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The Selfie Course: More than a MOOC

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For those of us who teach with, over, or about the Internet, technological development will always move faster than educational theory. This is a truism, but sometimes we forget, usually when our students thank us for showing them how to edit Wikipedia entries. Yet for every successful assignment we've launched involving cross-blogging commentary in the name of "digital literacy," how many of us can say we know how to think through the ramifications, say, of a private Snapchat comment referencing a Tumblr page that features remixed images of oneself and a schoolmate, some of which can be viewed by the public, all of which is data mined and sold to advertisers?

In moments like these, many of us feel like students ourselves, searching for critical and ethical frames robust enough to handle all the moving parts of the case in question. Sometimes (especially if we have trained in visual studies) we respond by trying to "freeze" particular images and lines of text, extracting them from the networks and contexts from which they began, thereby ignoring every tenet of deconstruction learned in graduate school. Our students, sensing that we aren't quite getting the whole picture, rightly resist this urge, instinctively knowing that when you can't go under it, and you can't go over it, you have to go through it.

In the pages that follow, we discuss the conception, production, deployment and user-testing of "The Selfies Course": a distributed, online, collaborative course (DOCC) designed to help students and teachers "go through it": that is, critically assess social media moments together. The Selfies course emerged from the Selfies Research Network, a Facebook-based discussion and research group established by Theresa Senft (New York University) in February 2014. This informally-convened group rapidly expanded from a small number of scholars to a global network of academics, students and others interested in understanding the phenomenon of selfies. Within three weeks the Facebook group had 200 members (it now has 2500), and provided an

active forum for serious debate about selfies. This allowed for discussions that included established scholars familiar with each other's work, as well as remaining inclusive to students and newcomers. It soon became clear that many of the participants were interested in using selfies in teaching, and discussions turned towards how selfies might be integrated into university and college classes on digital culture, communications, ethnography, gender studies, cultural studies or visual studies.

A subgroup of the larger Selfies Research Network formed a smaller Facebook group (about 70 people) to discuss further this idea of how selfies might be used pedagogically. Twelve members, a mix of junior and senior faculty and graduate students, volunteered to co-write a course about selfies which they could teach in various capacities in their local institutions, while making the content fully available online. We decided that discussing this course, and teaching with selfies in general, could be a compelling workshop at the annual Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) conference, which many members attend (many of us also share the more general belief that pedagogy should be better integrated into academic conferences). We proposed the workshop, which was accepted. Now the real work began.

