

# Cyberfeminism

Professor Jessica Pressman

ENG 563

Fall 2017

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Cyberfeminism” is a term from the 1990s that has been nearly forgotten, along with much of the radical born-digital art from those early, pivotal days of the Web and cyberculture. “Concerned with countering the perceived dominance of men in the use and development of information technology, the Internet, etc.” (OED), cyberfeminism is about perspective, ideology critique, and media archaeology. This course examines seminal texts of cultural theory and digital literature from the 1980s-early 2000s focused on the relationship between gender and digital culture. From theorists such as Donna Haraway and Sadie Plant to hypertext literature by M.D. Coverley and Shelley Jackson, this course recovers forgotten threads from digital culture’s recent but compact history to weave a web for understanding our contemporary cultural context.

### Learning Outcomes

In this class, you will

- acquire an understanding of the role of gender in media history and theory
- become familiar with seminal texts and thinkers in the history of new media
- acquire fluency with feminist theory
- apply cultural theories to the critical analysis of the digital
- sharpen your ability to construct thesis-driven arguments

### **Administrative Information**

Email: <a href="mailto:jpressman@sdsu.edu">jpressman@sdsu.edu</a> <i>*Do not expect a response within 24 hours</i>	Course Website: <a href="http://fall2017-cyberfeminism.jessicapressman.com">http://fall2017-cyberfeminism.jessicapressman.com</a>
Office: AL 261 Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-11 and by appointment	Course Meeting: T/Th 11-12:15 Room: EBA 254
English Subject Librarian: Markel Tumlin	<a href="mailto:mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu">mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu</a>
Special Collection Librarian: Anna Culbertson	<a href="mailto:aculbertson@mail.sdsu.edu">aculbertson@mail.sdsu.edu</a>

## ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: 15%

Presentation: What is missing? 5%

Weekly Blog Responses: 20%

3 Short Critical Interventions: 10% each, total of 30%

Final Essay Project: 30%

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### **-Attendance and Participation (15%)**

This is *your* class, and your attendance and participation is vital to its success.

Attendance matters and counts towards your grade. Come to class prepared to discuss the novels in depth; this means having read the *entire* text assigned *before* the first class meeting dedicated to that text.

**-Your participation grade includes attending *all* classes**

**-Your participation grade includes *speaking* in class.** If you have trouble speaking in public, please come see me early in the semester.

**-Your participation grade includes *an in-person meeting with the professor.***

**-Your participation grade includes a *3-minute presentation on one of the texts.*** This presentation should serve to start the class's conversation for the day. You will point us to a question from the day's reading and to the specific passage in the text that sparked that inquiry for you. You will get the discussion rolling...

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### **-Presentation: What is missing? 5%**

At the end of the semester, you will give a short (5 minute) presentation on a text or art object that is missing from our syllabus. You will introduce the object and explain why it matters in the context of our course of study.

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### **-Weekly Blog Posts (20%)**

You will write (300-500 words) **blog responses to the reading *and* each provide a comment on a peer's blog each week.** These short critical responses and comments will be posted to the course blog *before the second-class* meeting of the week. They will serve to extend the conversation and coverage of the course by allowing you to 1) express, share, and comment upon interests, questions, and concerns related to the readings and also to 2) enable the professor to address or incorporate these topics in that week's lecture. The blog is intended to extend the space for learning and discussion.

\* Late posts do not receive credit.

-You will be given an *overall* grade for blog posts, based on completion and content, not a grade for each post. Rubric for grading is available on our website.

Your Blog Grade is based on 2-parts: 1) a completion grade, and 2) a content grade.

<b>The completion component of the blog grade</b> requires you to have the following number of posts: A= 10-13 posts	<b>The content component of the blog grade</b> is based on the following grading rubric A= Post contains a focused thesis or
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B= 7-9 posts C= 5-6 posts D= 3-4 posts F= 2 or less <hr/>	question and close reading of a passage, B= Post contains a close reading of content but no focused question or thesis C= Post contains no analysis of text (no close reading), just summary and undirected ideas D=Post contains little substantive thinking as content <hr/>
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**-3 Creative-Critical Interventions (10% each, 30% total)**

These short (3-4 page) writing assignments allow you to explore the topic of cyberfeminism in creative and media-specific ways. You will respond to a text, presenting an argument about it, but you are free to do so in creative ways: you can write a poem or use a digital tool to remix a text or present your response.

- You will be graded on content *and* format of your response/intervention.
- You can rewrite these interventions for a better grade. Revisions are due *before* the next deadline for a creative-critical intervention.

