COMS 310: Media and Feminist Studies
Fall 2020, COVID-19 edition
Day and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:05-2:25pm
Location: Zoom and MyCourses!

Prof. Carrie A. Rentschler
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Office hours on Zoom: 1:05-2:25 pm Wednesdays, and additional hours to be set based on student time zones.

Teaching Assistant: Alican Koc
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TA Office hours: will be held around major assignment due dates. Stay tuned for updates.

Communicating with your professor: Your professor will primarily communicate with you via MyCourses announcements, Discussion forum responses, in class Q&A on Mondays in Zoom, recordings of answers to student questions on MyCourses, and via Office Hours on Wednesdays. These are preferred ways your professor is able to communicate over the semester. *Email is for communicating something private to your professor. For anything requiring more discussion (e.g. asking about whether a topic will work for an assignment, requesting clarification on an idea discussed in lectures or readings, etc.) please check in with the professor (or your TA, around major assignment deadlines) during office hours on Zoom or via the Discussion forum. Please use the Discussion forum in MyCourses to ask questions of your professor (remember questions posted there will be viewable to other students). If you ever have to email your prof or TA for a private reason, please put “COMS 310” in the subject line.

Hey Girl
I would love to blow up the patriarchal dialectic that traps us in a constant struggle for dominant subject-hood
But I think you should do the honors
Course Description: Feminist Media Studies examines contemporary scholarship and writing in feminist studies of digital culture and new media in dialogue with debates about whiteness, intersectionality, the politics of representation, consent, gendered and racialized labour, personal autonomy, and other key issues in feminist theory and media studies. Authors we will be reading examine new and emerging contours of feminist thinking, doing, and debating in the context of changing media environments. Most of our course material will focus on digital culture, social media, and critical race feminisms. We will pay close attention to how current feminisms are being practiced using the tools and infrastructures of social media, mobile phones, apps, and online platforms. We will also analyze the contemporary terrain of online and offline oppressions and the feminist tools people use to fight back against them. This means that our course approaches media not simply as “pictures in the world” (e.g. representations of [fill in the blank] ...), but as systems, tools, technologies, infrastructures, codes, platforms, social practices and genres of communication. We will approach feminism as sets of ideas and forms of analysis, but also as movements and forms of activism. While the course and the professor do not espouse a particular feminist politics, part of our task is to openly, and vigorously, discuss feminist thinking, feminist research, and feminist movements in their relation to a range of intersectional, socially differentiated relations of power. If you take this course, you need to be up for this kind of engagement.

Course Readings: Except where noted as “for further reading” or “recommended,” all readings for the course are required. All readings are available on the course website, either in pdf, or via a link to the web. For articles published in open-access online journals, the link to these articles is provided in the schedule of readings included with this syllabus, and in the weekly units of content posted on MyCourses. To enable the proper citation of readings in essays and reports written for the course, the reading schedule below contains full bibliographic information.

Learning Outcomes: By taking this course, students will learn to:

- Explain and comprehend key concepts in feminist media studies
- Apply feminist concepts to interpret contemporary examples of popular media and feminism
- Develop critical reading skills to assess major texts and ideas in the field
- Formulate questions to foster discussion and engage with course materials
- Develop effective writing strategies for constructing strong analytic essays
- Work collaboratively to problem solve

Weekly Schedule for COMS 310: The following schedule demonstrates the work we will do in and for COMS 310 by day of the week.

Sundays by 5pm: Students post questions to MyCourses discussion forum on the reading and/or lecture (from prior Wednesday).
Mondays 1:05-2:25pm: Live optional Zoom session for discussion and Q&A on course readings and lectures (from prior Wednesday lecture drop and reading). Zoom link in MyCourses.
**Tuesday (24 hours, starting at 12:00am):** Weekly quiz on prior week’s reading(s). Students will have a 24-hour window in which to complete the quiz. The quiz will be timed for 30 minutes (it should take less time to complete it).

