

## WGS 385 – FEMINIST\_MEDIA\_STUDIES: SEX\_AND\_TECH



photo by simon bacon: <https://phi.ca/en/antenna/sdd-experience/>

**TIME/LOCATION:** TBD

**INSTRUCTOR:** samantha pinson wrisley, phd </>

**COURSE\_DESCRIPTION:** This class takes a feminist media studies approach to various questions concerning sexuality and technology: How does technology enhance, trouble, and disrupt sexuality, sexual identity, and sexual expression? How do depictions of technological advancement in film intersect current ideas of gender, sexuality, race, and identity? Do advanced forms of technology pose a significant risk to human relationality? How might feminism respond to the more worrisome aspects of technological advancement?

The course begins with a primer on feminist media studies theory and methods before moving into texts on cyberfeminism/xenofeminism and digital media studies. Then we will collectively engage with objects, films, fiction, texts, that explore the chosen theme and apply a feminist media studies analysis to said object. The course culminates with student projects that analyze a cultural object from a feminist media studies perspective.

**LEARNING\_OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- > Apply a variety of feminist frameworks to critically analyze different forms of media.
- > Use critical and creative thinking to draw connections between course materials and feminist politics.

- > Develop and apply an array of communication techniques for interactions with broad publics, including non-academic and interdisciplinary audiences, such as public writing and media projects (e.g., podcasts).

**COURSE\_EXPECTATIONS:** Students are expected to

- > Attend all class meetings.
- > Prepare for class by reading and/or engaging the set materials in advance of class each week.
- > Actively participate in class discussion and collaborative projects.
- > Prepare for and complete all individual and group assignments.

**GENERAL\_POLICIES:**

**Classroom behavior:** Please arrive on time and leave after class is finished. Be prepared for your lectures, participate, and do the readings. Respect your fellow classmates during class discussions.

**Formatting:** All written work should be typed and double-spaced, in a standard 12-point font and with one-inch margins unless stated otherwise. The length of the assignment is based on wordcount, not number of pages. Please include page numbers on each page; and include the paper title and your name at the top of the first page.

**Late Work:** Sometimes life happens and students realize they are not going to finish an assignment on time. Reach out to your instructor once you gather you need an extension on an assignment so we can negotiate the length of that extension. If you do not have time to reach out, remember it is better to submit something - *anything* - than not submit anything at all. Undiscussed late work will be docked a full letter grade for each day it is late.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism, including the unauthorized use of AI learning systems like Chat GPT, is a serious breach of academic conduct, and it will be penalized. Please refer to the Emory College Honor Code, online at: [tinyurl.com/2p8cf6ph](http://tinyurl.com/2p8cf6ph)

**Disability:** Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need a classroom accommodation, please discuss this with me as soon as possible and contact the Emory Department of Accessibility Services (DAS): 404-727-9877; <http://accessibility.emory.edu>.

**Title IX Statement:** I am a Designated Reporter under the University's Title IX Policy. As a Designated Reporter, I will direct students who disclose prohibited discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment or violence, to resources that can help. I am also obligated to report the information shared with me to the University's Title IX Coordinator/Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance.

**Course Materials:** All course materials will be made available to students through Canvas with the exception of Helen Hester's *Xenofeminist Manifesto*, which is available, in its entirety, online (more details given in class).

**BLANKET CONTENT WARNING:** Please be aware that the nature of this course's subject matter means that we will encounter difficult material, including material that discusses sexual assault, eating disorders, self-harm, hate crimes, and institutional racism/sexism. Use

your best judgment with regard to your mental health when approaching these course materials, including films.

[Does The Dog Die?](#) is a website you can use to check for specific triggers in films.

## **ASSESSMENT\_&\_ASSIGNMENTS:**

attendance and participation . . . . .	20 points
in-class midterm . . . . .	25 points
independent review . . . . .	25 points
group project proposal . . . . .	5 points
group project . . . . .	25 points

**Attendance and Participation:** This is a discussion-based class. Without your informed presence, there is no class. Thus, you are required to come to class prepared, i.e., having read and reflected on the materials and having the materials in hand, ready to discuss. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. **Students are allowed four “free” absences to account for sick days or mental health days.** Please use these days wisely. **After four absences, your attendance and participation grade will drop a half-grade and will continue to drop with each additional absence. Arriving significantly late or leaving significantly early counts as an absence.** If you have extenuating circumstances, please discuss them with me ahead of time so we can make arrangements. Note: If you contract COVID, please follow Emory protocol. I will make class materials available to you. DO NOT come to class if you are feeling ill. For grading criteria regarding attendance and participation, see the syllabus folder on Canvas.

**In-Class Midterm:** There will be an in-class essay midterm that will assess student’s understanding of the first half of the course content. The exam will consist of five (5) essay questions, from which students will select three (3). We will have a review session prior to this midterm.

