

CREATING FEMINIST MEDIA

Fall 2018 - VM 420-01 - 4 credits
Thursdays 6-9:45p - Ansin 601

If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.
Shirley Chisholm

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By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will develop their authorial voice through creating socially-conscious film, video, and/or audio projects. Students will critically examine the work of female-identified media artists, discuss key contemporary feminist issues illuminated by the work, and explore artistic interpretations of the female experience. Class discussion, screenings, and critical readings will provide the necessary foundation for innovative and informed media projects.

Note: the nature of this course requires the screening and discussion of potentially sensitive material during every class.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through production assignments, discussion, screenings, and critical readings, this course seeks to:

- Guide students as they create socially-conscious media works that explore their own relationship with feminism and the female experience, lived or observed
- Explore methods, modes, and techniques of exemplary feminist media production to assist students as they develop their own creative authorial voice
- Provide an overview of key contemporary feminist issues and examine the work of female-identified media makers across ethical, societal, social, domestic, and individual contexts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Express personal experience and authorial voice through producing media works that challenge hegemonic gender norms and/or provide alternative narratives for women
- Link conceptual understanding of contemporary feminist issues to artistic expression and the effective communication of an artist's intended message
- Analyze media from a feminist perspective, considering personhood, representation, gender norms, interpersonal relationships, and self-exploration
- Examine the ways personal experience of gender informs the interpretation of media art
- Articulate key concepts in feminist criticism, including primary arguments and historical context

FEMINIST SPHERES

For the purposes of this course, various feminist issues have been organized into topical spheres:

- **Ethical:** female personhood, basic human rights, rape, abortion, etc.
- **Societal:** institutional representation, access to power, equal pay, etc.
- **Social:** beauty standards, gender expression/performance, trans identity, etc.
- **Domestic:** gender roles, division of domestic labor, motherhood, having children (or not), etc.
- **Individual:** interpersonal relationships (romantic/platonic/familial), internalized misogyny, etc.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Engaged discussion is a key component of this course. These guidelines foster a respectful classroom climate:

- Respect your peers. Disagreements are natural (and welcome!), but grant everyone courtesy whether or not you agree with what they say.
- You do not have to express your own opinion on a subject, but if you do, expect others to disagree.
- Some of you may wish to bring up personal experiences when relevant to class discussion. Please do! But note that your comments are then a potential topic for discussion.
- Respect your classmates' privacy when you leave the classroom. Las Vegas rules apply.
- Feel free to hate some of the work you see, but remember that our goal is to understand the work and how it might be useful to us as media artists. Respond not only to content, but to the mode of creation.
- You are free to change your mind on any topic at any time (one of the great benefits of being human). Personal transformation encouraged.

PARTICIPATION / ATTENDANCE

This course requires informed and committed participation. Come to class ready to actively listen and discuss. More than two absences will lower your final grade by a letter. For example, if you earn an A- but miss three classes, you will receive a B-. If you miss four or more classes, you will fail the course.

COURSE READINGS

My reading list is always evolving and depends a lot on where discussion takes us. You will receive handouts and/or links via Canvas for all required reading. For the most part, you will be able to choose which readings to focus on within any given topical sphere (see Assignments section).

EQUIPMENT ALLOCATION (EDC)

- Canon C-100 (interchangeable lens)
- Canon XC-15 w/ on-board mic (fixed lens)
- Sony FS5
- Tascam DR-44 recorder
- Canon lenses / batteries
- Shotgun mics / lavalier mics
- Tripods / Monopods
- Lowel Elemental Kit
- Gel kit / Flexfill / sand bags
- Boom poles / XLR cables / stingers

GRADING

This course is a production workshop in creating feminist media (surprise!). You are expected to regularly produce creative work. This is based on the principle that the more you practice, the better you become. Use EVERY assignment to communicate what is important to you and **take risks**.

Presentation	20%
Creative Reading Responses / Critiques	25%
Midterm Project	25%
Final Project / Group Exhibition	30%

ASSIGNMENTS

Further details on all assignments will be shared in class.

Presentation: What is “feminist media”? (20% of final grade)

This is the platform for your manifesto: what is “feminist media”? What does it look like? What does it say? Select a female-identified media artist that inspires you and/or works in the specific medium you intend to pursue. Choose 5-10 minutes of their work. What makes this particular work feminist? Discuss the content both as a work of art and as a social commentary, including any relevant aspects of the artist’s life you feel contribute to their authorial voice. I encourage you to consider makers from underrepresented socio-economic, cultural, or gender identity backgrounds. Prepare a presentation and screen the clips you have selected. Submit clips, slides, and/or notes on Canvas.

- Presentations will run throughout the semester; dates to be assigned.

Creative Reading Responses / Critiques (25% of final grade)

At the beginning of each topical sphere, you will receive related readings. Select the reading that most interests you and respond to it by creating a 2- to 3-minute video that reflects on the text. Be as straightforward or as creative as you like—the videos can include abstract ideas, monologues, dialogues, archival footage, etc. Unlike your midterm and final projects, production value is not as important as progress toward cultivating your artistic voice. All work will be shown in class and you will be expected to discuss your work’s relationship to the reading you selected. You will also be assigned a creative partner whose work you will formally critique throughout the semester (and vice versa). **Late submissions are not accepted.** If you miss the deadline, you forfeit the points allotted to that sphere.

- Ethical: September 27
- Societal: In-class activity on October 11 (no video response)
- Social: November 8
- Domestic: November 29
- Individual: In-class activity on December 6 (no video response)

Midterm Project (25% of final grade)

Select one sentence/phrase from any of the assigned readings and create a 4- to 6-minute project that creatively responds to it. Use the sentence as a seed for your ideas, but feel free to interpret loosely. Projects can be of any narrative structure: fiction, nonfiction, experimental, audio-only, etc. You will present your proposal and your midterm project for feedback/critique. Projects will be evaluated for the successful execution of your idea, originality of concept, and production value. A grading rubric will be distributed. Late submissions will be penalized 10 points for every day the project is late.