**Wednesdays:** Prof. Rentschler’s weekly recorded lecture will drop in MyCourses by 1pm.

**Wednesdays 1:05-2:25pm:** Prof. Rentschler’s Zoom office hours. Zoom link in MyCourses.

**Fridays:** Fridays are when writing assignments are due. Check the calendar and assignments tab in MyCourses for exact dates.

**Remote Teaching Plan** – A remote teaching plan is available in MyCourses. The plan explains how this course has been organized to be delivered remotely, in MyCourses and in Zoom. Students will engage in this course through a variety of synchronous and asynchronous means. For those students taking the course completely asynchronously, alternative forms of engagement have been established to enable your ability to fully participate in the course. If Prof. Rentschler can make the course more accessible for you, please let her know.

**Assignments**

The following explains the course assignments for the term. In addition to required course readings and participation in the class discussion forum, they constitute the whole of required work for the course. However, in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. Students who require special assignment accommodations should notify the professor as soon as possible, well before any of the set deadlines.

**Discussion Questions [10%]:** Students will post a question on the reading or lecture to the MyCourses Discussion forum each week. Prof. Rentschler will answer a selection of them via audio recording that will be posted on Mondays by 1pm; our TA will make a selection of representative questions for Prof. Rentschler to answer. During our optional live Zoom Sessions on Mondays (from 1:05-2:25pm), Prof. Rentschler will answer any additional questions students have and lead a discussion of the readings and lecture from the prior Wednesday. Students are required to post a question each week and will receive credit for doing so. Questions will be graded as “1” or “0”. A grade of “1” signals that the question has been submitted and is appropriate to the assignment. A grade of “0” will be given for non-submission of questions or for questions that are not appropriate to the assignment. This assignment represents a base line form of student engagement with the course readings and lecture materials. **Questions must be posted by Sundays at 5pm** in the Discussion forum in MyCourses for the reading and lecture being discussed (from the prior Wednesday).

**Short-Answer Quizzes [20%]:** Every Tuesday, students will be quizzed about that week’s course readings and/or lecture material to demonstrate their knowledge of the material and their comprehension of its content. Quizzes will be written short answer and they will be administered using the quiz tool in MyCourses. **Quizzes can be completed within a 24-hour window starting Tuesdays at 12:00am Eastern time zone** (quizzes will close at midnight on Tuesday). Once the quiz is started, students have 30 minutes to finish writing their short answer before the quiz ends. Quizzes will be graded according to the following scale: 100% (answered the question and/or completed the assignment correctly), 50% (did the reading and is familiar with the content related to the writing assignment, but provided an answer that demonstrates a lack of comprehension), 10% (you submitted the quiz), 0% (you did not submit the quiz).
Answers that appear to be copied and pasted from others will receive no credit and will be reported under the academic dishonesty policy. **Note:** students’ two lowest quiz scores will be dropped from the final grade calculation.

**Two Media Reports [10%]:** Part of the learning we do in our course involves bringing what we encounter in and through media to bear on our discussions and collective discovery in the course. With this in mind, students will **write 2 short reports over the term** on media practices relevant to the course and course materials. Media reports must state their direct relevance to the course through direct use and citation of a course concept.

Media reports are **brief, 2-page, double-spaced, 12-pt font essays** that describe a media artifact, practice or event that is occurring. You can choose any relevant media example to report on from the year 2020 (nothing earlier will be accepted). The report must provide the following:

1) a clear **description of what the media practice or event or artifact is** and 2) an **interpretation of what it means or does** using a concept from the course.

The media object or practice on which you report must directly relate to the course in a clear and demonstrable way. Each report will count for 5% of your semester grade and will be graded pass/fail. You will submit your reports via MyCourses and will receive short comments in return in MyCourses.

