

COMM 856.001: Feminism & Technology

Professor Alice Marwick
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Office Hours:
M 11-12; T/Th 1-2pm

Description

This class will examine feminist theories of technology and read a number of example studies that use feminist principles, methodologies, and praxis. While “technology” is writ large, the class will generally focus on media and digital technologies. We will take an intersectional approach to feminism, using gender not as a primary lens but as one alongside race, class, and sexuality (among others) to examine how technology researchers de-center hegemonic perspectives when investigating technology. To that end, we will read ethnographic and historical accounts of various technologies and discuss a variety of projects—some successful, others less so—that involve queer, postcolonial and feminist approaches to design and deployment. This class draws from feminist philosophy of technology, science and technology studies (STS), human-computer interaction (HCI), feminist technology studies (FTS), material culture studies, the social history of technology (SHOT), and internet studies, among others. I invite students to keep an open mind about the interdisciplinarity of the works we will discuss.

Required Texts (in order of reading)

We will read a lot of journal articles, book chapters, and popular press articles in addition to these books, all of which are available on Sakai. Print the articles out and bring them to class.

Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press (PDF on Sakai, or purchase on your favorite book website)

Cowan RS. 1983. *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York: Basic Books.

Phillips, Whitney. 2014. *This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ramesh Srinivasan. 2017. *Whose Global Village? Rethinking How Technology Shapes Our World*. New York: NYU Press.

Gray, Mary. 2013. *Out in the Country*. New York: NYU Press.

Chess, Shira. 2017. *Ready Player Two*. University of Minnesota Press.

Noble, Safiya. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression*. New York: NYU Press.

Assignments & Class Policies

Participation	20%
Response Papers	30%
Final Paper	
Final Paper Topic	
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Presentation	10%
Final Paper	30%
TOTAL:	100%

Participation (20%)

This is a graduate seminar. Therefore, I expect that you will attend every seminar meeting, be prepared for discussion, do all the readings and have something to say about them, bring the books/articles under discussion to class that day, and do your work on time unless you've discussed alternate dates in advance. If you know you will have trouble meeting a deadline or if there is anything that will prevent you from fully participating in the seminar, please let me know within the first week of class.

Response Papers (15% each)

You will each sign up for two weeks in which you will write a response paper (approx. 1500 words) discussing the readings and making some sort of *argument* about them. At the end of each paper, include 2-4 questions to pose to the class. The paper will be due that day in class.

Final Paper (40%)

The course will culminate with a 20-25 page paper that makes an original argument about some aspect of feminism and technology.

You will turn in your topic for the final paper on 2/12 after four weeks of class (1-2 pages). An annotated bibliography, fleshing out your argument and including a list of 7-10 sources, will be due on 3/19 (5-6 pages). On the last day of class (4/23), you will give a 10-minute presentation about your paper. The final paper will be due at the end of exam period.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week / Date	
Week 1 – 1/22	Where is the Feminist in Feminist Technology Studies?
Week 2 – 1/29	Approaches to Gender & Technology
Week 3 – 2/5	Gendered Artifacts
Week 4 – 2/12	Technology & Masculinity
Week 5 – 2/19	History of Computing
Week 6 – 2/26	Cyborg Feminism and Cyberfeminism
Week 7 – 3/5	Social Media
<i>Spring Break – 3/12 – 3/16</i>	
Week 8 – 3/19	Trolling and Harassment
Week 9 – 3/26	Decolonizing Computing
Week 10 – 4/2	Queering Technology Use
Week 11 – 4/9	Feminist Game Studies
Week 12 – 4/16	Algorithms
Week 13 – 4/23	Paper presentations

Week One – Where is the Feminist in Feminist Technology Studies?

Note that we have no class on 1/15 because it is MLK Jr. Day. Thus, I would like you to come to the first week of class having read the following readings:

Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Chapters 1, 2 and 6 (on Sakai)

Alaimo, Stacy. 2016. "Nature." *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*.

James Damore, 2017. "Google's Ideological Echo Chamber: How bias clouds our thinking about diversity and inclusion." <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3914586/Googles-Ideological-Echo-Chamber.pdf>

Week Two - Understanding Approaches to Gender and Technology

Review Essays:

Wajcman, J. 2010. "Feminist Theories of Technology." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Volume 34, Issue 1, 1 January 2010, Pages 143–152.

