 page response paper (double-spaced) on the readings assigned for a class via Canvas (this includes the one response paper for the class presentation day). Students cannot write more than one response paper for the material for one class session – the three papers must be from different class sessions. Students can opt to write about one text, or can discuss several together. Students must email this response paper before the start of class. This response paper should include: a summary of the text and an analysis of the text considering course themes. Personal reactions to the texts are welcome.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Course material below is based upon the class meeting twice a week.

WEEK 1: LOOKING

LOOKING

- *Ways of Seeing* – Berger
- [“Shoes” Youtube video](#)

LOOKING OTHERWISE

- “The Oppositional Gaze” – bell hooks in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*
- “Race, Gender, and the Technological Turn: A Roundtable on Digitizing Revolution” with Dorothy Kim, Treeandrea M. Russworm, Corrigan Vaughan, Cassius Adair, Veronica Parades, and T.L. Cowan “Shit White Girls Say...to Black Girls” [Youtube video by chescaleigh](#).

WEEK 2: IT'S ALL ABOUT (ME)ME

ME(ME) CULTURE AND MASS CONSUMPTION

- “Entertainment and Utopia” – Richard Dyer in Cultural Studies Reader

- The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production – LevManovich
- “Caucasian Living with Joanne the Scammer” [YouTube](#) “Never Before”
- Podcast: [Janet Mock with Branden Miller](#)

GENDER, RACE, CULTURE, AND ME(ME) CULTURE

- “Encoding, Decoding” – Stuart Hall in Cultural Studies Reader
- The Language of Internet Memes – Patrick Davidson
- Doja Cat, [“I’m a Cow:”](#)
- [Brand Memes and Clapbacks | Memesplaining](#)

WEEK 3: CYBERFEMINISMS

FEMINIST THEORY AND TECHNOLOGY

- “Introduction: Feminist Utopia or Dystopia?” and Chapter 5: “Metaphor and Materiality” in *TechnoFeminism* by Judy Wajcman
- “Feminist theories of technology” – Judy Wajcman
- “Where is the Feminism in Cyberfeminism?” – Faith Wilding
- [TERFS | ContraPoints](#)

CYBERFEMINISMS AND RACE

- “Cyberfeminism, Racism, Embodiment, Maria Fernandez
- “Queering feminist technology studies,” Catharina Landstrom
- “Cyberfeminism, technology, and international development,” Radhika Gajjala and Annapurna Mamidipudi
- [Sonic Origins | Moor Mother](#)

WEEK 4: GRASSROOTS /NETROOTS

HASHTAG FEMINISM

- “Bystander intervention, feminist hashtag activism. And the anti-carceral politics of care,” Carrie A. Rentschler
- “#Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the UnitedStates,” Yarimar Bonilla, Jonathan Rosa
- “Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: the case of #RhodesMustFall,” Tanja Bosch

TRANSFEMINISM AND DIGITAL MEDIA

- “#Free_CeCe: The Material Convergence of Social Media Activism,” Mia Fischer
- “Is Transmisogyny Killing Trans Women of Color?” Black Trans Feminisms and the Exigencies of WhiteFemininity,” Elías Cosenza Krell
- “Capturing Hate” Research Report
- [Quay Dash – Decline Him](#)
- [Diamond – I am Her](#)

WEEK 5: HACKING THE BODY

TRAP OF VISIBILITY

- “Exploring the Paradox of Trans Visibility” – Sarah Burke in *VICE Broadly*

- “Go beyond Our Natural Selves:” The Prison Letters of CeCe McDonald – CeCe McDonald (edited by Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley)
- “Capital T: Trans Visibility, Corporate Capitalism, and Commodity Culture” – Emmanuel David
- [The Library: The Transgender Movement Needs a Watershed Moment](#)

HACKING THE BODY

- Hacking the Body and Posthumanist Transbecoming: 10,000 Generations Later as the *mestizaje* of Speculative Cyborg Feminism and Significant Otherness – Lissette Olivares
- “The Technical Capacities of the Body: Assembling Race, Technology, and Transgender” – Julian Gill-Peterson
- “Biohacking Gender: Cyborgs, Coloniality, and the Pharmacopornographic Era” – Hilary Malatino
- [Becoming Dragon](#) – Mica Cardenas

WEEK 6: EMBODIED TECHNOLOGIES

CYBORG FEMINISM

- (Dis)Regarding Pain? Resituating a Feminist “Cyborg” Praxis – Pam Patterson
- “Technology, selfhood and physical disability” – Deborah Lupton, Wendy Seymour
- The Cerebral Subject and the Challenge of Neurodiversity – Francisco Ortega
- [Disability, Art, and the Age of the Internet: Jes Sachse at TEDxTrentUniversity](#)

EXPLOITATION

- “The Indecent Internet” – Jenna Stokes
- “Catching a Catfish: Constructing the ‘Good’ Social Media User in Reality Television” – Michael Lovelock
- “Why do people lie online? Because everyone lies on the internet” – Michelle Drouin, Daniel Miller, Shaun M.J. Wehle, Elisa Hernandez
- “Teen Girl Posed for 8 Years as Married Man to Write About Baseball And Harass Women” – Lindesey Adler