The first media report is due by: **Friday October 2**
The second report is due by: **Friday November 13**

Your TA and Prof. Rentschler will announce current media examples that they are aware of that might be of interest to students in the course, but students can also identify things to write about on their own (in fact, we encourage you to) that are relevant to the topic and subject matter. Things to consider writing about: a hashtag, a media event, an exhibition of media works, an online phenomenon, a YouTube show or episode, a current TV program, a meme, a Twitter thread, a comment section, etc. Each report must address a different media artifact/practice/event (you cannot write about the same thing more than once in your media reports). Your TA and Prof. Rentschler may bring examples from students’ media reports into lectures and class discussion. Students may also use topics that they have written about in their media reports for the graded essay assignments. *Only one media report per essay assignment can be used like this.*

**Two Feminist Media Studies Analytic Essays [worth 30% each of your final grade, for a total of 60%]:** Students will write two 5-6 paged double-spaced essays over the course of the semester that draw on the concepts we use in the course to critically analyze a current media example. The media example must date from January 2020 to the present. Students must write about different media examples for the two essays (the same media example cannot be used in two different graded essays). You must make an argument. Include a copy/image of the media example with your essay. More details on the assignment will be posted in MyCourses prior to the deadline. Prof. Rentschler will also share advice on writing in MyCourses.

The first essay must identify and use **two concepts** that we have read and discussed up to October 16th in the course. This includes, for instance, intersectionality, consciousness raising, the personal is political, strategies of feminist media critique, content notes/trigger warnings, or
other concepts that have been addressed directly by our lectures and readings up to the due date. Essays are required to directly, and substantially, reference two sources from our course readings. For essay #1, this means readings assigned from the start of the course to October 16.

First Essay Due Date: Friday October 16 by 5pm in MyCourses.

The second essay must identify and use two concepts that we have read and discussed between October 16th and December 12th in the course. This includes, for instance, the feminist politics of representation, visibility politics, misogynoir, “eating the other,” gender scripts, the politics of platforms, the walkthrough method, online grabs, consent, selfies, and feminist technologies of the self, among others. Essays are required to directly, and substantially, reference two sources from our course readings. For essay #2, this means readings assigned between October 16 and the end of the course. Second Essay Due Date: Friday December 11 by 5pm in MyCourses.

Grading

As a student at McGill, you have the right to turn in work that is written in French. All lectures, class discussions, examinations and most of the in-class viewings will be conducted in English. Your final grade for the semester will be based on the strength, quality and clarity of thought you demonstrate in your in-class writing, reports, and other assignments and the demonstration that you fully comprehend the course materials and concepts.

How to Interpret Grades in this Course: Prof. Rentschler and your T.A. are eager to help you do well on assignments before they are due. Please visit your professor during her online office hours to ask questions about material for the course and assignments on which you are working. Your TA will also hold office hours around assignment deadlines for this purpose as well.

Grades are assigned based on the scale set out in the Arts and Sciences calendar. Grades in the “A” range are awarded only for superior work (and not merely sufficient performance). Grades in the “B” range are awarded for work that is above satisfactory. In the “C” range they are awarded for satisfactory/sufficient work. And in the “D” range, they signal unsatisfactory work.

Final grades will be based on the McGill University scale, reproduced here:

- 85-100% = A
- 80-84% = A-
- 75-79% = B+
- 70-74% = B
- 65-69% = B-
- 60-64% = C+
- 55-59% = C
- 50-54% = D (Conditional Pass)
- 0-49% = F (Fail)

Grades are never given out over email or phone. Students can check their grades via the gradebook in the course website on MyCourses.

Grade Appeals: All assignments are graded on performance, not effort. Grades are final, except where a mistake has been made in calculation. The only circumstances under which the professor would change a grade are: (a) if an error has been made at the level of calculation, or
(b) if you have not been held to the same standard as everyone else. If you seek clarification on a grade you have received, you should visit your professor during her online office hours, keeping in mind the criteria of evaluation on which your assignment was graded. The professor will neither defend nor contest the T.A.’s or a grader’s evaluation; she will instead discuss ways in which you can understand the evaluation and improve upon your performance.