Bray, Francesca. 2007. "Gender and Technology," *Annual Reviews of Anthropology*, 36: 37-53, 2007

STS Basics:

Winner, L. 1986. "Do Artefacts have Politics?" in L. Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (University of Chicago Press), pp. 19-39.

Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker (1984), "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or, How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other," *Social Studies of Science* 14(3): 339-441.

Project Examples:

Weber, Rachel N. 1997. Manufacturing Gender in Commercial and Military Cockpit Design. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Spring), pp. 235-253

Ellen van Oost. 2003. "Materialized Gender: How Shavers Configure the Users' Femininity and Masculinity," in: Pinch and Oudshoorn, Eds., *How Users Matter* (MIT Press, 2003): 193-208.

Week Three - Technology Producing Gender, Gender Producing Technology

Cowan RS. 1983. *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York: Basic Books

Optional:

Rakow, Lana. 1992. *Gender on the Line: Women, the Telephone, and Community Life*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Week Four - Technology and Masculinity

Paper Topics Due

Cohn, C., 1987. Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 12(4), pp.687-718.

Haring, Kristen. 2003. "The 'Freer Men' of Ham Radio: How a Technical Hobby Provided Social and Spatial Distance." *Technology and Culture* 44, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 734-61.

Mellström, U., 2004. Machines and masculine subjectivity: Technology as an integral part of men's life experiences. *Men and masculinities*, 6(4), pp.368-382.

Faulkner, W., 2000. Dualisms, hierarchies and gender in engineering. *Social Studies of Science*, 30(5), pp.759-792.

Optional:

Wendy Faulkner, 2000. "The Power and the Pleasure? A Research Agenda for "Making Gender Stick" to Engineers," *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 25 (2000): 87-119.

Cech, E.A. and Waidzunas, T.J., 2011. Navigating the heteronormativity of engineering: The experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. *Engineering Studies*, 3(1), pp.1-24.

Project Example:

Winter, Jessica. 2017. "Why aren't mothers worth anything to venture capitalists?" *The New Yorker*, September 25. <https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/why-arent-mothers-worth-anything-to-venture-capitalists/amp>

So, Adrienne, 2017. Review: Medela Sonata. *Wired*, December 6. <https://www.wired.com/review/review-medela-sonata/>

Week Five – History of Computing

Light, Jennifer. 1999. "When Computers were Women." *Technology and Culture* 40:3, 455-483.

Lerman, Nina. 2010. Categories of Difference, Categories of Power: Bringing Gender and Race to the History of Technology. *Technology and Culture* 51(4): 893-918

Gaboury, Jacob. 2013. A Queer History of Computing, Parts 1-5. *Rhizome*, February – June. (Skim) <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/19/queer-computing-1/>

Nelsen, R.A. 2017. Race and Computing: The Problem of Sources, the Potential of Prosopography, and the Lesson of Ebony Magazine. *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, January-March, pp. 29-51.

Optional:

Grossman, Rachael. 1980. "Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit," *Radical America* 14.

McPherson, Tara. 2012. US Operating Systems at Mid-Century: The Intertwining of Race and Unix. In *Race After the Internet*, Nakamura, L & Chow, P (Eds). New York: Routledge, pp. 21-37.

Week Six - Cyborg Feminism and Cyberfeminism

Haraway, Donna. 1993. "A Cyborg Manifesto." Pp. 271-291 in *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Simon During, Editor. Routledge.

Turkle, Sherry. 1995. Chapter 10: Identity Crisis. *Life on the Screen*. New York: Touchstone.

Nakamura, L. 1999. "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet." In *Cyberreader*, edited by Victor Vitanza. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Paasonen, Susanna. 2011. "Revisiting Cyberfeminism." *Communications* 36 (3): 335–352.

Optional:

Balka, Ellen. 1993. "Women's Access to On-Line Discussions about Feminism." *The Electronic Journal of Communication / La Revue Electronique de Communication* 3 (1). <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/003/1/00311.HTML>.

Hayles, Katherine. 1999. *How We Became Posthuman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Prologue, Chapter 1, conclusion.