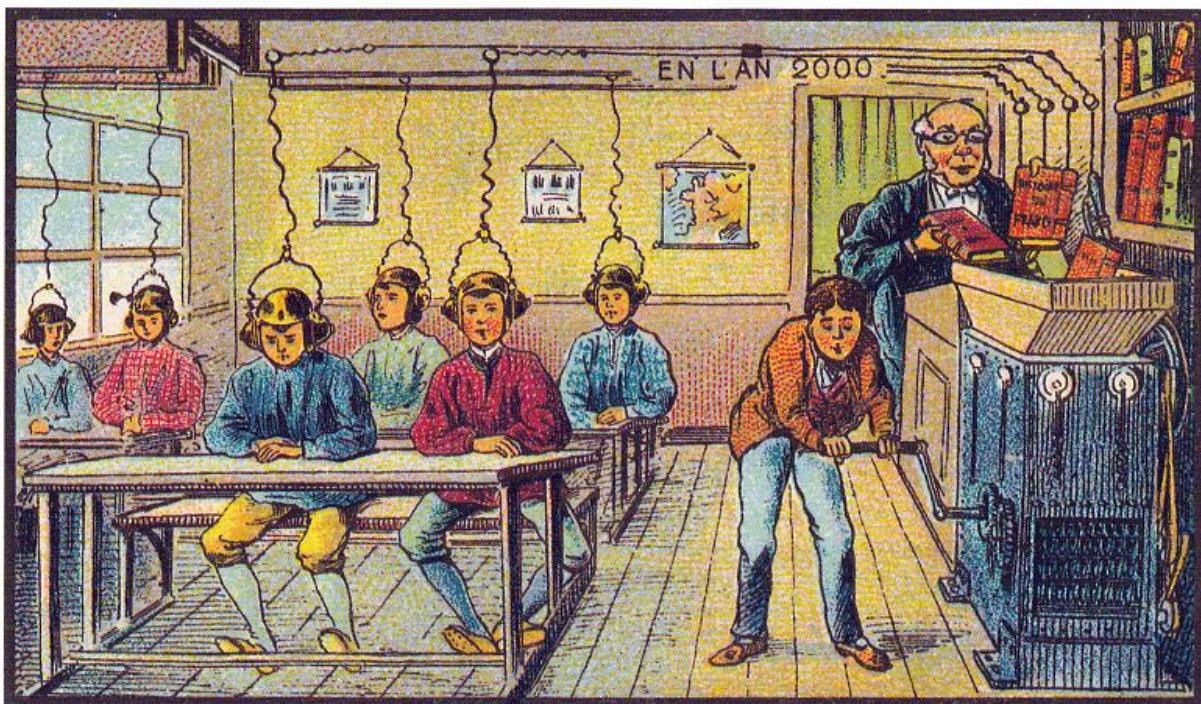
The Trouble with MOOCs

From the onset, all the members of our pedagogy group had voiced frustrations regarding limitations of Massively Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. To many of us familiar with technology “bubbles,” the revolutionary rhetoric with which MOOCs were embraced—particularly by journalists reporting on them, and commercial operators seeking to monetize them—had a tone not dissimilar to early evangelizing of Web 2.0 platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Marwick, 2013). Certainly, those unaware could easily be left concluding that the very concept of online higher education emerged fully formed in 2012, the year advocates like Clay Shirky (2012) began warning that online courses would radically disrupt higher education models, just as the mp3 format and online distribution had upset the music industry (Kent & Leaver, 2014; Leaver & Kent, 2014).

Yet even as educational administrators were swallowing what in retrospect seems a bit like technological bait, classroom educators were questioning the revolutionary claims of MOOC advocates. For a model with the word “open” in its acronym, they pointed out, the standard MOOC seemed awfully closed with regard to both their teaching delivery (usually centralized out of one university) and their restrictive content licensing agreements. In addition, they raised the concern that providers appeared to be treating their courses as petri dishes, monitoring and mining students for data, glossing (and sometimes ignoring) issues of consent or even disclosure. (Marshall, 2014). Rather than open, MOOCs are better thought of as accessible in that they can be viewed and responded to mostly without a fee. A truly open model would include educators

from more than one locale, encourage reuse and remixing of contents as students and teachers desired, and engage in clear and informed practices of data collection of students and their behaviours.

In addition to legal and ethical concerns, educators (especially those familiar with the history of distance learning prior to 2012) expressed worries that the pedagogical structure of most “revolutionary” MOOCs was actually quite retrograde. A detailed review (de Langen & van den Bosch, 2013) argued that on the whole, MOOCs tend to replicate the “sage on the stage model” of lecture and lecturer driven content delivery, providing relatively minimal opportunity for engagement with students. Certainly, the vast majority of MOOC courses seemed to have been constructed without reference to the extensive pedagogical literature already existing in the field. The problem of delivery was exacerbated by the supposedly massive scale of MOOCs, as well as standard course offerings, which one researcher likened to the super-sized offerings of junk food franchises (Baggaley, 2014).



At School

Figure 1. This French postcard from the first decade of the 20th century imagines the schools of our time, a century later, in a manner that is eerily similar to the pedagogy of many MOOCs. The illustration is by Jean-Marc Coté or Villemard and is from a series of postcards titled France in the year 2000. [Image is in the public domain, see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:France_in_XXI_Century._School.jpg for more info and larger sizes.]

Within two years of their appearance, MOOCs have been declared largely a failure. As the figures now show, although there was massive enrollment in MOOCs early on, this enrollment rarely led to similar levels of sustained participation or completion (Pretz, 2014; Strauss, 2013; Yang, 2013). Yet just as we now understand the revolutionary “disruption” power of MOOCs was vastly overstated, so too should we understand their failure as a sign to stop the conversation. To the contrary: for us invested in distance education, the failure of MOOCs to deliver on their promise serves as a useful provocation to serve students in better ways than we are currently doing. It is also makes for a good opportunity to champion those elements of both older and newer models of distance learning that resemble the best of the MOOC concept (its existence online, its potential for scalability) while resisting the rest.

Taking the Best, Leaving the Rest

Many members of the Selfies Research Network Pedagogy Group have been circulating in online communities for some time now. We remember how the internet was used for learning in the 1990s and early 2000s, where emphasis was placed on developing shared platforms on which geographically situated teachers could bring groups of students together. MOOs were one of the popular technologies of the time, and were similar to the text-based multi-user games of the era but deliberately more open (Haynes & Holmevik, 2000; Haynes & Holmevik, 2001). Educational MOOs (an acronym standing for MUD, Object Oriented, which references MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) and the object-oriented nature of the programming of MOOs) provided teachers and students with spaces for learning that could be expanded and developed by the users themselves, rather than being centralised and run by a corporation or single institution as are today’s MOOCs.