In the event that you feel you received an undeserved grade and wish to dispute it, you must make your case in writing within one week (7 days) of receiving the grade. The case in writing must detail the grounds on which you are making an appeal, accompanied by the original assignment (keep a copy for yourself). Grade complaints will not be considered after the 7-day deadline, or if they are not made in writing. If the professor agrees to review your assignment and re-evaluate its grade, keep in mind that your grade could remain the same, be elevated, or be reduced.

**Extensions:** Other than unannounced in-class assignments, all other assignments are announced well in advance of their due dates. This provides students with ample time to prepare and complete them.

**Illness, Mental Health, and other Barriers:** If you are having difficulty and are unable to make an assignment deadline, contact the professor. All weekly lectures are posted online and can be completed there. Online Zoom sessions are encouraged, but not mandatory. Class assignments are announced in advance. Quizzes can be completed within a 24-hour window. If you should need assistance, Counseling Services provides personal, academic, and career counseling to undergraduate and graduate students. They also offer workshops on study skills, multiple choice exams, test anxiety/stress management. Students can also visit the Wellness Hub for more information: 514-398-6017 [https://www.mcgill.ca/wellness-hub/](https://www.mcgill.ca/wellness-hub/) For other resources available to students, see the section on Expectations, Resources and Other Business.

**Late Assignments:** COMS 310 has been designed to accommodate students as best as possible. That said, your professor and TA will evaluate and grade assignments according to the schedule that has been established. Assignments turned in late will be subject to penalty. Late papers and assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day they are late, which includes weekends (e.g., a three-day late A paper becomes a B paper). Papers will be considered a day late if they are turned in at any time after the due date deadline.

**Expectations, Resources and Other Business**

Failure to follow the letter and spirit of university regulations and regulations for this course can result in the reduction of your final grade, failure of the course, and/or other penalties set by University policy.

**Course Website:** A course website has been established on McGill’s MyCourses web portal for course readings, lectures, handouts (where needed, e.g. for assignments), the syllabus, the remote teaching plan, grading grids (which are used in the evaluation of student essays), and periodic announcements. Lectures will be posted in MyCourses on a weekly basis on
Wednesdays. Please note: lectures will not be delivered live on Zoom. On Mondays Prof. Rentschler will hold an optional live Zoom Q&A session that is encouraged but not mandatory. You should regularly check the course website for updates and announcements on the course and new materials that have been posted. Please make use of the Discussion Forums to ask questions (that are not meant to be private) of your professor regarding the course. To use the course website, login via your McGill account at: https://mycourses2.mcgill.ca/

Technical Difficulties: Your professor and TA will not be able to troubleshoot your computer, mobile, or internet connection. If there are systemic problems with MyCourses or Zoom (this is a real probability), please do let us know. We will deal with them in a way that does not penalize students for issues beyond their control. If you have an IT issue, please contact McGill IT support https://www.mcgill.ca/it/. Your professor expects that there may very well be glitches with the technologies we use for the course, and we will, as they say, “roll with it.”

Language: The language of instruction in our course will be English. However, you can submit your work in French, if you prefer. In discussions, Francophone students are welcome to use the French word if they can’t think of the English word and we can work to help each other out across our linguistic differences. If French-speaking students would like to be grouped with other French-speaking students for breakout room discussions in Zoom, your professor will try to make that happen. Please let her know if you’d like to try this.

Accommodations: COMS 310 has been designed for remote delivery with student accessibility in mind. Lectures will include audio recordings that will accompany lecture slides. After being posted in MyCourses, the audio recordings will be turned into captions that can be read with the slides (this is the hope at least: Prof. Rentschler is trying to make this a reality). Any Zoom recordings posted in MyCourses will also be automatically captioned. Your professor regularly uses image descriptions to textually describe what is depicted in visuals used to illustrate points in the course. If this is particularly helpful to you, please let her know!