Gajjala, Radhika. 1999. "Internet Constructs of Identity and Ignorance: 'Third-World' Contexts and Cyberfeminism." *Works and Days* 33/34, 35/36(17 and 18): 117-137

Stone, Sandy. 1995. Introduction: Death, Sex and Machinery. *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Claire L. Evans. 2014. "We Are the Future Cunt: CyberFeminism in the 90s." *Motherboard*, November 20. https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/4x37gb/we-are-the-future-cunt-cyberfeminism-in-the-90s

Project Examples:

VNS Matrix. 1991. "Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century." http://obn.org/reading_room/manifestos/html/cyberfeminist.html

Swanson, Heidi. "Project: ChickClick." *101cookbooks.com*. <http://www.101cookbooks.com/heidiswanson/html/ccframeset.html>

Week Seven - Social Media

Keller, J., Mendes, K. and Ringrose, J., 2016. Speaking 'unspeakable things:' Documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of Gender Studies*, pp.1-15.

Cho, Alexander. 2017. Default publicness: Queer youth of color, social media, and being outed by the machine. *New Media & Society* Dec. 12.

Bivens, Rena. 2017. The gender binary will not be deprogrammed: Ten years of coding gender on Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 19(6): 880-898

Marwick, A. Forthcoming, 2018. "None of this is New (Media): Feminisms in the Social Media Age." *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Feminism*, Eds. Oren, Tasha, and Andrea L. Press, editors. London: Routledge.

Optional:

Gillespie, Tarleton. 2010. The Politics of "Platforms." *New Media & Society* 12, no. 3: 347-64.

Project Example:

Feminist Principles of the Internet, 2016
<https://feministinternet.net/>

Week Eight – Trolling and Harassment

Annotated Bibliography Due

Phillips, Whitney. 2014. *This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Intro, Chapters 1-3)

Massanari, Adrienne. 2015. "#Gamergate and The Fapping: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *New Media & Society* 19 (3):329-46.

Marwick, A. 2017. "Scandal or Sex Crime? Gendered Privacy and the Celebrity Nude Photo Leaks." *Ethics and Information Technology*, 19(3), 177-191.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10676-017-9431-7>

Optional:

Blackwell, L., Dimond, J., Schoenebeck, S., and Lampe, C. 2017. Classification and Its Consequences for Online Harassment: Design Insights from HeartMob. Proc. ACM Human Computer Interaction Vol. 1, No. 2, Article 24 (November 2017).

Chun, W. H. K., & Friedland, S. (2015). Habits of Leaking: Of Sluts and Network Cards. *differences*, 26(2), 1-28.

Sarah Sobieraj (2017): Bitch, slut, skank, c***: patterned resistance to women's visibility in digital publics, *Information, Communication & Society*.

Project Examples:

HeartMob
<https://iheartmob.org/>

Crash Override
<http://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/>

Week Nine: Decolonizing Computing

Ramesh Srinivasan. 2017. *Whose Global Village? Rethinking How Technology Shapes Our World*. New York: NYU Press.

L. Irani, J. Vertesi, P. Dourish, K. Philip and B. Grinter. 2010. Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development. *Proceedings of CHI 2010*, Apr. 10-15, 2010. Atlanta, GA.

Optional:

Burrell, J. 2011. "User Agency in the Middle Range: Rumors and the Reinvention of the Internet in Accra, Ghana," *Science, Technology and Human Values* 36(2): 139- 159.

Jackson, S. J., Ahmed, S. I., & Rifat, M. R. (2014, June). Learning, innovation, and sustainability among mobile phone repairers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In *Proceedings of the 2014 conference on Designing interactive systems* (pp. 905-914). ACM.

Irani, Lilly. 2015. "Hackathons and the Making of Entrepreneurial Citizenship." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 40 (5): 799–824.

Nguyen, Lilly U. 2016. "Infrastructural Action in Vietnam: Inverting the Techno-Politics of Hacking in the Global South." *New Media & Society*, 1461444816629475.

Week Ten: Queer/ing Technology Use

Gray, Mary. 2013. *Out in the Country*. New York: NYU Press.

Project Examples:

Sarah Murray & Megan Sapnar Ankerson (2016) Lez takes time: designing lesbian contact in geosocial networking apps, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 33:1: 53-69

Fiona Barnett, Zach Blas, Micha Cárdenas, Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, Margaret Rhee. 2016. QueerOS: A User's Manual. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*.
<http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/56>

Week Eleven - Feminist Game Studies

Chess, Shira. 2017. *Ready Player 2: Women Gamers and Designed Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nakamura, L. 2012. Queer Female of Color: The Highest Difficulty Setting There Is? Gaming Rhetoric as Gender Capital. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* (1).

Week Twelve: Algorithms

Noble, Safiya. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression*. New York: NYU Press.

Week 13: Paper Presentations