The simplest way to use a MOO was as an advanced chat space, where a speaker could share a presentation, groups could have open or group-only discussions, and conversations could be recorded. At a more advanced level, rooms and objects could easily be programmed by teachers and students to respond in different ways, allowing learners to interact with interactive assignments and exercises in the MOO or to create their own complex worlds of words and images. The pedagogical underpinning of educational MOOs was learner-centric and based on dialogue, unlike the simpler transmission model that informs many MOOCs and that is illustrated in Figure 1. There was also an emphasis on students’ interactions with students from other cultures, especially in language learning MOOs which often employed tandem learning between students from different countries (von der Emde, Schneider & Kötter, 2001).

MOOs went out of vogue about the same time as blogs became huge, and several of us have also used blogs with students (Walker, 2005). Like MOOs, blogs can be used to allow students to interact with others beyond the classroom, and, also like MOOs, students can customise and

design their blogs as they like. This student ownership of the space for learning is something that is lacking in today's MOOCs.

One of the more interesting developments to occur in the last three years has been the development of a model that harkens back to the early days of MOOs. We are thinking here of the DOCC, or distributed online collaborative course. To some extent, a DOCC can be thought of as a "flipped" or inverted MOOC. In a MOOC, teachers from one institution broadcast corporately controlled content over an educational platform that "reaches out" to the rest of the world in a center/periphery fashion. In a DOCC, this dynamic is reversed: rather than centralized, teachers are distributed across institutions, networked globally through a shared educational platform through which they collaborate. Rather than closed via restrictive licensing, content is made freely available; teachers are both encouraged and shown how to modify material to fit the needs of their classes. Rather than reinstating the hierarchy of teachers in the West who speak without interruption to students in the Rest, DOCCs work to destabilize us/them dyads by providing tools by which to lay claim to knowledge of one's background, training and experience.

It may perhaps come as no surprise that the first DOCC was the brain-child of FemTechNet, an online collective of three hundred feminist university educators worldwide. In an interview, co-founder Alexandra Juhasz explains how FemTechNet began in 2012 with a question that was circulating among educators in Women's, Ethnic, and Queer Studies at the time: "How can we mobilize, network, archive and grow our actual institutional power, as well as our discrete intellectual traditions and politicized processes?" Co-founder Anne Balsamo adds:

Quite surprisingly, at about this time, we both individually received an email from Carol Stabile announcing the launch of Fembot and a new journal called Ada...From the beginning, we knew we were working on complementary efforts: Fembot and Ada focus on publication and public engagement, while FemTechNet focuses on pedagogy and archiving feminist histories. In the best spirit of collaboration, we joined forces, and began sharing resources and networks (Juhasz & Balsamo 2012).

By 2013, FemTechNet had rolled out their first course: "Dialogues in Feminism and Technology." Pedagogically, the creators conceptualized of their teaching material (texts, files, videos) not as artifacts to be frozen through licenses, but rather as what they called "boundary objects that learn" (BOTL). According to Balsamo, one of the parameters of a BOTL is that it be capable of being "modified by those who use the object[s] in specific learning situations." FemTechNet imagined the concept of "teacher" as likewise malleable, including but stretching far beyond full-time university professors. As Balsamo explains,

The teachers are those who agree to offer “independent studies,” “directed reading experiences,” or extra credit for those students who seek credit for participating in the DOCC. The teachers are those who sign on as “at-large” learners, who want to engage in the material offered as part of the course. The teachers are those who “drop in” as informal learners because they are interested in a particular topic on the course schedule (Juhasz & Balsamo 2012).

Introducing the Selfies Course

When we created the Selfies Course, we wanted to create something easily (and massively) scalable, fully available online (<http://www.selfieresearchers.com/the-selfie-course/>) in an open format for free, with a clear and accessible course structure. Although not all of us were familiar with the concept of the DOCC when we created The Selfie Course, our project has all the characteristics of one, and our politics certainly align with those of the pioneering efforts of FemTechNet (femtech.org). Although the “live” teaching period for the Selfie Course was September 8 to October 24, 2014 (with the final week overlapping the AoIR Pre-Conference), the materials themselves were intended to remain evergreen for those who wished to use them in the future. In addition to the course website and associated blog, the course included a dedicated, members-only Flickr site. The WordPress blog and Flickr site were established to facilitate sharing of images and discussion beyond the face-to-face interactions within individual classrooms.