If you require other accommodations for your assignments or your access to the remote delivery of this course, please notify your professor and the Office for Students with Disabilities by the end of the first week of class, ideally. The Office for Students with Disabilities is located in Suite 410 (4th floor) at 1010 Sherbrooke Street West (for more information, go to http://www.mcgill.ca/osd). To get in touch with the Office for Students with Disabilities, you can call (514) 398-6009, (514) 398-8198 (TDD) or email disabilities.students@mcgill.ca to speak with an adviser there. Please note the above commitment to accommodation applies equally to survivors of sexual assault and/or harassment on or off campus. For information about accommodations available to those students who have experienced sexual violence, please see the SSMU website for more information (https://ssmu.ca/resources/sexual-violence/). Your professor is committed to making this course as accessible as possible.

Sexual Assault Survivor Support and Allyship: Should you or someone you know need support as a survivor of sexual assault, harassment and/or discrimination on campus, please contact McGill’s Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca, situated in the new Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support
and Education (located at 550 Sherbrooke, suite 585) for assistance. They also, normally, offer drop-in hours during the school year (the schedule is online). For more information on their office, sexual violence support and reporting options visit: www.mcgill.ca/saap. The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student’s Society (SACOMSS) offers peer counseling and support to students who have experienced sexual violence and their allies, as well as outreach and education. You can find out more about them at http://www.sacomss.org/wp/. Their hotline number is: (514) 398-8500 and they normally offer drop-in hours as well (the schedule for which is online). The SSMU website also contains additional information on a number of resources available to survivors (https://ssmu.ca/resources/sexual-violence/).

Other Key Resources: The Writing Centre offers individual consultation on all aspects of writing. Appointments are required. We highly recommend this university resource if you want to work on your writing. 514-398-7109, https://www.mcgill.ca/mwc/. Queer McGill provides social, political, and informational support for queer students by queer students. 514-398-6913 and https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/queer-mcgill. First People’s House provides a “home away from home” for Indigenous students, promoting academic success as well as community connection. 514-398-3217 and https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/. The Black Students’ Network provides support for black students, and also works to raise awareness at McGill of issues that Black individuals face; they also work to make the campus safer and more accessible for black students. Find them online at: https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/black-students-network. Additionally, the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life is available as a nondenominational religious and spiritual hub on campus. https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/mcgill-office-religious-and-spiritual-life-morsl

Expectations for How We Interact: COMS 310 is designed to be a space in which we can grow as scholars, critics, writers, analysts, and for some, advocates. In this space, we are able to try out ideas, even if we might abandon them later. In this course, one of our goals is to give ourselves and other people the space to transform their thinking and change their minds. We will not seek a purity of ideas nor should we expect others’ ideas to be “pure.” Our thoughts and beliefs are contingent, often contradictory, mutable and subject to change, partial, and sometimes uncertain. In the midst of all of this, clarity in what we say and write is especially valuable. Respectful dialogue is expected of everyone. And while disagreements are expected, they should not shut down dialogue. Learning is a process: we make mistakes; we change our minds; we sometimes even regret some things we’ve said earlier. Our aim is to work together to learn and un-learn some of the things we take for granted, and to sharpen our analytic skills in the process.

To this end, please grant your fellow course participants courtesy and respect, whether you agree with what they say or not. Let’s avoid attacking someone’s character or personhood if you disagree with something they have said: what someone thinks or says is not reducible to who and where they are. Our goal in using the discussion forum and talking in small groups is to understand the texts we read, the concepts we use, and the media examples we encounter, and how they might be useful to us. As much as possible, let’s work to avoid purely negative critique in comments and responses. Let’s also extend the same consideration to classmates. Consider
what other people say in their comments and discussion forum posts and think about how you can build on them and respond as generously as possible.

While you each bring interesting experiences to the course, you should consider whether you really want to bring them up in discussion. If you do bring up your own experience, recognize that it becomes a topic for discussion. Ask yourself what point you want to make by talking about yourself. Do you want others to know this about you? You also do not have to express your own opinion on a subject. You are also free to change your mind on any topic at any time.

