

Gender, Culture, and Technology: Collaborations in Feminism and Technology  
FemTechNet Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC)  
Colby-Sawyer College, MED 346 HY  
Autumn 2014

**Professor: Melissa Meade**

Email: [meademelissa@gmail.com](mailto:meademelissa@gmail.com) (preferred) or [mmeade@colby-sawyer.edu](mailto:mmeade@colby-sawyer.edu)

Office: 226 Colgate Hall, 603-526-3798

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4-5 PM (in office and on google chat)

Additional office hours will be open to this class as the semester progresses.

You may also reserve time slots at [youcanbookme.com](http://youcanbookme.com) (link forthcoming).

As a hybrid class, we will meet most weeks in person (Mondays 4-5:40, 301 Colgate), and you will complete two hours of online learning each in times of your own choosing each week.

**Partner classes:**

“Gender, Media, and New Technologies” at The Ohio State University, Professor Cricket Keating, and “Collaborations in Feminism and Technology” at the University of Illinois, Professor Sharon Irish

DOCC Commons Site: <http://femtechnet.newschool.edu/>

“During movement times, the people involved have the same problems and can go from one community to the next, start a conversation in one place, and finish it in another.”

Myles Horton, *The Long Haul*

“We’re here, we’re queer, and we have email.” Digital Queers, 1992

“They Want Us to Make a Symphony Out of the Sound of Women Swallowing Their Own Tongues,” Le Tigre, *From the Desk of Mr. Lady*, 2001

This course will explore the relationship among technology, social media, and movements for gender, racial, and sexual justice. In particular, we will examine feminist theories of technology and social change, ways that activists have used technology to build coalitions and unite people across diverse contexts, and links between the “do it yourself” approach to social movement and the open-source ethics in technology cultures. Course topics include: identity and subjectivity; technological activism; gender, race and sexualities; place; labor; ethics; and the transformative potentials of new technologies. The course itself is a part of a cutting-edge experiment in education, culture, and technology. It is a “nodal” course within a Distributed Online Collaborative Course

(DOCC). Students in this node of the DOCC will engage in their course of study alongside, and in dialogue with, other undergraduate and graduate students participating in the DOCC.

**Texts:**

Lisa Darms, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*

Judy Wajcman, *Technofeminism*

Virginia Eubanks, *Digital Dead End*

Other course readings will be available on Moodle or online.

**Course Requirements**

*CSC Class participation (20%):* Come to class each Monday prepared with questions and comments on the assigned reading. You are encouraged to take an active role in classroom discussions by bringing relevant questions, concerns and experiences to the classroom.

*Cross-class participation (20%):* Outside of class, you will be responsible for “sync-watching” a video dialogue with one or more students from another DOCC class. Discuss the video using an on-line chat/collaboration service (e.g. the Commons forums, todaysmeet.com, gmail chat, facebook chat). In your discussion, highlight ideas that you find compelling or that you have questions about. If possible, discuss in what ways the video dialogue speaks to your own experience. Does your experience confirm, complicate, or call into question aspects of the author’s theory? Turn in transcripts for 5 of your dialogues. There will also be other opportunities for cross-class participation.

*Reflection Papers: (30%)* At the end of each course section, write a three-page reflection paper on a reading from that section will be due. For your discussion paper, briefly discuss a central critique, vision, and strategy from one author or more authors that we have read or watch during that course section. Discuss ways in which author or authors’ ideas might contribute to the building of a feminist technocultural movement.

*Final Project (30%)* For the final project, work in teams or individually to design a feminist technocultural intervention. In your 6-8 page project reflection paper, address the following questions: What problem does your project aim to address? What alternative vision of economic, political, or social relations does your project represent, either explicitly or implicitly? In what ways does your project mobilize technology to help achieve that vision?

**Grading**

Overall grades will be based on the quality of your written assignments and the constructive nature of your class participation. All assignments are due in class and in the

Moodle dropbox at the end of day specified in the syllabus. A late paper will be penalized by half a grade for every day that the paper is overdue.

### **Questions or concerns**

Please feel free to email me or to speak with me if you have questions about the material, or if you have personal concerns that will affect your class performance. I am happy to arrange appointments to discuss issues at greater length.

