

Fall 2013 – LCST 3705 (CRN 7523)
Dialogues on Feminism and Technology

MW 1:50-3:30 p.m. Eugene Lang
Instructors: Anne Balsamo and Veronica Paredes

Contact Information

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Office Hours By Appointment

Course Website: femtechnet.newschool.edu

Course Description

This course will participate in a networked learning experiment involving instructors and students from several institutions across North America. It is project of FemTechNet, an activated network of scholars, artists, and students who work on, with, and at the borders of technology, science, and feminism in a variety of fields including STS, Media and Visual Studies, Art, Women's, Queer, and Ethnic Studies. "Dialogues on Feminism and Technology" is the first iteration of a **Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC)**, initiated by FemTechNet. Course topics will address a range of issues and themes drawn from the history of the feminist engagement with science and technology and from contemporary feminist work in technology and media.

Feminism and feminists have been integral to technology innovation, yet as recently as June 2012, the *New York Times* carried an article about Silicon Valley that opened with the line: "Men invented the Internet." As technology remakes academia and the arts, critical analysis of gender, sexualities, and race have been absent in much of this re-thinking of disciplines and practices. Since the early years of Internet availability, cyberfeminists have explored the use of the Internet for dialogue and participation across various socio-economic layers worldwide. Access and skills for women and various economically underprivileged communities of the world (such as populations from the developing world and inner cities of the U.S.) was a central concern for feminists in developing distributed and participatory environments for learning, training, and information exchange.

Since the mid-1990s, cyberfeminists have spent significant time and energy in developing methods for inclusive teaching. The DOCC 2013 has been created as an alternative genre of MOOC (Massively Open Online Course), to demonstrate the innovative process of feminist thinking that engages issues of networked infrastructures for learning, learner-centered pedagogies, collaborative knowledge creation, and transformational practices of design and media making.

Required Texts

1. Judy Wajcman, *TechnoFeminism* (Polity Press, 2004) [Available at New School Bookstore]
2. Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Duke UP, 1996) [Will be provided in PDF format]
3. Anne Balsamo, "Gendering the Technological Imagination," in *Designing Culture: The Work of the Technological Imagination* (Duke UP, 2011) [Will be provided in PDF format]

*** A copy of Autumn Stanley's *Mothers and Daughters of Invention: Notes for a Revised History of Technology* (Rutgers UP, 1995) will also be made available to borrow.

Selected Readings as assigned.

Course Pedagogy

This course will be run as a mix-mode seminar that includes presentations by instructor, special viewings of Video Dialogues, discussions, and hands-on media making activities. These will include:

1. Keyword Videos
2. Wikistorming
3. Manifestos
4. Blueprints for a Feminist Technological Future

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this course, students will:

1. Collaborate on many scales, within small groups, as a class, and also with at-large members of FemTechNet.
2. Gain experience in using new digital technologies for research, collaboration, and scholarly writing.
3. Acquire knowledge about the historical engagement among women, girls, and feminists with issues of technology critique, design, and innovation.
4. Create a work of media-rich scholarship using new digital tools to communicate humanities, art, and social science research to wider public audiences.

Assignments/ Grading Policy

1. Viewing and Reading Responses (10%)
2. Mid-term Media Project: Wikistorming Topic (40%)
3. Final Group Project (50%)

General Notes

I. Syllabus Subject to Change: This is an experimental course and will likely change as the semester progresses. Collectively, we will reflect on what is working, and what is not working, throughout the semester in order to ensure that the course remains open and collaborative.

II. FemTechNet Commons: The syllabus, selected readings and handouts will all be posted on the course website, hosted on FemTechNet Commons. femtechnet.newschool.edu

III. Late Work Policy: Short extensions of deadlines will be granted for compelling personal or professional reasons, if requested at least a week before due dates. Most of the deadlines for work will be negotiated with the class participants in advance of actual due dates.

IV. Specific Needs: If you require any specific assistance or accommodations to participate in course activities (such as visual reading assistance, hearing assistance or any type of assistive technology), please inform us early in the semester so that we may improve accessibility to the course and its material.

