WGSS 424 – Gender and Sexuality in Digital Media

Lecturer: Dr. L. Ayu Saraswati
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Department: International affairs
Semester: 1

Course level: L3 Undergraduate
Domain:
Teaching language: English
Number of in-class hours: 33
Number of course sessions: 10 + Exam
ECTS: 6

Course description and objectives

How does the virtual world shift and shape our lives? How does the Internet help produce new and alternative modes of expressing and experiencing our gender and sexuality? How have gender and various categories of sexuality been constructed and represented in this space? Students will reflect on these questions while reading various materials on gender and sexuality as well as critically examining various websites, online materials, and apps. Various assignments in this class are designed to help students think critically and creatively, and articulate their arguments coherently and persuasively.

**** For UH students, this course fulfills an Oral Focus (O) and DH (Diversification Humanities) requirement and also counts as an International Cultural Studies Elective course.**

Prerequisites

None

Learning outcomes

1. Improved critical thinking and oral communication skills.
2. Developed a more nuanced knowledge about digital media and the ways in which gender, sex, and sexuality work in this new medium.
3. Demonstrated ability to engage in critical and interdisciplinary thinking, analysis, and problem solving through effective oral communication.
4. Evidence of ability to integrate key concepts in Women's Studies, including the social construction of gender; intersectionalities among gender, sexuality, race, class and other vectors of power and identity; social stratification; and how these issues manifest in written work.
5. Demonstrated ability to connect the classroom with "real world" feminist issues.

Assignments and grading

Attendance and Participation in Class Discussions
Discussion Leader
Instagram Account
Persuasive Presentation of your Revised Instagram Account (Final Exam)

Attendance and Participation

This class has an oral communication focus (O). It means that we will rely heavily on and improve our oral communication skills. For each class, students are expected to come already prepared with

either: 1) one discussion question related to the reading materials for that day;

or 2) a critical analysis of the readings for that day.

Three or more students will be asked to orally deliver these questions or analyses. If when the professor asks a student to share this **ONE discussion question** or **analysis** of the readings for that day, and the student's response is, "**I didn't do the reading," that student WILL BE MARKED ABSENT** for that day.

Active participation requires having read or watched all of the assigned materials BEFORE coming to class regularly and on time. Respect for each other's opinion is key for having fruitful discussions where we will learn from each other. In this class students will learn how to participate actively, respectfully, and critically in class discussions. Students will get ZERO (0) for that day's participation if they do not contribute anything to the discussion.

Discussion Leader

This class has an O focus. This assignment will help students improve their leading and facilitating discussion skills. This assignment can be done by one or two (max) people. It is also designed to help everyone in the class understand the reading material better, and enjoy the process while we're doing it. It is also created to help students practice articulating complex theories and be engaged in stimulating conversations. This assignment is **NOT** about you presenting the **summary** of the text. This is about having a fabulous conversation about the readings as they relate to other matters in our lives.

Students will be leading a discussion on the day of their choice (first-come-first-serve). On the student's chosen presentation day, they will bring an example (newspaper clip, youtube clip, film clip, cartoon, novel, poem, academic article, book, etc) that relates to the reading for that day. The clip should be SHORTER than ten minutes to watch/read. On this day, the student/discussion leader and the professor will be the co-host, facilitating the discussion for that entire day. In a relax, fun (yes, F-U-N!), and intellectually-stimulating environment, we will talk about the clip that the student brings and the reading materials for that day.

Student responsible to lead discussion on that day will come to class with a minimum of **five THOUGHT-PROVOKING, CONTROVERSIAL** questions related to the readings.

CREATIVITY IS ALWAYS PART OF THE GRADE. Try to incorporate something fun and engaging. Games are fun. Music, too. The possibilities are endless.

Have some creative ideas? Let the professor know!

Instagram Account

In lieu of a traditional exam, students show mastery of class materials by creating an Instagram account that reflects their understanding of theories they read in class. Students will therefore have a hands-on experience of using digital media to champion their cause or articulate their identity.

Students are to position themselves as someone who has just been hired by a French organization or a "Visit France" tourism organization to enliven their social media presence, particularly on Instagram. Or, students can create a digital diary of their stay in Paris. Other ideas are welcome. Students are encouraged to contact the professor to discuss other forms of assignments such as short video reels or YouTube video. Students are invited to choose a topic that they feel passionate about as long as it is related to gender and sexuality issues, broadly defined. Feeling unsure? Ask away!