**Nondiscrimination Statement:** As a professor and teaching assistant at McGill University, we value equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial, ethnic, sexual, physical, and cultural diversity. Be assured that we work to promote a safe and conducive environment for learning. In accordance with University policy, we will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, civil status, familial status, sexual orientation, or disability. In addition to the University’s policy, and within the bounds of the course, we do not discriminate on the basis of political creed. This means that you do not have to agree with us in order to do well in this course. So long as you demonstrate an understanding of the course material and an ability to work with it analytically, you are under no obligation to agree with it. We will also make every effort to avoid discrimination on the basis of class or income. If there is something we can do to make the class more accessible and hospitable, please let us know.

**Academic Integrity:** We take academic integrity very seriously, as does the university. Failure to follow procedures and direct requests from your professor or T.A. during an assignment can result in immediate failure of the assignment. Presenting someone else’s work as your own is plagiarism (academic dishonesty). All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

**Semester Schedule of Course Readings**

*This schedule of readings is subject to change.*

The organization of the course is meant to create a semester-long conversation that makes connections between ideas and the practices of cross-citation and dialogue across texts in contemporary feminist media studies. The schedule is organized thematically around key practices of feminist doing and thinking around media, starting with teaching and learning media studies as a feminist practice. The readings that have been selected and their order in the course is meant to enable us as readers and discussants to thread together concepts, feminist approaches and feminist epistemological genealogies in the field, while providing us with useful concepts and analytic frameworks to analyze a range of (primarily) digital media practices.
Let’s Begin

*This first section of the course introduces our approach to the study of media and feminism, and some of the feminist principles and working assumptions that will support and guide our participation in the course.

**Wednesday September 2 Lecture Drop: Doing Feminist Media Studies**  
(In MyCourses AND brief Zoom session)

*Content Note:* Welcome to COMS 310! In today’s lecture, we’ll come up with some working definitions of feminism, introduce the field of inquiry in feminist media studies, and review and discuss the plan for this semester’s course.

**Monday September 7: LABOR DAY (No Class)**  
*Because we do not have class this day, Prof. Rentschler will respond to questions students have on the syllabus and on the first lecture (dropped Sept 2) in the discussion forum in MyCourses!*

**Wednesday September 9 Lecture Drop: Feminism as Practices of Feeling and Analysis**  
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

*Content Note:* This lecture will cover and extrapolate from a chapter we are reading in Sara Ahmed’s 2017 book *Living a Feminist Life*. The chapter “Feminism is Sensational” discusses the processes through which we develop a feminist analytic based in our own experiences and the structures of feeling and power in which we examine and analyze them. Whether you are new to feminist thinking or not, this chapter will hopefully open up some productive avenues for thinking about how you analyze things from feminist perspectives, in ways you will find useful over the term. Note: Ahmed briefly discusses some experiences of non-consensual touch, exposure, and harassment in the chapter.


**Monday September 14: Zoom Session to discuss Wednesday lecture on COMS 310**  
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

**Tuesday September 15: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (1st quiz)**

**Wednesday September 16 Lecture Drop: Content Notes and the Politics of Learning**  
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)
Content Note: The readings for this lecture discuss ways of approaching the different challenges we bring to our course work and lives based on our experiences and social positions. They also help us think about what it is we search for and want in our media use and form the basis for the use of content notes in the course. Gay and Lothian help us think about this through the perspective of survivors of violence and the targets of gender, sexual and racial oppression, and what it means for how we study media, talk about media use, and what shared expectations we bring to our discussions and other work in the course. In addition to the Gay and Lothian readings, the lecture will also draw from some ideas in Angela Carter’s recommended reading.


For Further Reading (if interested; not required):

Monday September 21: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday September 22: 20-minute short-answer QUIZ in MyCourses (2nd quiz)

Wednesday September 23 Lecture Drop: Feminist Curiosity and the Pleasures of Critique
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: The readings for this lecture focus on what it means, and is, to do feminist critique, and how we can use these practices to analyze media examples in COMS 310. Rather than a negative practice, the texts we read by Cynthia Enloe and Janice Loreck suggest that feminist critique is based in curiosity, pleasure and exploration.