Schedule Symbols:

* Prof. Balsamo is away

** Prof. Balsamo will join class virtually

*To discuss possibility of meeting later
on: Sept 9, Oct 7, Nov 4, Nov 18*

Course Schedule

Part I: Introductory Concepts

Week 1 – August 26 and August 28

INTRODUCTION TO FemTechNet

Activity: Class Introductions

Readings:

1. Alex Juhasz and Anne Balsamo, "An Idea Whose Time is Here: FemTechNet – A Distributed Online Collaborative Course (DOCC)" *Ada: Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology* (Nov 2012) <http://adanewmedia.org/2012/11/issue1-juhasz/>
2. Liz Losh, "Bodies in Classrooms: Feminist Dialogues on Technology, Part I," *DML Central* (August 6, 2012) <http://dmlcentral.net/blog/liz-losh/bodies-classrooms-feminist-dialogues-technology-part-i> and "Learning from Failure: Feminist Dialogues on Technology, Part II," *DMLcentral* (August 9, 2012) <http://dmlcentral.net/blog/liz-losh/learning-failure-feminist-dialogues-technology-part-ii>
3. Wacjman, "Introduction: Feminist Utopia or Dystopia?" *TechnoFeminism*

Week 2 – September 2 (Labor Day) and September 4*

MALE DESIGNS ON TECHNOLOGY

Activity: Web research on "Wikipedia's Woman Problem"

Readings:

1. Wacjman, "Chapter 1: Male Designs on Technology," *TechnoFeminism*
2. Balsamo, "Gendering the Technological Imagination," *Designing Culture* [PDF]
3. Valerie L. Thomas, "Black Women Engineers and Technologists (1989)" in *A Hammer in Their Hands: A Documentary History of Technology and the African-American Experience*, ed. Carroll Pursell (MIT Press, 2005) [PDF]
4. How to Use Wikipedia as a Teaching Tool: Adrienne Wadewitz
<http://dmlcentral.net/blog/liz-losh/how-use-wikipedia-teaching-tool-adrienne-wadewitz>

Week 3 – September 9* and September 11**TECHNOSCIENCE RECONFIGURED**

Activity: Compose and annotate a list of educating girls/women in STEM research & practices

Readings:

1. Wacjman, "Chapter 2: Technoscience Reconfigured," *TechnoFeminism*

Week 4 – September 16 and September 18**VIRTUAL GENDER**

Activity: Connect readings to contemporary developments in social media and feminism (e.g. Twitter conversations around hashtags #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen and #fuckcispeople)

Readings:

1. Wacjman, "Chapter 3: Virtual Gender," *TechnoFeminism*
2. Balsamo, "Chapter 5: The Virtual Body in Cyberspace," *Technologies of the Gendered Body* [PDF]

Assignment DUE: Wikistorming Topic Proposal

Part II: Video Dialogue Themes

Week 5 – September 23* and September 25**HISTORY OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF FEMINISM & TECHNOLOGY**

LABOR | Video Dialogue 1. Judy Wacjman interviewed by Anne Balsamo

Readings:

1. Cynthia Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance* (1985) [excerpt]
2. Michèle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist-Feminist Analysis* (1980) [excerpt]
3. Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (1984) [excerpt]
4. Paula England, "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled," *Gender & Society* (2010)[PDF]

Week 6 – September 30 and October 2

SEXUALITIES | Video Dialogue 2. Faith Wilding and Julie Levin Russo

Links:

Faith Wilding | <http://faithwilding.refugia.net/>

subRosa | <http://www.cyberfeminism.net/>

Julie Levin Russo | <http://j-l-r.org/>

Readings:

1. VNS Matrix project, “The Cyberfeminist Manifesto” and “Bitch Mutant Manifesto,” http://www.obn.org/reading_room/manifestos/html/vnsmnfst.gif
http://www.obn.org/reading_room/manifestos/html/bitch.html More:
http://www.obn.org/inhalt_index.html
2. Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (1985) [PDF]

Assignment DUE: Wikistorming Article Draft

Week 7 – October 7* and October 9

RACE | Video Dialogue 3. Lisa Nakamura and Maria Fernandez

Readings:

1. Lisa Nakamura, “Avatars and the Visual Culture of Reproduction on the Web,” *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures on the Internet* (Univ of Minnesota Press, 2007) [PDF]
2. Maria Fernandez, “Cyberfeminism, Racism, Embodiment” in *Domain Errors: Cyberfeminist Practices!* (Autonomedia, 2002) [PDF Online]
http://refugia.net/domainerrors/DE1b_cyber.pdf
3. Beth Coleman, “Race as Technology,” *Camera Obscura* 70, Vol 24, Num 1 (2009): 176-206 [PDF]
4. Tara McPherson, “Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation,” *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Univ of Minnesota Press, 2012) <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/29>