In the pages that follow, we outline our production process in detail, focusing in particular on the collaborative nature of our course writing. We then note how our initial course played out in our local classrooms, as well as more broadly online. Next, we discuss the second phase of our project, in which we worked with teachers during a workshop run at the AoIR conference, where the course was discussed, analysed, tested, critiqued, and ultimately extended with six additional weeks of material. Throughout, we argue that in through our practices of pedagogical construction, our commitment to the distributed responsibility and ownership of our course (without fidelity to any one institution), and our commitment to open access and open redistribution, our DOCC helps fulfil the revolutionary promises of online education far more effectively than most offerings by the corporate start-ups.

Why Selfies?

What is a selfie? Most simply, a selfie is a digital self-portrait intended to be shared with a networked audience (Marwick, 2015; Senft & Baym, 2015). In their introduction to a special issue of the *International Journal of Communication* about selfies, Theresa Senft and Nancy Baym describe the selfie as an object (a photograph imbued with feeling), a practice (a gesture carrying

meaning, open for misunderstanding or signification), and a part of a larger assemblage of technologies through which user-generated content is shared, tracked, and monetized (p.1589). In the course materials, we defined “selfie” as:

any photograph an individual (or a group) takes of themselves, regardless of whether that photo is privately held (or is thought to be privately held), transferred to others, or is displayed via social networks like Facebook and Instagram (Senft et al, 2014).

Selfies are also an excellent “object to think with” as they are a recent entrant to a long line of maligned media artifacts primarily embraced by young people. Like comic books and video games before them, selfies elicit scorn in popular media as they continue to increase in popularity (Senft & Baym, 2015). Rather than engaging with the popular discourse of selfie-as-pathology, in which selfies are seen to represent a generational turn towards narcissism, vanity, or even mental illness, many members of the Selfie Researchers Network wanted to encourage critical examination of selfies, namely how selfies speak as cultural objects, and how we might we, as academics, develop better methods to understand and interpret them rather than as evidence of generational anxiety.

Given the popularity of selfies, and the familiarity with selfies on the part of most students, selfies provide an accessible “way in” for educators working with students on issues like information literacy and cultural sensitivity. As part of the internet’s “visual turn” (Rettberg, 2014, p. 3) students studying selfie production, consumption, deletion, circulation and abstention can also gain insights into social dynamics often at play on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, WeChat and Tumblr. And as contemporary cultural artifacts deeply imbricated in larger narratives of celebrity, commercialism, self-presentation, surveillance, identity, and normative practice, they serve as excellent jumping off points to examine some of the main themes, theories, and theorists in contemporary internet and cultural studies.

Constructing the Course

As teachers who are also internet researchers, we agree with those who have been critical of a ‘digital literacy’ movement that treats social media as little more than amalgamation of texts to be decoded. Like Burnett and Merchant (2011), we believe that a critical social media pedagogy needs to consider texts, but also practices, networks and identities. Roughly, we think of these categories as questions. What actions are performed? How are connections operating? Which bodies are coming to matter, how, and why? As educators, we have been influenced by the public pedagogy theories of Henry Giroux (2004); Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the “organic intellectual”

(Gramsci, 1992; Fishman, 2005; Sriastava, 2012; Tickle, 2001); and activist learning through embodiment as espoused by Paolo Freire (2005).

After discussions, we decided to present The Selfie Course as six themed units of study, running one week per unit. The units, designed to be used in sequence or not, in combinations or as stand-alone interventions in a class devoted to materials beyond selfies, were arranged as follows:

- Week One: Identity and Interpellation
- Week Two: Celebrity and Branding
- Week Three: Dataveillance, Biometrics and Facial Recognition
- Week Four: Gender, Sexuality and Dating
- Week Five: The Subaltern, Criminal and “Others”
- Week Six: Place, Space and “Appropriate” Selfies

For each unit, we stated our teaching objectives, provided required and optional reading materials, noted critical vocabulary, linked to social media-related case studies, developed image production/curation assignments, and provided questions to fuel essays. Throughout the formal six-week period of the ‘live’ course, unit instructors also posted to the blog, reflecting on the course activities, their experiences of teaching with selfies, and their subjective experiences of self-presentation in online spaces. For example, Theresa Senft’s post on ‘pelfies’ (or pet selfies) both offered an example of a popular selfie genre, and explored the classed and raced contexts of North American pet ownership. Crystal Abidin posted an array of celebrity selfies from Singaporean lifestyle bloggers, collected as part of her ethnographic fieldwork, and Magdalena Olszanowski posted a semiotic reading of a naked (but completely non-explicit) selfie which framed it simultaneously as both ‘art’ and ‘dating profile picture.’