**-Final Project (30%):**

This essay provides an opportunity to explore your primary interests from the course in an analytical (i.e. thesis-driven) essay that approaches *what is missing* from the syllabus. Find something *not* on our syllabus and write a 5-7 page essay explaining why it should be—what it matters to our topic and method of study-- by relating it to other texts and artworks that we read during the semester and/or by situating the work/object/text in historical and theoretical context and closing read its content and format.

- The essay should be 5-7 pages (double-spaced) and posted to our course blog.
- \*\*Graduate students will write an 8-10 page essay
- Late essays are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day late.

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**Extra Credit (Total of 1%)**

There are multiple ways to earn extra credit in this class, all of which will be listed on our website.

- \*\*To receive credit for any of these events, you must not only attend but also write a blog post that situates that event (the reading, the literature, the discussion) in the context of our class
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## READING SCHEDULE

### Part I: Context

#### **Week 1: Introduction**

August 29: introduction to the class

August 31: Joanna Walsh, "She wore a USB cord instead of a necklace": whatever happened to Cyberfeminism?" in *The New Statesman* [online], May 2016

#### **Week 2: Cybernetics and Simulacra**

September 5: Norbert Wiener, "Cybernetics in History" from *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1950)

September 7: Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" (1983)

#### **Week 3: Cyberspace and Feminist Theory**

September 12: Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" (1983)

-Extra Credit Lecture-- Piotr Mareki (Jagiellonian University, Poland)

September 14: Hélène Cixious, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976)

#### **Week 4: Feminist Theory**

September 19: Luce Irigauy, "This Sex which is not One" (1977), essay version

September 21: *Rosh Hashanah services, no class*

#### **Week 5: Hypertext**

September 26: George Landow, excerpt from *Hypertext*

September 28: Linda Carroli and Josephine Wilson, "Water Always Writes in Plural" (1997)

\*creative-critical intervention project due—Sunday, 9/24@ midnight, posted to blog

### Part II: Cyberfeminism

#### **Week 6: Cyborg Manifesto**

October 3: Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto"

October 5: Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto"

#### **Week 7: Patchwork Girl**

October 10: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*

October 12: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*

Shelley Jackson, "The Stitch Bitch"

#### **Week 8: Cyberliterature**

October 17: M.D Coverly, "Endless Suburbs" (1999)

-explore "The Progressive Dinner Party" (1999)

\*additional reading: M.D Coverly's *Califia*

October 19: Guest Visit: Marjorie Luesebrink (aka M.D. Coverley)

*\*creative-critical intervention project due-- Sunday, 10/22@ midnight, posted to blog*

**Week 9: Hands-on Learning**

October 24: *Tools Workshop in DH Center (Library)*

October 26: *Special Collections visit (Library)*

**Week 10: Sadie Plant, Zeros + Ones**

October 31: *Zeros + Ones*

November 2: *Zeros + Ones*

**Week 11: Manifestos**

November 7: VNS, “The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st century” (1991)

November 9: Old Boys Network, “Call for Contributions” (2004)

*\*creative-critical intervention project due-- Sunday, 11/12@ midnight, posted to blog*

**Week 12: Cyberliterature**

November 14: Natalie Bookchin “The Intruder” (1999), Mez, “the data[[h!]][bleeding texts” (2000)

November 16: *Special Collections visit*

*--proposal for final project due-- Sunday, 11/19@ midnight, posted to blog*

**Week 13: Final Project Review**

November 21: Peer Review Session for Final Project

November 23: *no class meeting--Thanksgiving*

**Week 14: Cyberfeminism Today**

November 28: Legacy Russell, “Glitch Feminism” (2013)

November 30: Alexandra Juhasz and Anne Balsamo, “An Idea Whose Time is Here: FemTechNet – A Distributed Online Collaborative Course (DOCC)” (2012)

**Week 15: Student Presentations: What is missing?**

December 5: Student Presentations—What is missing?

December 7: Student Presentations—What is missing?

**Week 16: Conclusions**

December 12: Concluding Discussion

December 14: *No class meeting*; instead, extra office hours for individual meetings about final projects. Sign-up to meet on 12/12 and 12/13

## **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

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*NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change.*

### **SDSU as “safe space”**

The CSU has affirmed its commitment to ‘protecting access, affordability, intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all students . . . including supporting DACA students.’ Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status and other categories of identity is prohibited. If you have concerns about your status at the university, please visit <http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/EOP/> for information or contact the Dean of Students or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in your College.”

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

I take teaching seriously, and I expect you to take seriously your work as a student. That means that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonest includes, but is not limited to: (a) using assignments that you wrote for another class, (b) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), and (c) copying someone else’s work on an assignment, basic cheating. Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action. If you have questions at all, you should consult me immediately.

### **DISABILITY STATEMENT**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at [\(619\) 594-6473](tel:6195946473). To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.