For Mid Term, students are to submit:

1) A PRETEND Instagram account for a French organization/company/product of their choice, including "Visit France" account. Alternatively, students can create a digital diary of their experiences in Paris/France. Other ideas are welcome, too—students will need to get an approval from the professor to submit a particular project that is not mentioned here. They will have posted 20 images on this account, with caption for each image. They can do this on Word Document, Powerpoint, or Canva.com (with a layout of and all the elements of an Instagram account). In other words, they do not have to actually open an Instagram account.
2) A 2-page paper describing what this account is about and the theories we've read in class (or other relevant books) that influence why students post the images and the captions the way that they do. This paper thus needs to be supported by solid research and data.
3) Works Cited page/bibliography. Minimum of 2 academic books or 4 peer-reviewed articles, or a combination thereof. One of the books can be the book we use in this class.
4) Submit it on Lamaku under "Assignment," and then choose, "MID TERM."

Persuasive Presentation of your Instagram Account (Final Exam)
For Final Exam, students are to:

1) Add 10 more images on the Instagram account they submitted for Mid Term (for a total of 30 images). They will need to incorporate the professor's feedback on their mid-term project in REVISING their account. Submit this revised project on Lamaku under "Assignment," and then click on "FINAL".
2) Do a **ten-minute** MAX presentation on the Instagram account. Students will have to explain why they make the Instagram account/campaign the way that they did and why it will be an effective social media campaign. They must use class materials (direct quotes) or other relevant academic resources in their presentation. It must be persuasive, creative, and engaging.

The numerical grade distribution will dictate the final grade. The passing grade for a course is 10/20.

Class participation: Active class participation – this is what makes classes lively and instructive. Come on time and prepared. Class participation is based on quality of comments, not quantity.
Exam policy: In the exam, students will not be allowed to bring any document (except if allowed by the lecturer). Unexcused absences from exams or failure to submit cases will result in zero grades in the calculation of numerical averages. Exams are collected at the end of examination periods. For this class, in lieu of traditional exam, we will have oral presentation as an exam.

Course structure

Session	Topic
1	1. Going through the syllabus. 2. Class Agreement. 3. Introduce yourself on Padlet (Name, Major, What You Hope to Learn in This Class, Share Your favorite video—could be youtube clip of beauty tutorial, travel or health video, politics/news/book video, whatever that you LOVE!) PADLET website is here: https://padlet.com/socialsciencesuhmanoa/gender-and-sexuality-in-digital-media-h9jk1c0gmkq8u1cq password: wgss 4. Comment on at least ONE other student's posting on Padlet. (For example, if you like the same video, genre, or from the same major, have the same reason taking this class, etc. say something about that) 5. Sign up for Discussion Leader. 6. We will watch in class and discuss https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5OVw-77ABc #emilyinparis posting https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkxtejJ5DOQ critiques of Emily in Paris about social media marketing manager ****Workshop: "How to Facilitate and Participate in Class Discussions"**

	Clicking the "Enter" Button: What Space Are We Entering into? Rossi, Julien. "Chapter 5: Is There a Right to Be Offline 'for No Reason' in France?" Title of the book: *The Right Not to Use the Internet.* Available online at UH Library https://uhawaii-manoa.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UHAWAII_MANOA/1j16209/alma9912988609905681
2	Saraswati, L. Ayu. *Pain Generation: Social Media, Feminist Activism, and the Neoliberal Selfie*. Chapter 1 (pages 1-12) and chapter 2. Available online at UH Library https://uhawaii-manoa.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UHAWAII_MANOA/1j16209/alma9951145819205682 ****Workshop: "How to give engaging, convincing, and persuasive presentations."**
	Words and World-Shaping Johnson, Paige. "(Re)contextualizing the 'Anti-Woke' Discourse: Attitudes towards Gender-Inclusive Language in English and French on X (formerly Twitter)" (Lamaku)
3	Laquièze, Ugo. "#LGBTpropaganda #GenderTheory #Wokism: Expanding and Blurring the Boundaries of Francophone Anti-Gender Discourse Propagated on Twitter." (Lamaku) Zsombok, Gyula and Peter Tarjanyi. "When Iel Broke the Internet: A Social Media Study on the Reception of Non-Binary Pronouns." (Lamaku) https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/13/tech/french-hate-speech-social-media-law
	Gender and the Digital World De Blasio, Emiliana and Donatella Selva. "Chapter 4: Intersectional Digital Inequalities after the Pandemic: Tackling Digital Gender Gaps in France and Italy." (Lamaku)
4	Harsin, Jayson. "Post-Truth Populism: The French Anti-Gender Theory Movement and Cross-Cultural Similarities." (Lamaku) Wallaschek, Stefan and Lara Minkus. "Scrolling Backwards? The Link Between Social Media Use and Gender Attitudes in Europe." (Lamaku)
	Sexuality in Digital Spaces Troth, Brian. "Digital Geographies: Online Spaces and Gay Identity in Twenty-First-Century France" (Lamaku)
5	Severson, Pernilla. "Webisodes as Different Subversive Forms of Representation of Gender and Sexuality." *Identities and Intimacies on Social Media.* (Available online at UH Library https://uhawaii-manoa.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UHAWAII_MANOA/1j16209/alma9912262305905681 https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/11/15/new-study-reveals-what-has-changed-in-french-peoples-sex-lives **Instagram Account Due today by 11:59 pm**
6	**The Body on Social Media**