Designing with Openness, Collaboration, Care

The Selfie Course utilises a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which specifies that others can use, build upon and remix the Selfie Course to fit their needs as long as they acknowledge the original source of the material, and to not seek to commercialise the content (Lessig 2005, 2008). Also, where possible, the additional tools recommended for use in the Selfie Course were consistent with this approach, including Flickr, which was one of the first content-sharing platforms to explicitly integrate Creative Commons licensing options for all content uploaded, and WordPress, which easily integrates Creative Commons licenses into pages and posts via widgets. Hosting all the Selfie Course content online, and using a Creative Commons license for both the course as a whole and its individual elements is far more explicitly open than many existing MOOCs.

Principles and practices of collaboration were deployed by the designers of the Selfie Course from the earliest stages of development. Social technologies were fundamental to the creation of the course, given both the distributed nature of the group's members and the absence of funding for the project. During the summer of 2014, the twelve members met periodically over Skype (often at odd times to accommodate the wide range of member time zones) to discuss first the structure of the course, then division of labour, and finally to review each other's work, which was shared using Google Docs. The class was initially organized into six week-long modules, with teams of two responsible for each week: identity; celebrity and branding; digital surveillance and biometrics; gender and sexuality; subalternity and otherness; and space, place and location specificities. These topic areas were picked primarily based on member expertise and interest, and we paired mid-career scholars and higher-degree students and/or early-career researchers as a mentoring opportunity.

Each team then worked together to formulate a lesson plan for their week and topic area. The lesson plans were detailed, including learning objectives and key theoretical points, required and optional readings, case studies to think through the concepts discussed, and assignments. Course readings were chosen with attention to accessibility, with the aim of making teaching modules available to educators and students without access to a University library. We collectively decided to include several types of assignments that could be customized by instructors to best fit their class: image production assignments (e.g. selfies), discussion questions, and reflection essay prompts, but these were presented as suggestions only. Following some deliberation, the Selfie Course designers deliberately chose not to include assessment criteria, or other formal participation requirements, on the assumption that educators who might adapt course content would do so within their own institutional frameworks.

As each team finished their lesson plan, we met via Skype to review the finished work posted to Google Docs. Google Docs allowed us to easily edit and comment on each other's work. We frequently used the Skype calls and chat sessions to brainstorm case studies, readings, or references for different modules. Follow-up tasks were coordinated asynchronously within Google Docs, Facebook group messages, and group emails.

As the lesson plans moved towards completion, we simultaneously began to build out the technical infrastructure for the shared class. We planned on piloting different course modules in a variety of classes taught by group members during September - October 2014, so any technology we chose would ideally allow students from different institutions to view and comment on each other's work. We also wanted to provide technological support to instructors who might adopt our modules in the future. While traditional MOOCs usually take place within pre-existing proprietary, closed platforms such as Coursera or Blackboard, we used a mix of different tools. These were judged not only for their technical capabilities, but to maximize

student agency and privacy. For example, we evaluated different image-sharing services to find one that would allow students to post to a group and comment on each other's images, and did not require "real names" or a personal Facebook or Instagram login (we decided on Flickr, which had both pros and cons. The functionality is fine, but the platform is no longer popular with students and thus had a learning curve; we wrote detailed help files for the students and still ran into some problems). We also decided to use a class blog where any instructors participating in the pilot could write about their experiences teaching different modules.

The main home of the Selfie Course was our website. We purchased the "selfieresearchers.com" domain for less than USD 20 (this constituted the entire monetary cost of the project), and set up a free WordPress installation using one of the organizers' hosting plan. After building the basic site, we solicited help from the larger network via the Facebook group to customize the WordPress template, write page content, and refine design elements. This was extremely successful as it allowed people to participate as best fit their workload and schedule. For example, we wrote an introduction in English and asked volunteers to translate it into other languages; we very quickly received 15 translations, including Arabic, Russian, and Chinese. The website hosts not only the course itself, with a full syllabus and the lesson plans for six modules, but links to bibliographies, publications, resources, and the class blog.

As educators of undergraduates, many of us felt strongly that curricular openness ought to be coupled with an ethics of care for our students. During the planning stages, the Selfies Pedagogy group spent considerable time comparing our respective experiences of using commercial platforms in educational contexts. While group-members acknowledged the ethical and other risks of using these sites to facilitate assessment activity and/or politically/personally sensitive learning and teaching conversation, we concluded that we would indeed use these tools, but would clearly signpost their limitations. The introduction and guidelines to the Selfie Syllabus consequently included guidelines on online civility and kindness, and the following thoughts on posting classroom exercises on public platforms:

Many of the modules involve work posted publicly online. There are legitimate problems with using commercial, networked services in this way, but we believe the pedagogical, social, and professional benefits outweigh these problems, for now. You are always welcome to post work under a pseudonym, and to make accounts for your coursework that are separate from your personal accounts. We welcome you to approach your instructor with any concerns you may have about posting your work publicly, and they will do their best to accommodate these with you (Senft et al. 2014).

