



**VM 444 - FALL 2021**  
**4 CREDITS - TR 6-7:45PM - PARAMOUNT 515**

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*An artist and an activist are not so far apart.*  
Ava DuVernay

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

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Students develop their authorial voice through creating socially-conscious film, video, and/or audio projects. Students critically examine the work of female-identified media artists, discuss key intersectional feminist issues, and explore artistic interpretations of the female experience. Class discussion, screenings, and critical readings provide the necessary foundation for innovative and informed media projects. *The nature of this course requires the screening and discussion of potentially sensitive material during every class.*

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Through production assignments, discussions, 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.
- 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 dislike 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 can change your mind on any topic at any time (a great perk of being human). Personal transformation encouraged.

## PARTICIPATION / ATTENDANCE

This course requires informed and committed participation. Be ready to actively listen and discuss. Since Fall 2021 is *still* a wild one thanks to the never-ending coronavirus, I am not including a formal attendance policy this semester. That said, you will get 3290843028 times more out of this class if you are fully engaged.

## COURSE READINGS

All required readings are available on Canvas. For the most part, you will be able to choose which readings to focus on within any given topical sphere (see *Assignments*). If you have a reading you've been meaning to do that fits a certain topical sphere, I am open to you running it by me as inspiration for your creative work. We can discuss how it could potentially be integrated.

## EQUIPMENT ALLOCATION (EDC)

- Canon C-100 (interchangeable lenses) and accessories
- Sony FS5 and accessories
- Canon XC-15 w/ on-board mic (fixed lens) and accessories
- Fuji XT-3 and accessories
- Sony PCM-D10 recorder
- Shotgun mics, wireless lavalier mics
- Tripods, monopods, Easyrig Minimax stabilizer
- 3-point LED light kit
- Gel kit / Flexfill / sand bags
- Boom poles / XLR cables / stingers / Slates
- Other cameras (including 16mm) and lighting setups by special request and VMA Associate Chair approval

## 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**.

Participation	10%
Portfolio Website	20%
Sphere Responses	35%
Final Project	35%

## ASSIGNMENTS

Further details on all assignments will be shared in class. Canvas will also help you keep yourself organized.

### Portfolio Website (20% of final grade)

You will work throughout the semester on a portfolio website, i.e. your professional, public launch as a feminist media maker! Your website will house the work you do in this class, and anything else you have made that you wish to highlight. You will also polish your résumé, bio, and artist statement for inclusion on your website. If you already have a website, great! We'll make it better. If you make personal pieces for this class that you don't wish to share publicly, that's perfectly fine as long as we connect about it.

- Phase 1 (skeleton site, YouTube/Vimeo account, drafts of bio and artist statement): October 5
- Phase 2 (draft of résumé): November 9
- Phase 3 (final website and final versions of all assets): December 2

### Sphere Video Responses (35% 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 final project, 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. **Late submissions are not accepted.** If you miss the deadline, you forfeit the points allotted to that sphere.

- Ethical: September 21
- Societal: October 5 (Phase 1 of website; no video response)
- Social: October 19
- Domestic: November 4
- Individual: November 18

### Final Project (35% of final grade)

Create a 7- to 10-minute project of your own conception and execution. Less than 7 minutes is fine if production is particularly intense (i.e. animation), but 10 minutes is a firm time limit. 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, and you are also required to schedule an individual rough-cut meeting with me. Projects will be evaluated for the successful execution of your idea, originality of concept, and production value. **Late submissions are not accepted.**

- Proposal: November 9
- Meeting: Throughout Week 15
- Project: December 14

## DRAFT SCHEDULE

Syllabus is subject to change if things get wild, but you will always be informed. See Canvas for more details.

Week 1: September 2	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Class introductions</li><li>- Detailed syllabus review</li><li>- Explore readings for Introduction discussion (see Canvas)</li></ul>
Week 2: September 7 September 9	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Director of Production and Safety visit (9/7 at 6pm)</li><li>- Discuss introductory readings</li><li>- Crash course in feminist history</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to critique</li> <li>- Explore readings for Ethical sphere discussion (see Canvas)</li> </ul>
Week 3: September 14 September 16	Ethical Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical sphere screenings and discussion</li> <li>- Filmmaker visit: Nicole Rose Kaveny (via Zoom; date pending filmmaker availability)</li> </ul>
Week 4: September 21 September 23	Ethical Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ethical sphere video response due (9/21)</b></li> <li>- Explore readings for Societal sphere discussion (see Canvas)</li> </ul> Societal Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss portfolio websites</li> <li>- Societal sphere screenings and discussion</li> </ul>
Week 5: September 28 September 30	Societal Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Societal sphere screenings and discussion, continued</li> <li>- Camera overview: Canon XC-15, Fuji XT-3, Sony FS5, and Canon C-100 (9/30)</li> </ul>
Week 6: October 5 October 7	Societal Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Phase 1 of portfolio website due (10/5)</b></li> <li>- Audio production workshop</li> <li>- Explore readings for Social sphere discussion (see Canvas)</li> </ul> Social Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social sphere screenings and discussion</li> </ul>
Week 7: October 12 October 14	Social Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social sphere screenings and discussion</li> </ul>
Week 8: October 19 October 21	Social Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Social sphere video response due (10/19)</b></li> <li>- Explore readings for Domestic sphere discussion (see Canvas)</li> </ul> Domestic Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic sphere screenings and discussion</li> </ul>
Week 9: October 26 October 28	Domestic Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic sphere screenings and discussion, continued</li> <li>- Halloween party! (10/28)</li> </ul>
Week 10: November 2 November 4	Domestic Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Domestic sphere video response due (11/4)</b></li> </ul> Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final project assigned</li> <li>- Explore readings for Individual sphere discussion (see Canvas)</li> </ul>

	Individual Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual sphere screenings and discussion</li> </ul>
Week 11: November 9	Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Final project proposal and Phase 2 of portfolio website due (11/9)</b></li> <li>- Final project proposal presentations / discussion</li> <li>- No class on November 11 (Veterans' Day)</li> </ul>
Week 12: November 16 November 18	Individual Sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual sphere screenings and discussion, continued</li> <li>- Schedule rough-cut meeting with Colleen (meet by EOD 12/9)</li> <li>- <b>Individual sphere video response due (11/18)</b></li> </ul>
Week 13: November 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>NO CLASS:</b> Thanksgiving week!</li> </ul>
Week 14: November 30 December 2	Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-class workshop time – projects and websites</li> <li>- <b>Phase 3 of portfolio website due (12/2)</b></li> </ul>
Week 15: December 7 December 9	Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual work-in-progress production meetings</li> <li>- No class during regularly scheduled time</li> </ul>
Week 16: December 14	Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Final project due (12/14)</b></li> <li>- This class may run a bit long, so clear your schedules!</li> <li>- Cry about how much we will miss each other</li> </ul>

**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](mailto: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](mailto:titleix@emerson.edu) or 617-824-8999. You can also report online: [www.emerson.edu/reportaconcern](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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.