Monday September 28: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
Tuesday September 29: 20-minute short-answer QUIZ in MyCourses (3rd quiz)

The Personal is Political – An Intersectional and Systemic Analytic in Digital Culture

*This section of the course focuses on a key feminist analytic: the personal is political and the intersectional framing and practice of this analytic in the context of digital culture.

Wednesday September 30 Lecture Drop: The Personal is Political
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: The readings for this lecture provide key feminist frameworks for understanding how political and social structures shape personal lives and individual experience, helping us to connect, analytically, the scale of personal experience to structures of power at the institutional level. Give yourself time to do the 3 required readings for this lecture.


For Further Reading (if you are interested; not required):

*Friday October 2: Media Report #1 Due, 5pm My Courses*
Monday October 5: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday October 6: 20-minute short-answer QUIZ in MyCourses (4th quiz)

Wednesday October 7 Lecture Drop: Intersectional Feminism on Social Media
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: Today’s readings and lecture help us conceptualize and engage black feminist frameworks for conducting feminist intersectional analysis of social media (and other media practices), with a particular focus on intersectionality as a feminist analytic, and the politics community building and consciousness raising online. Give yourself some time with the Cooper reading, which is a conceptually and analytically rich piece that looks at a range of feminist debates on what intersectionality is and means, and how it can be used as an analytic framework. Jackson, Bailey and Welles deploy intersectional analysis in their study of the trans women of colour hashtag #GirlsLikeUs. The video by Franchesca Leigh and Laci Green offers a useful, accessible, and entertaining introduction to what intersectionality is. I will post Kimberlé Crenshaw’s Ted Talk video to MyCourses for student viewing: it represents the significance of addressing intersectionality in the context of contemporary police violence against racialized folks. Please note: the end of the video shows recordings of police violence against racialized women; if you do not wish to view this violence, stop the video early.


https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality

For Additional Reading (not required):

Monday October 12: Canadian Thanksgiving (no Zoom session)
(Prof. Rentschler will still post answers to student questions on MyCourses)
Tuesday October 13: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (5th quiz)

Wednesday October 14 Lecture Drop: The Feminist Politics of Representation

Content Note: Linda Alcoff’s classic essay in feminist theory examines the relations of power that shape the act of speaking on behalf of, and representing, others. Alcoff lays out the problem of speaking for others and suggests ways in which the harms feminists (and others!) do to others can be reduced in relationship to acts of representation and their rituals of speaking. This is a substantial philosophy essay: give yourself time to read it. Additionally, we’ll be discussing a piece by Rebecca Solnit that inspired the term “mansplaining” to explicate the systems of gendered power through which the knowledge of female-identified folks is undermined and deemed to be not believable. Solnit links mansplaining to structures of gendered oppression, including sexualized violence. As she argues, “Credibility is a basic survival tool.”


For Further Reading (not required):

*Friday October 16: ESSAY #1 DUE*

Monday October 19: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday October 20: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (6th quiz)

Wednesday October 21 Lecture Drop: The Politics of Trans* Visibility in Systems of Surveillance
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)
Content Note: The reading by Mia Fischer examines the dangers that trans people face as a result of the ways they are made visible in the context of US surveillance systems. Fischer sets these dangers against the 2014 mainstream media celebration of a “transgender tipping point” around Caitlyn Jenner’s coming out, the increasing visibility of trans women YouTube personalities, and the hit TV show Orange is the New Black, among other markers of trans women’s visibility. Fischer argues that a backlash against trans people’s rights has coincided with this visibility, and she helps us think about the very real limits to visibility as the main way to achieve social change in increasingly surveillant systems of control and punishment.


Monday October 26: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday October 27: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (7th quiz)

Wednesday October 28 Lecture Drop: Black Beauty, Misogynoir and Digital Culture
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: The reading by Janell Hobson discusses how hashtags and Instagram create crucial spaces of self-representation for black women as a response to misogynoir (anti-black misogyny), a key concept coined by Moya Bailey and Trudy (founder of the blog Gradient Lair). The lecture will draw from these texts as well as bell hooks’ key essays “Eating the Other” and “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination” in order to examine how Black women organize to speak back against anti-black misogyny.