**Independent Review:** After reading the set texts that cover the groundwork for both feminist media studies as a discipline and feminist science fiction/technology studies/posthumanism as a genre, you will select a film/novel that engages the themes of the course (sex and technology broadly construed), watch/read it, and write a review of your chosen film/novel. For examples of film reviews, check out the following links:

- [www.rogerebert.com/](http://www.rogerebert.com/)
- [www.nytimes.com/reviews/movies](http://www.nytimes.com/reviews/movies)
- [www.theguardian.com/us/film](http://www.theguardian.com/us/film)

For ideas on films/books to review, see the below list\*:

Children of Men (2006)

Her (2013)

Annihilation (2018)	Under the Skin (2013)
Alien (1979)	Contact (1997)
Cherry 2000 (1987)	Arrival (2016)
Mad Max: Fury Road (2015)	Blade Runner 2049 (2017)
High Life (2018)	Black Mirror: San Junipero (2016)
Parable of the Sower (1993) by Octavia Butler	The Hierarchies (2020) by Ros Anderson
Logan's Run (1976)	The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) by Ursula Le Guin
Crimes of the Future (2022)	Possessor (2020)

\*This list is in no way exhaustive; if you have a different idea, feel free to use that one.

**Group Project:** Towards the end of the class, you and your classmates will settle on either a topic or a medium (e.g., podcast, zine, short film, etc.) for your final project. Groups will be sorted based on the student's preferred medium/topic. With your group, you will submit a group project proposal (worth 5 pts.) where you will lay out the who, what, where, and why of your project. I will provide feedback to each group on their project proposals during this process. The last full week of class will be dedicated to working on your projects as a group. On the last day of class, you will share your final product with your classmates and talk through your process.

## </> COURSE\_SCHEDULE </>

thurs 8/29	Introduction	What is feminist media studies? Why sex and technology?
tues 9/3	Feminist Psychoanalytic Critique	Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in <i>Feminist Film Theory</i> (1975).
thurs 9/5	Feminist Psychoanalytic Critique	Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," <i>Scene</i> (2009).
tues 9/10	Black Feminist Critique	bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in <i>Feminist Film Theory</i> (1992).
thurs 9/12	Affect and Interpretation	Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation" (1968).
tues 9/17	Posthumanism	Rosi Braidotti, "Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism," in <i>Anthropocene Feminism</i> .

thurs 9/19	Posthumanism	Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulation," (only pages 1 & 2).  Guy Debord, "Spectacle Perfected (1-10)," in <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> (1967).
<b>Special Screening of <i>The Matrix</i> will be September 20th at 6pm in Whitehall 110.</b>		
tues 9/24	Cyborgs	Discuss: <i>The Matrix</i> (1999), dir. The Wachowski Sisters.
thurs 9/26	Cyborgs	Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto." (1985)  <i>Read this for clarification:</i> Krista Lynes, "Cyborgs and Virtual Bodies." <i>The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory</i> , (2015).
tues 10/1	Xenofeminism	Helen Hester, "What is Xenofeminism?" and "Xenofeminist Futurities," in <i>Xenofeminism</i> (2018).
thurs 10/3	Xenofeminism	Helen Hester, "Xenofeminist Technologies" and "Conclusion: Xeno-Reproduction," in <i>Xenofeminism</i> (2018).
tues 10/8	Review	<b>Review Session</b>
thurs 10/10	Assessment	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
tues 10/15	Fall Break	No Class
thurs 10/17	Trad Wives and Domestic Technology	"Trad Wife Rises with Sarah Archer," <i>You're Wrong About Podcast</i> (2024). Available <a href="#">here</a> .  Sarah Archer, "In the Midcentury American Home, Radical Design Began in the Kitchen." Available <a href="#">here</a> .
tues 10/22	Film Screening	<i>The Stepford Wives</i> (1972), dir. Bryan Forbes.
thurs 10/24	Discussion	Complete film + Discussion
tues 10/29	Film Screening	<i>Ex Machina</i> (2015), dir. Alex Garland.
thurs 10/31	Discussion	Complete film + Discussion
tues 11/5 *Election Day	Film Screening	<i>Advantageous</i> (2015), dir. Jennifer Phang.
thurs 11/7	Discussion	Complete film + Discussion
tues 11/12	Class Time Meetings	[I will be holding extra office hours during class time. If you would like to discuss your <b>independent film review</b> , use this <a href="#">Google Doc</a> to sign up for a time block. Otherwise, use class

		time to work on your <b>independent film review.</b> ]
thurs 11/14	NWSA	No class <b>Independent Review Due 11/16 at 11:59pm on Canvas.</b>
tues 11/19	Film Screening	<i>Her</i> (2013), dir. Spike Jonze <b>Group Project Proposal</b>
thurs 11/21	Discussion + Group Project Proposal	Complete Film + Discussion <b>Group Project Proposal Due 11/22 at 11:59pm on Canvas.</b>
tues 11/26 & thurs 11/28	Thanksgiving Break	No Class
tues 12/3	Group Project	Use class time to work on group project.
thurs 12/5	Group Project	Use class time to work on group project.
tues 12/10	Group Project	<b>Presentations</b>
<b>Final Projects Due December 12th at 11:59pm on Canvas</b>		