Assignment DUE: Wikistorming Article “Final” Draft

Week 8 – October 14 and October 16

DIFFERENCE | Video Dialogue 4. Shu Lea Cheang and Kim Sawchuk

Links:

Shu Lea Cheang | <http://www.mauvaiscontact.info/>

Readings:

1. Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Difference: ‘A Special Third World Women Issue,’” *Woman Native Other* (Indiana Univ Press, 1989) [PDF]

2. Kim Sawchuk, "Tactical mediatization and activist ageing: pressures, push-backs, and the story of the RECAA," *MedieKultur* (2013) [PDF Online]
<http://ojs.statsbiblioteket.dk/index.php/mediekultur/article/view/7313>
3. Shu Lea Cheang Interview with Matthew Fuller, "Compost Your Orgasm Trash," *Mute* (Feb 29, 2012) <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/compost-your-orgasm-trash>

Assignment Intro: Final Group Project

Week 9 – October 21 * and October 23**

BODIES | Video Dialogue 5.

Readings:

1. Balsamo, "Chapter 1: Reading Cyborgs, Writing Feminism: Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture," *Technologies of the Gendered Body* [PDF]
2. Balsamo, "Chapter 2: Feminist Body Building," *Technologies of the Gendered Body* [PDF]
3. Judith Halberstam, "Technotopias: Representing Transgender Bodies in Contemporary Art," *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (NYU Press, 2005) [PDF]

Week 10 – October 28 and October 30

MACHINES | Video Dialogue 6. Wendy Chun and Kelly Dobson

Readings:

1. Wendy Chun, "On Sourcery and Source Codes," *Programmed Visions* (MIT Press, 2011) [PDF]
2. Alison de Fren, "Technofetishism and the Uncanny Desires of A.S.F.R (alt.sex.fetish.robots)" *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol 36 (2009) [PDF]

Assignment DUE: Final Group Project Proposal

Week 11 – November 4* and November 6

SYSTEMS | Video Dialogue 7. Brenda Laurel and Janet Murray

Activity: Game Night (Pizza provided)!

- "Woman" (twine-built interactive fiction) | <http://lightnarcissus.com/twine/woman/woman-play-page/>
- "A Closed World" | <http://www.gamesforchange.org/play/a-closed-world/>
- "Cyberqueen," | <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/beautiful-weapons/>
- "inCharacter" | <http://takeactiongames.com/TAG/inCharacter.html>
- "Meet the Middletons" <http://www.veronicaparedes.com/middletons/FinalFiles/MiddletonFinal.html>
- "Lim" | <http://mkopas.net/files/Lim/>
- "dys4ia" | <http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/591565>

Readings:

1. Balsamo, "Chapter 6: Feminism for the Incurably Informed," *TGB* [PDF]
2. Brenda Laurel, *Utopian Entrepreneur* (MIT Press, 2001) [excerpt]
3. Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (MIT Press, 1998) [excerpt]

Week 12 – November 11 and November 13

PLACE | Video Dialogue 8. Sharon Irish and Radhika Gajjala

Activity: Field Trip to an NYC Site: Occupy or 9/11 Museum

Readings:

1. Wacjman, "Chapter 5: Metaphor and Materiality," *TechnoFeminism*
2. Chela Sandoval, "New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed," in *The Cybercultures Reader*, eds. David Bell and Barbara Kennedy (Routledge, 2000) [PDF]
3. Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Cotton and Iron," *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 1991) [PDF]
4. Karen Barad, "Spacetime Re(con)figurings: Naturalcultural Forces and Changing Topologies of Power," *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Duke UP, 2007) [PDF]
5. Cara Wallis, "Gender and China's Online Censorship Protest Culture" [PDF]

Week 13 – November 18* and November 20

INFRASTRUCTURES | Video Dialogue 9. Lucy Suchman and Katherine Gibson Graham

Activity: Session #1: Group meetings with Anne / Veronica

Assignment DUE: Final Group Project Draft

Week 14 – November 25 and November 27 (NO CLASS)

ARCHIVE | Video Dialogue 10. Lynn Hershman and B. Ruby Rich

Viewing: Lynn Hershman, *RAW/WAR* archive

Activity: Session on Digital Research Methods

Week 15 – December 2* and December 4**

TRANSFORMATIONS | Video Dialogue 11. Donna Haraway and Catherine Lord, in conversation with the work of Beatriz da Costa

Activity: Session on Digital Research Methods

December 9 and December 11

***** FINAL PRESENTATIONS *****