	Jiotsa, Barbara. et al. "Social Media Use and Body Image Disorders: Association between Frequency of Comparing One's Own Physical Appearance to That of People Being Followed on Social Media and Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness." (Lamaku) Bussy-Socrate, Hélène and Karina Sokolova. "Sociomaterial Influence on Social Media: Exploring Sexualized Practices of Influencers on Instagram" (Lamaku) Martin, Philippe, et al. "Young People's Proposals for a Web-Based Intervention for Sexual Health Promotion: A French Qualitative Study." (Lamaku) https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/france-tiktok-still-steering-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-towards-depressive-and-suicidal-content/
7	**Harassment and Hope** Fay, Isabel. "Disclosure, Twitter, and the Power of #WhyIDidntReport: Applying French and Raven's Bases of Power to Tweets from Victims of Sexual Violence." (Lamaku) Lopez, Irene. "Denouncing Sexual Violence: A Cross-Language and Cross-Cultural Analysis of #MeToo and #BalanceTonPorc" (Lamaku) Sandra Muller, France's #MeToo creator, fined for defamation https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49824683
8	**Online Activism** Fagundes-Ausani, Mariana. "Combating Anti-Feminism and Building Strategies for Gender Equality: The World of Digital Feminist Media Activism in Brazil and France." (Lamaku) Mouflard, Claire. "Stages, Streets, and Social Media: Intersectional Feminism and Online Activism in France during the Pandemic." (Lamaku). Collins, Elizabeth M. ""#AsiatiquesDeFrance": Confronting Anti-Asian Racism in Contemporary France through Digital Media." (Lamaku)
9	**Online, Sex, and Work** Pajnik, Mojca, et al. "Digitalising Sex Commerce and Sex Work: A Comparative Analysis of French, Greek and Slovenian websites." (Lamaku) Thurman, Neil, et. al. "Lessons from France on the Regulation of Internet Pornography: How Displacement Effects, Circumvention, and Legislative Scope May Limit the Efficacy of Article 23." (Lamaku) van Voorst, Roanne. "The Future of Sex Work: Sex Care, Digitalization and Inclusive Pornography." (Lamaku) https://www.france24.com/en/france/20230125-education-in-the-spotlight-as-watchdog-warns-of-sexist-backlash-sweeping-france
10	**Sex, Technology, and the Future** Faustino, Maria. "Rebooting an Old Script by New Means: Teledildonics—The Technological Return to the 'Coital Imperative.'" (Lamaku)

	Hipólito, Inês, Katie Winkle, and Merete Lie. "Enactive Artificial Intelligence: Subverting Gender Norms in Human-Robot Interaction." (Lamaku) https://www.forbes.com/sites/susannahbreslin/2018/01/30/paris-sex-doll-brothel-france/
11	**Final Exam/Oral Presentation in Class**

Bibliography

See above

Lecturer's biography

L. Ayu Saraswati, Ph.D is professor in women, gender, and sexuality studies at the University of Hawai`i. She is the author and co-editor of six books, including *Pain Generation: Social Media, Feminist Activism, and the Neoliberal Selfie* (Silver Winner of 2023 Nautilus Book award for Social Change). Her latest book is *Scarred: A Feminist Journey through Pain* (Winner of 2024 Association of American Publishers PROSE Auto/biography book award). Her works have been included as one of *Meridians* journal's most impactful works in the past twenty years, *Library Journal*'s Best Books of 2023, and in *Vogue Australia*'s "An Essential Queer Reading List."

Moodle

This course is on Moodle: **XXX**

Academic integrity

Be aware of the rules in Université Paris Dauphine about plagiarism and cheating during exams. All work turned in for this course must be your own work, or that of your own group. Working as part of a group implies that you are an active participant and fully contributed to the output produced by that group.