The Selfie Course in the Classroom

Not every Selfie Pedagogy member ran the course modules within their own classrooms, and those that did were not always able to synchronise their teaching and assessments with the online course schedule. Despite these challenges, a range of educators in North America, Europe and Australia reported their adaptations of Selfie Course modules in secondary and tertiary settings. Selfie Course designers Theresa Senft (New York University), Alice Marwick (Fordham), Negar Mottahedeh (Duke), Jill Walker Rettberg (University of Bergen), Radhika Gajjala (Bowling Green), Crystal Abidin (University of Western Australia) and Kath Albury (UNSW) all trialled Selfie Course exercises within undergraduate and postgraduate tertiary classrooms during the initial development stage of the course (from June -September 2014), sharing student feedback with others in the Selfie Pedagogy group. In late 2014, Adi Kuntsman (Manchester Metropolitan University) adapted selfie exercises for UK students, and Canadian academic Katie Warfield (Kwantien University), using exercises adapted from the Selfie Course to explore phenomenological aspects of gendered identity in a first-year communications class. It is perhaps ironic that these pedagogical experiments occurred as many of our colleagues in higher education were debating Clay Shirky's revelation that he had banned laptops, tablets and phones in his classrooms (Shirky 2014).

Many of our students and colleagues initially responded to selfie exercises and discussions of selfie pedagogies with an element of bemusement - why were we taking these trivial (and potentially distracting) practices so seriously? As one US educator put it, his students "seemed a little resistant to the selfie being more than just a picture". Another educator (based in the UK) found that students were enthusiastic when analysing their own selfies in relation to Goffman's theories of self-presentation, but many chose not to participate in selfie activities focused on political activism. Some students were unwilling to analyse their own selfies and their classmate's selfies, suggesting such an analysis might be too 'critical' in a negative sense. In many instances, however, students engaged with selfie exercises as we had hoped - demonstrating both a spirit of playfulness, and a willingness to engage more deeply with the theoretical and practical challenges of selfie pedagogy (for example, Alice Marwick's class reflected the invisible labour involved in production of self by attempting to reproduce a series of iconic 'million like' celebrity selfies).

While we had initially imagined that educators and students might use the blog and Flickr page to participate in larger discussions across a range of online and offline spaces and locations, in practice, there did not seem to be a great deal of cross-institutional interaction within these sites (other than the images and short blogposts contributed by the Selfie Researchers themselves). This may have been due in part to student's lack of comfort or familiarity with Flickr, which has been surpassed by Instagram as the preferred picture-sharing platform for many of our students, or it may have been the case that individual instructors asked their students to post pictures to

different platforms. Despite the presence of a range of instructions and cheatsheets on the Course blog, the Flickr site was not well used. What seemed like resistance or disinterest may also have been due to the content or structure of the modules themselves - for example, one undergraduate class found the range of readings offered in Week Two, Celebrity and Branding to be somewhat overwhelming, suggesting there might be more material in this module than could reasonably be addressed in a single week. This meant that students did not experience as much cross-cultural exchange as we had initially intended, although the teachers certainly did, in our Skype conversations and emails as well as openly on Facebook in the larger communities of the Selfie Pedagogy Group and the Selfie Research Network.

