

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND GENDER COMS 472

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Department of Communication Studies
Concordia University
Winter Semester 2008
Thursdays, 1:15-4
CJ 5.223

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OBJECTIVES

Communication Technologies and Gender provides an introduction to debates surrounding gender and technology, including historical and theoretical perspectives on feminism and technology from various perspectives – cultural studies, political economy, feminist theory, new media studies, and STS (science & technology studies). Case studies of specific technologies will be provided, with particular attention paid to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

BOOKS (available at Loyola Bookstore)

- Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Anansi, 1999).
- Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: 'Hysteria', the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
- Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

OTHER READING

Readings listed below on the syllabus are available on CLUES (Concordia University Online Library Catalog).

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (10%)

This course is a seminar, so students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and debate the weekly readings. Anticipated absences are to be discussed with the professor ahead of time.

Reading presentation (15%).

Each student will choose one weekly reading (or a set of readings) and give a brief (approx. 15 minute) critical analysis in class, designed to provoke questions and further class **discussion**.

Artifact presentation (25%)

Students will present in class (approx. 15 minutes each) a discussion of a technological artifact and its gendered implications. Note that you do not have to bring to class the particular artifact (this may be impossible!), however, you may present this artifact in whatever creative way you deem necessary. While extensive outside research on the artifact is not necessary, students will be asked to give a brief history of the artifact and an idea of its social uses and political ramifications. Students do not need to hand in a written paper.

Paper (total 50%)

Students are asked to write a case study of a particular communications technology and its gendered implications, overview and critique of a theoretical perspective from a feminist perspective, or a paper on policy issues related to ICTs and gender. Paper length should be approximately 5,000 words, *including* bibliography (this works out to, at 250 words per page, around 20 pages). Throughout the term suggested paper topics will be discussed.

Abstract and preliminary bibliography – (10% of final paper mark) – due January 31

Students are asked to prepare a 250-word abstract of their proposed paper topic, along with a tentative bibliography (approx. 5 sources). This is so I can give you feedback on your paper topic.

The draft final paper is due March 13 – (30% of final paper mark) –

I will be providing students with feedback on the paper (style – grammar-structure; content – argumentation, relevance of sources) and will return to students by April 3.

The final paper (corrections to draft) is worth the remaining 10% of the final paper mark and is due back to me April 10th.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all the classes unless there are particular personal reasons why this is not possible. Please inform me ahead of time if you will not be able to make a class, or e-mail me if you know that you won't be able to make the class (because of sickness or personal emergency). As this is a seminar class, students are expected to come to class having completed all the reading for that week – we will be discussing and debating the readings, so come prepared!

Lateness policy: Assignments and in-course presentations are due on the designated day. If you are sick or are having a problem that influences your attendance and work, communicate with me before it becomes a major problem.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism: Please acquaint yourself with Concordia's Academic Code of Conduct, and in particular, the nature of plagiarism: <http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/plagiarism/>. Here you will find an excellent resource on what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and academic sanctions if plagiarism is discovered. *If you are uncertain about how to appropriately cite sources, please discuss with me!*

Classroom Etiquette -- on laptops, mobiles, and other e-devices: Unless there are compelling reasons for students to use laptops in classes (e.g. need to take notes), I would ask that all students refrain from using them. As for mobiles, please turn off when in class (vibrator/silent mode is OK), and please refrain from text messaging in class. Such usage can be very distracting to all seminar participants.

COMS 472 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: January 3

Introduction to Course

Week 2: January 10

Thinking About Technology: Theoretical Perspectives

Readings

Franklin, Chapters 1-3

Hughie Mackay and Gareth Gillespie. (1992). Extending the Social Shaping of Technology Approach: Ideology and Appropriation. *Social Studies of Science* 22: 585-718. (CLUES)

Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. MacGregor Wise. (2006). Cultural Studies and Communication Technology, pp. 141-162 in *The Handbook of New Media* (updated student edition), edited by Leah A. Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone. London: Sage Publications. (Hand-out)

Week 3: January 17

Gender and Technology: Theoretical Perspectives

Readings

Franklin, Chapters 4-6

Judy Wajcman. (June 2007). From Women and Technology to Gendered Technoscience. *Information, Communication & Technology* 10(3): 287-298. (CLUES)

Maria Lohan. (December 2000). Constructive Tensions in Feminist Technology Studies. *Social Studies of Science* 30: 895-916. (CLUES)

Catharina Landström. (2007). Queering Feminist Technology Studies. *Feminist Theory* 8(1): 7-26. (CLUES)

Ellen van Oost. (2004). Materialized Gender: How Shavers Configure the Users' Femininity and Masculinity, pp. 193-208 in *How Users Matter: The Co-Construction of Users and Technology*, edited by Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch. MIT Press. (Hand-out) (Optional)

Week 4: January 24
Masculinities

Readings

Franklin, Chapters 7-10 and Coda

Maines, Chapters 1-3

Maria Lohan and Wendy Faulkner. (April 2004). Masculinities and Technologies: Some Introductory Remarks. *Men and Masculinities* 6(4): 319-329. (CLUES)

Tine Kleif and Wendy Faulkner. (2003). "I'm No Athlete [but] I Can Make This Thing Dance! – Men's Pleasures in Technology. *Science, Technology & Human Values* 28: 296-325. (CLUES)