- Proposal: October 4
- Project: October 18

Final Project / Group Exhibition (30% of final grade)

Create a 5- to 7-minute project of your own conception and execution. Like the midterm project, your piece can be of any narrative structure, but should speak to reflections and ideas you have had throughout your participation in this course. The parameters for the final project are purposefully open so that you can further develop your own personal style and artistic voice. You will present your proposal to the class for feedback/critique. Projects will be evaluated for the successful execution of your idea, originality of concept, and production value. **Late submissions are not accepted.** You will also plan and execute a group exhibition/screening. Planning roles will be assigned in class as part of our Societal sphere discussion.

- Proposal: November 15
- Exhibition: December 13

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

If we need to change things up, we will do that together.

WEEK 1: Thursday, September 6

INTRODUCTION

- Class introductions / detailed syllabus review
- EDC Contracts
- Crash course in feminist history
- Receive introductory readings

WEEK 2: Thursday, September 13

ADVENTURE TIME!

- *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85* Exhibit (Institute of Contemporary Art)
- Receive Ethical sphere readings

WEEK 3: Thursday, September 20

ETHICAL SPHERE

- Schedule presentations; assign creative partners
- Ethical sphere screenings and discussion
- Filmmaker visit: Nicole Rose Kaveny

WEEK 4: Thursday, September 27

ETHICAL SPHERE, continued

- **Ethical Sphere reading response due**
- Presentations 1 and 2
- Receive Societal sphere readings

WEEK 5: Thursday, October 4

MIDTERM PROJECT PREP

- **Midterm project proposal due; proposal presentations**
- Camera overview: Canon C100, Canon XC15, and Sony FS5 (Nick Corsano)
- Presentations 3 and 4

WEEK 6: Thursday, October 11

SOCIETAL SPHERE

- Societal sphere screenings and discussion
- Presentations 5 and 6
- Final group exhibition planning / assignments

WEEK 7: Thursday, October 18

MIDTERM PROJECTS

- **Midterm project due**
- Screening of midterm projects / partnered critique

WEEK 8: Thursday, October 25

ADVENTURE TIME!

- Attend Boston Asian American Film Festival screening (Bright Family Screening Room)
 - o *Drawn Together* (2017)
 - o *Flip the Record* (2017)
 - o *Wonder Buffalo* (2017)
- Receive Social sphere readings

WEEK 9: Thursday, November 1

SOCIAL SPHERE

- Social sphere screenings and discussion
- Presentations 7 and 8

WEEK 10: Thursday, November 8

SOCIAL SPHERE, continued

- **Social sphere reading response due**
- Presentations 9 and 10
- Receive Domestic sphere readings

WEEK 11: Thursday, November 15

DOMESTIC SPHERE

- **Final project proposal due; proposal presentations**
- Domestic sphere screenings and discussion
- Presentations 11 and 12

WEEK 12: Thursday, November 29

DOMESTIC SPHERE, continued

- **Domestic sphere reading response due**
- Final group exhibition planning
- Receive Individual sphere readings

WEEK 13: Thursday, December 6

INDIVIDUAL SPHERE

- Collaborative Individual sphere reading response: The Long Take (in-class activity)
- Final group exhibition planning; determine play order

WEEK 14: Thursday, December 13

FINAL GROUP EXHIBITION

- **Public group exhibition**
 - **Final project files due**
 - Bemoaning the fact that our time together has come to an end
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Diversity Statement

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with the course instructor or to contact the Social Justice Center at 617-824-8528 or by email at sjc@emerson.edu.

Title IX Statement

I am a responsible employee at Emerson College which means I am not a confidential resource. I am required to report disclosures that may violate Emerson's Sexual Misconduct Policy. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Healing and Advocacy Collective, Counseling and Psychological Services, and/or the Center for Health and Wellness. If you would like to report an incident involving a possible violation of Emerson's Sexual Misconduct Policy, please contact our Title IX Coordinator at titleix@emerson.edu or 617-824-8999. You can also report online: www.emerson.edu/reportaconcern

Accessibility Statement

Emerson College is committed to providing equal access and support to all students who qualify through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may fully participate in the Emerson experience. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services at SAS@emerson.edu or 617-824-8592 to make an appointment with an SAS staff member. Students are encouraged to contact SAS early in the semester. Please be aware that accommodations are not applied retroactively.

Plagiarism Statement

It is the responsibility of all Emerson students to know and adhere to the College's policy on plagiarism, which can be found at: www.emerson.edu/policy/plagiarism. If you have any questions concerning the Emerson plagiarism policy or about documentation of sources in work you produce in this course, speak to your instructor.

VMA Production Safety Statement

Safety is a major concern on any film or video set; safety training is also a requirement for employment in the production industry. Emerson supports safety measures and requires safety training through seminars and the VMA Student Production Safety Manual. Students participating in any Emerson film or video production must meet all requirements as set forth by the VMA Student Production Safety Manual and Lenny Manzo, the Director of Production and Safety (DPS). Students with questions or concerns should contact Lenny Manzo (DPS) at 617-824-8126 or leonard_manzo@emerson.edu. In case of emergency, the PRODUCTION SAFETY HOTLINE can be reached 24/7 at 617-939-1311. If you choose to work with minors in your production(s), familiarize yourself with the College's policies on minors (available on the College website). At no time is a student to be one-on-one with a minor without a guardian present.