Recommended/For Further Reading (not required):
Monday November 2: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture  
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday November 3: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (8th quiz)

Feminist Interventions into Online Environments

*This section of the course focuses on feminist strategies and tools for intervening into systems of power online.

Wednesday November 4 Lecture Drop: Our Platforms Reinforce Gender Binaries  
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: There are two readings for our lecture this week. The reading by Anna Friz and Robert Gehl argues for the need to study sign-up interfaces on social media platforms as key sites in which normative gender scripts of inequality are encoded, and enacted. Using the case of Pinterest’s sign-up screen, they examine the ways in which Pinterest genders users along the lines of traditional white middle-class norms of femininity. Rena Bivens’ article analyzes how the change in Facebook’s gender identification of users reinforces strong gender binaries in its background code (which it then uses for advertising purposes).


For Additional Reading (if interested; not required):

Monday November 9: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture  
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday November 10: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (9th quiz)

Wednesday November 11 Lecture Drop: Race, Gender, Sexuality and Apps  
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)
Content Note: The readings for the lecture today present a method for studying the ways apps codify gender, race and sexuality into the design, and experience, of using apps, with a particular focus on dating and hook up sites. Prof. Rentschler will draw from the recommended reading by Light, Burgess and Duguay, who articulate in detail the walkthrough method for studying apps.


For further reading (not required):


*Friday November 13: Media Report #2 Due, 5pm in MyCourses*

*Monday November 16: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture*
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

*Tuesday November 17: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (10th quiz)*

*Wednesday November 18 Lecture Drop: Sexual Autonomy and Media Consent*
(in MyCourses; no Zoom session today)

Content Note: Amy Hasinoff and Tamara Shepherd’s article examines sexting as a key form of self-expression and discusses the ways in which ideas, advice, policy and laws about sexting demonizes girls and female sexuality in particular. They interview teenagers about the expectations of privacy in relationship to their sharing of sexual images, and the harms that non-consensual distribution does to them. Terri Senft’s book chapter examines the phenomenon of live web camgirls from the early 2000s and the politics of non-consensually “grabbing” their online material, conceptualizing for us the notion of the “online grab.” Give yourself time to read both required readings.


For Further Reading (not required):

“Safer Nudes: A Sexy Guide to Digital Security” by CodingRights.org (Brazil).

boyd, danah (2012). “Super Publics”
http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2006/03/22/super_publics.html


Monday November 23: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

Tuesday November 24: 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (11th quiz)

Wednesday November 25 Lecture Drop: Selfies and Feminism

Content Note: This week’s readings and lecture turn our critical attention to some feminist uses of selfies. Seidman’s article historicizes the feminist meme “Who Needs Feminism?,” revealing how her students deployed selfies in their activist messaging, and how the campaign developed as a template for others to use. Hall’s reading provides a critical analytic for understanding how the use of cue cards in so much social media reporting and testimonial function as a “technology of the self,” drawing on modes of self-writing and confessional discourse that have become hallmarks of social media posting and, more broadly, activist documentation.


For Further Reading:
Aria Dean (2016). “Closing the Loop” The New Inquiry, March 1. Available at: https://thenewinquiry.com/closing-the-loop/ (on whiteness and selfie feminism)

**Monday November 30: Zoom Session to discuss last Wednesday lecture**
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

**Tuesday November 31: final 20-minute short answer QUIZ in MyCourses (12th quiz)**

**Wednesday December 2: Lecture and Advice on Writing the Final Essay**
(1:05pm-2:25pm; link in MyCourses)

**Thursday December 3rd (is a “Monday” this term): Meet in Zoom to talk about Essay #2**

*Friday December 11: Essay #2 DUE, 5pm My Courses*