Week 5: January 31
Gender and Domestic Technologies

Readings

Lynn Spigel. (2001). Media Homes: Then and Now. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4(4): 385-411. (CLUES)

Lynn Spigel. (2005). Designing the Smart Home: Posthuman Domesticity and Conspicuous Production. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8(4): 403-426. (CLUES) (Optional)

Genevieve Bell and Paul Dourish. (2007). Back to the Shed: Gendered Visions of Technology and Domesticity. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing* 11: 373-381. (CLUES)

Helen Watkins. (April 2006). Beauty Queen. Bulletin Board and Browser: Rescripting the Refrigerator. *Gender, Place and Culture* 13(2): 143-152. (CLUES)

Week 6: February 7
Technologies of Gendered Bodies

Note: There is a lecture as part of the HIV/Aids Lecture Series that students are encouraged to attend: Paula Treichler, Condoms and HIV: A Cultural History, 6pm, Hall Building, Room 110.

Readings

Continue with Maines, Chapter 3-5.

Leonore Tiefer. (2006). The Viagra Phenomenon. *Sexualities* 9(3): 273-294. (CLUES)

Nicole Vittellone. (2002). "I Think It More of a White Persons Sort of Awareness": Condoms and the Making of a White Nation in Media Representations of Safer (Hetero)Sex. *Feminist Media Studies* 2(1): 19-36. (CLUES) (Optional)

Week 7: February 14
Digital Technologies & Gender

Readings

Donna Haraway. (1991). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century, pp. 149-181 in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. NY: Routledge. URL: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>

Saskia Sassen. (May 2002). Towards a Sociology of Information Technology. *Current Sociology* 50(3): 365-388. (CLUES)

Chat Garcia Ramilo. (2006). Beyond Tools: Technology as a Feminist Agenda. *Development* 49(1): 68-71. (CLUES)

Micky Lee. (2006). What's Missing in Feminist Research in New Information and Communication Technologies? *Feminist Media Studies* 6(2): 191-210. (CLUES)

Gender and the Information Society – Commentary. (2003). *Feminist Media Studies* 3(3): 345-388. (CLUES) (Optional)

Winter Break, February 21

Week 8: February 28
Digital Technologies: Labor

Film: *Phantom of the Operator*, Caroline Martel
<http://artifactproductions.ca/fantome>

Readings

Elisabeth K. Kelan. (June 2007) Tools and Toys: Communicating Gendered Positions Towards Technology. *Information, Communication & Society* 10(3): 358-383. (CLUES)

Rosalind Gill. (2002). Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe. *Information, Communication & Society* 5(1): 70-89. (CLUES)

Marianne I. Franklin. (July 2007). NGO's and the 'Information Society': Grassroots Advocacy at the UN - a cautionary tale. *Review of Policy Research* 24(4): 309-330. (Hand-out)

Nelly Oudshoorn, Els Rommes, Marcelle Stienstra. (Winter 2004). Configuring the User as Everybody: Gender and Design Cultures in Information and Communication Technologies. *Science, Technology & Human Values* 29: 30-63. (CLUES) (Optional)

Week 9: March 6

Digital Technologies: Gender, Race and Representation

Readings

Nakamura, Intro, Chapters 1-3

Week 11: March 13

Digital Technologies: Gender, Race and Representation

Readings

Nakamura, Intro, Chapters 4-5, Epilogue

Stella Minahan and Julie Wolfram Cox. (2007). Stick'nBitch: Cyberfeminism, A Third Place and the New Materiality. *Journal of Material Culture* 12(1): 5-21. (CLUES)

Week 10: March 20

Gender & Gaming

Readings

Digital Games and Gender- Commentary. (2007). *Feminist Media Studies* 7(1): 97-110. (CLUES)

Pam Royse, Joon Lee, Baasanjav Undrahbuyan, Mark Hopson, and Mia Consalvo. (2007) Women and Games: Technologies of the Gendered Self. *New Media & Society* 9(4): 555-576. (CLUES)

Valerie Walkerdine. (2006). Playing the Game: Young Girls Performing Femininity in Video Game Play. *Feminist Media Studies* 6(4): 519-537. (CLUES)

Jo Bryce and Jason Rutter. (2002). Killing Like a Girl: Gendered Gaming and Girl Gamers' Visibility. CGDC Proceedings: 243-255. (optional) Available: http://www.thumbbandits.com/Gaming_Academia.asp

Mia Consalvo.(February 2003). It's a Queer World After All: Studying *The Sims* and Sexuality. GLAAD Center for the Study of Media & Society. (optional). Available: <http://www.glaad.org/programs/csms/papers.php>

Week 12: March 27
Mobiles

Readings

Lana F. Rakow. (September 2007). Follow the Buzz: Questions About Mobile Communication Industries and Scholarly Discourse. *Communication Monographs* 74(3): 402-407. (CLUES)

Molly Wright Steenson. (2006). Mobile Space is Women's Space: Reframing Mobile Phones and Gender in an Urban Context.
<http://www.girlwonder.com/>

Michelle Rodino-Colocino. (December 2006). Selling Women on PDAs from 'Simply Palm' to "Audrey" How Moore's Law Met Parkinson's Law in the Kitchen. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(5): 375-390. (CLUES)

Week 13: April 3
Course Wrap-Up