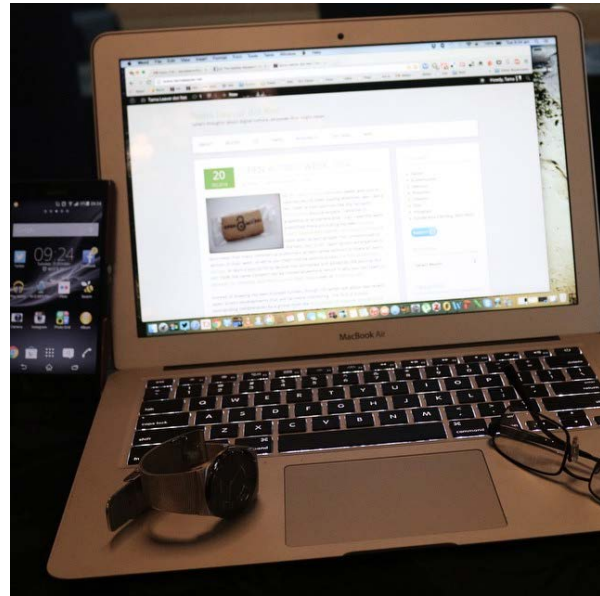
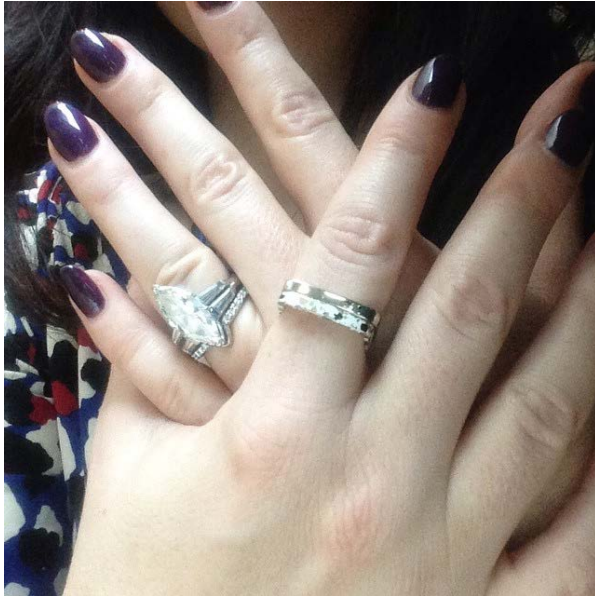
In sum, although the collaboration between teachers was very productive, and many groups of students successfully used all or portions of the course, this first iteration of the Selfie Course did not foster the kind of cross-cultural learning we had envisioned for our students. In addition to the use of image-sharing technologies that were not smooth enough, a major cause for this is that the different universities we were at had such different schedules and systems. It would be very interesting to attempt to set up a version of the Selfie Course as a genuine joint course between a set of universities, so that the courses were aligned between universities and students were given real opportunities to communicate with their peers in other parts of the world, combining an on campus experience with their peer with digital interaction with students elsewhere. This would enable international groups of students to share a set of common references from a shared curriculum but also enter into dialogue with students having very different cultural contexts.

The AOIR Pre-Conference

Three members of the Selfies Pedagogy group ran a half-day pre-conference at the Association of Internet Researchers 2014 conference in Daegu, Korea. Given that many members of the network could not be there in person, we streamed the proceedings using Bambuser, a mobile app that makes it possible to stream live video from a mobile phone. Bambuser also has a chat window, which allowed communication between our remote attendees and the pre-conference participants. (The two halves of the workshop are archived at <http://bambuser.com/v/5013779> and <http://bambuser.com/v/5013879>). We also set up a group Instagram account with a shared username and password (<https://instagram.com/ir15selfie>) to which attendees and remote participants could contribute, view, and discuss each other's photos.

In the first half of the pre-conference, we walked the attendees through two image production assignments drawn from the Selfie Course. As an icebreaker, we gave attendees a couple of minutes to "take a selfie that DOESN'T show your face (could be your bag, your feet, your body, whatever) that your friends might recognize you by." The purpose of this selfie was to examine

how people navigate the ubiquity of online surveillance while simultaneously wishing to connect with others on social media sites. Each participant was given the opportunity to explain their selfie as a form of introduction, allowing attendees to get to know one another and get insight on how they think about themselves.



Figures 2 & 3. Examples of the Faceless Selfie Exercise.

The second assignment asked attendees to mimic a celebrity selfie, which was the cause of much merriment as people tried to mimetically recreate images of actors and pop stars. Beyond creating consensus that the average male professor ought never attempt the Kim Kardashian “booty tooch”) the morning’s exercise produced one particular moment that was discussed for the duration of the conference. While viewing the new selfies together, we realized more than one group of academics had foregone the request to do a solo selfie and instead had gathered together to re-enact the well-known Nelson Mandela funeral image featuring Barack Obama, David Cameron, and Helle Thorning-Schmidt.



Figure 4. Example of a Nelson Mandela funeral image styled selfie.

To us, the choice was interesting for two reasons. First, the photo everyone was replicating was not itself a selfie, but rather a reporter's shot of three world leaders posing for one (nobody knows what the actual selfie wound up looking like.) Second, although everyone who chose the photo chose to include Michelle Obama in their re-enactment, nobody came close to replicating what African Americans call the First Lady's "side-eye" as she surveyed the scene. In the photos we saw on screen, the academics playing her (two were males) displayed facial expressions ranging from surprise to anger to contempt. None of these—and there was consensus here—seemed to register what we all agreed we saw in the original photograph.

As teachers in a roomful of teachers, we all found our inability to replicate Michelle Obama's expression fascinating, especially because nearly everyone agreed that very expression constituted what Roland Barthes might call the "punctum" of the shot. In a traditional classroom environment, it is here that a teacher might turn to terms like affect, signification, identification, interpellation, framing, and of course, the networked effects of racial and gendered performativity in a time of global media spread. But even without the requisite vocabulary, the question seemed plain as day, especially in a roomful of educators that contained no African American females: How on earth did we arrive at the belief that we knew anything about what

Michelle Obama's expression was intended to signify when we couldn't even replicate it with our own faces?