WEEK 7: TO SELFIE OR NOT TO SELFIE

SELF

- “The Skin of the Selfie” – Theresa Senft
- “What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon (Introduction) – Theresa Senft & Nancy Baym
- “Instagram Use and Self-Objectification: The Roles of Internalization, Comparison, Appearance Commentary, and Feminism” – Chandra E. Feltman and Dawn M. Szymanski
- [Katy Perry – Witness Live Stream](#)

BODY

- “The Commodification of the Body Positive Movement on Instagram” – Jessica Cwynar-Horta
- “Moving Toward the Ugly: A Politic Beyond Desirability” – Mia Mingus
- “Beauty as an ‘act of political warfare:’ Feminist makeup tutorials and masquerades on YouTube” – Michele White
- [“Contouring 101”](#) – Sailor J

WEEK 8: PLEASE LIKE MY STATUS UPDATE

KEEPING IT REAL

- Understanding Popular Culture – Fiske
- Visibility labor: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram – Crystal Abidin
- “Don't forget to like, share, and subscribe: Digital autpreneurs in a neoliberal world” – Rachel Ashman, Anthony Patterson, Stephen Brown
- [“Like Mah Status” Music Video – Miles Jai](#)

MICRO-CELEBRITY

- “Keeping it Real on the Web: Authenticity, Celebrity, Branding” 15-33 in *CAMGIRLS: Celebrity & Community in the Age of Social Networks* by Theresa M. Senft
- “All your faves are problematic: A brief history of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, stanning and the trap of #blackgirlmagic” – Sisonke Msimang
- [DON'T OFFICIAL MUSIC VIDEO | PatrickStarr](#)

WEEK 9: FANDOM

FANGIRLING: A POLITICS

- “Screen-Struck: The Invention of the Movie Fan Girl” – Diana Anselmo-Sequeira
- “Reimagining the Imagined Community: Online Media Fandoms in the Age of Global Convergence” – Lori Hitchcock Morimoto and Bertha Chin,
- “Sex, Utopia, and the Queer Temporalities of Fannish Love” – Alexis Lothian
- “Black Twitter and the Politics of Viewing *Scandal*” – Dayna Chatman in *Fandom : Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*
- [The Internet Lost Its Mind Trying to “Save” A Teenage YouTube Star Marina Joyce – What is Happening?](#)

GLASS (COMPUTER SCREEN) CEILINGS

- Chapter 1 of *Fabulous: Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric* – Madison Moore
- “Am I Gonna Become Famous When I Get My Boobs Done?” *Surgery and Celebrity* in *Gigi Gorgeous: This is Everything* – Dan Udy
- “The Undeniable Cultural Impact of Internet Sensation Gigi Gorgeous” – Alok [“I'm a Lesbian” – Gigi Gorgeous](#)

WEEK 10: LONELINESS

LONELY TOGETHER

- “If we bring our loneliness to the internet, what do we take away?” – Richa Kaul Padte
- “Secret Lives of Tumblr Teens” – Elspeth Reeve
- “Crying on YouTube: Vlogs, self-exposure and the productivity of negative affect” – Rachel Berryman, Misha Kavka
- [“I'm done with high school” vlog – Hannah Meldoché](#)

ONE EXTRA CLASS FOR CATCH UP AND/OR OPEN-TOPIC DISCUSSION FOR STUDENTS

WEEK 11: BLACKNESS

BLACKNESS AND SUBCULTURE

- “The Function of Subculture” – Dick Hebige in Cultural Studies Reader
- “What is this ‘black’ in black popular culture?” – Stuart Hall in *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*
- Black Teens Are Breaking the Internet And Seeing None of the Profits” – Doreen St. Felix in *Fader*
- [Parker Hill Vine Compilation](#)

ANTIBLACKNESS

- “Eating the Other” – bell hooks in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*
- Online Imagined Black English – Manuel Arturo Abreu“
- Ghost of Big Freedia” – Miles Johnson
- [“Cash Me Outside How Bout Dah” Video](#)
- [BHAD BHABIE feat. Lil Yachty – “Gucci Flip Flops”](#)

WEEK 12: DIRTY WORK

LABOR

- “Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers’ Dirty Work” – Sarah T. Roberts
- Impossible Job: Inside Facebook’s Struggle to Moderate Two Billion People”
- [“Post No Evil” Radiolab Episode](#)

ARCHIVE

- “Archive” – Mike Featherstone
- “In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture” - Ann Cvetkovich
- [Ravon Ruffin Digital Dialogue: “Digital Dialogue: ‘Digital Archives: Radical Acts of Self-Preservation](#)

WEEK 13: FAKE NEWS?

DISINFORMATION

- “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election” – Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow
- “Feminist Self-Imagining and Instagram: Tactics of circumventing sensorship – Magdalena Olszanowski” Guest Speaker
- [Rain Dove Instagram post](#)

RANDOM ACTS OF IMMATERIALITY

- *Random Act of Flyness* (watch and discuss in class)
- [“Item Falls, 2013”- Ryan Trecartin](#)