After walking educators through the current Selfie Course syllabus, the second half of the workshop was devoted to working in small groups of 2-5 people to expand the scope of the class. Attendees brainstormed new lesson plans for different topics suggested by the workshop participants, including friendship; policing and norms; the political economy of selfies; access and connectivity; historicizing the selfie; and representing gender fluidity. The small groups rapidly generated creative and innovative assignments, listed relevant readings, and came up with germane examples. For instance, the "gender fluidity" assignment read:

In pairs, take 5 selfies over a week that comment on different performances of gender. The images do not have to include your face. Working in pairs allows you to discuss as you go and support each other. With your partner, develop your own working understanding for: a) selfies, and b) gender. One option would be to document a journey over time. Another option would be to capture five alternate gender performances. The selfies will be posted to our course Instagram account (private) - login details TBA. You will be asked to comment on your selfies in class.

Groups used a Google Doc to track their progress, and then presented their lesson plans to the wider group. This collective form of pedagogical generation was a highly efficient way to generate another six weeks of strong class content from a fairly diverse audience of scholars and researchers. This content is being expanded and will be posted on the Selfie Course website for all to use. The six new modules created during the workshop covered: friendship; policing and norms; the political economy of selfies; teaching, access and connectivity; historicising the selfie; and representing gender fluidity.

Wider Influence and Effects

Following the development and launch of the online Selfie Course, and the AoIR pre-conference event, the Selfie Pedagogy Group's methods and approaches were adapted and extended by our colleagues. As we had hoped, selfies were widely recognised as a practical and theoretical frame through which teachers and researchers could extend student's capacity to engage with emerging visual and social technologies, and promote critical reflection about internet phenomena. In 2015, both Mark Marino (University of Southern California), and Miriam Posner (University of California, Los Angeles) ran 'selfie courses' that were explicitly inspired by the Selfie Pedagogy Group (Marino 2015, Posner 2015). In Marino's case, selfies provided a means of introducing a range of conceptual frameworks to his introductory first-year writing class. Students were invited to create and analyse selfies and other popular and mediated genres of

self expression (including 'unboxing' videos) in order to write reflectively and critically about personal and collective experiences of identity (including, but not limited to race and gender) (Marino 2015). Posner's course, 'Selfies, Snapchat and Cyberbullies: Coming of Age Online', incorporated selfie pedagogies into a critical interrogation of contemporary discourses of 'adolescence' and 'young adulthood' as they intersect with digital cultures (Posner 2015).

In early 2015, Marino's reflective exercise, 'Know thy selfie', was adapted by Stockton University lecturer Adeline Koh, who shared her account of the class exercise in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Koh 2015) - an indication of the 'spreadability' of selfie pedagogies beyond the initial Facebook group, and the Selfie Course's online modules (Jenkins, Ford & Green 2013). Also around this time, a postgraduate group within the Humanities, Arts, Science, Technology and Collaboratory (HASTAC) hosted an online selfies forum discussion, which involved representatives of the Selfies Pedagogy group (HASTAC 2015). While the 2014 prototype online Selfie Course did not provoke as much cross-institutional communication between students as we had initially hoped, the HASTAC discussion forum attracted undergraduate and postgraduate participants from a range of institutions. Posner and Marino's students participated in a digital collaboration as part of their 'cross-town selfie challenge'. It is perhaps significant that this collaboration was initiated by the instructors, and not the students themselves, and included an element of geographical co-presence, in that both classes were Los Angeles-based.

Conclusion

It is often said that universities will need to change in response to a changing world. The future of the university is not, we hope, a set of corporate, mechanised online courses with 100,000 students each. The future of the university must draw upon the internet's ability to connect learners and not simply on its ability to provide easy downloads. Rather than one university promoting itself as the leader of a certain field by providing the canonical course on the topic, we hope to see universities of the future join together to create shared learning environments where students and teachers can discuss and reflect upon global and local societal challenges, with an emphasis on dialogue and learning. The Selfie Course offers a new model for open, collaborative, international pedagogy, where teachers firmly grounded in their classrooms work together to create online learning environments where students can work individually or in groups, with students across town or across the world.

As pedagogues and activists, our aim is straightforward: we want to show students how to see complexity in activities they generally understand as simple and straightforward leisure activities. Nothing would make us happier than to see our principles of grassroots construction, decentralized delivery, legal and social freedoms, and educational democratization adopted and spread far and wide.

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