- *This syllabus is subject to change.*
- *Students who have a documented disability will be provided with reasonable accommodations. They are encouraged to contact Access Resources at [accessresources@colby-sawyer.edu](mailto:accessresources@colby-sawyer.edu) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. All accommodations must be approved by CSC Access Resources.*
- *All Colby-Sawyer College students are expected to understand the meaning of academic honesty and to behave in accordance with the college's policies on academic honesty as published in the Code of Community Responsibility.*
- *Students are responsible for meeting all of their academic obligations, even if they are engaged in college-sponsored activities, i.e. theatre, athletics, or field trips. There are no excused absences for such activities. In the case of a scheduling conflict between two classes, students should make appropriate arrangements with the course instructors, being mindful that a regularly scheduled class has the higher priority.*
- *Colby-Sawyer acknowledges that religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and that the demands of religious observance in some traditions may cause conflicts with student class schedules. If religious observance will cause a student to be absent from class or otherwise affect his or her ability to complete academic assignments, he or she must notify the instructor in advance and make necessary arrangements to complete the course materials.*

### **Course Schedule (subject to change – we can add/omit readings as needed)**

#### **Section 1: DIY/DWO Feminisms and Technology**

MON 9/08 Introduction to course and to each other. Project First Impression (DIY experiment)

##### Readings & Collaboration:

- Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools will never Dismantle the Master’s House” (Moodle and distributed in class)
- Femtechnet Manifesto (Moodle and distributed in class)
- Start *Riot Grrrl Collection*
  
- Explore commons, introduce yourselves:

<http://femtechnet.newschool.edu>

- Sync-watch: *Don't Need You*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9G45K6FgaI>

MON 9/15 Readings & Collaboration:

- Continue reading in *Riot Grrrl Collection*
- Hanna, Kathleen. "Riot Grrl Manifesto." *History is a Weapon*. Bikini Kill Zine 2, 1991 (Moodle)
- Sync-watch: *Women, Art, & Revolution*

MON 9/22 Readings & Collaboration:

- Judy Wacjman, *Technofeminism*, 1-78
- Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, "A Day Without Feminism" (Moodle)
- Optional: VNS Manifesto (Moodle)
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- Sync-watch: "Feminism, Technology, and Issues of Women's Labor" video dialogue with Judy Wacjman and Ann Balsamo

THU 9/29 Readings & Collaboration:

- Judy Wacjman, *Technofeminism*, 79-130
- Christina Haralanova, "Hacktivism: the Art of Practicing Life and Computer Hacking for Feminist Activism" (Moodle)
- Sophie Toupin, "Feminist Hackerspaces as Safer Spaces" (Moodle)
- micha cárdenas, From a Free Software Movement to a FreeSafety Movement (Moodle)
- Sync-watch: Archive video dialogue with Lyn Herschman and Ruby Rich

## **Section 2: Coalitional Technofeminism**

TUE 10/06 Readings:

- Aurora Levins Morales, "Circle Unbroken, The Politics of Inclusion" (Moodle)
- Mari Matsuda, "Standing Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory Out of Coalition" (Moodle)
- Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" (Moodle)
- Cricket Keating, "Building Coalitional Consciousness" (Moodle)

- Reflection paper 1 due by the end of the week, on Moodle (10/10)
- MON 10/9 Readings & Collaboration:
- Adrienne Wadewitz, “Wikipedia's gender gap and the complicated reality of systemic gender bias,” (Moodle)
  - TBA
  - Sync-watch: “Feminism, Technology, and Wikistorming
- MON 10/13 No Class Meeting on Monday
- Readings & Collaboration:
- Catharina Landstrom, “Queering Feminist Technology Studies” (Moodle)
  - TBA
  - Sync-watch: Sexualities video dialogue with Julie Levin Russo and Faith Wilding
- MON 10/20 Readings & Collaboration:
- Maria Fernandez, “Cyberfeminism, Racism, and Embodiment” (Moodle)
  - McPherson, Tara, “Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation” (Moodle)
  - Nakamura, Lisa, and Peter Chow-White, eds., Introduction and Ch. 2 (Chun), *Race after the Internet* (Moodle)
  - Sync-watch: Race video dialogue with Lisa Nakamura and Maria Fernandez
- MON 10/27 Readings & Collaboration:
- Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-first Century* (Moodle)
  - Petra Kuppers, “The wheelchair’s rhetoric: The performance of disability” (Moodle)
  - Sync-watch: Body video dialogue Flynn and Roberts
- MON 11/03 Readings & Collaboration:
- Radhika Gajjala, “Placing South Asian Digital Diasporas in Second Life” (Moodle)

- Sanya, Brenda Nyandiko, “Mobile technologies and feminist possibilities in rural Kenya” (Moodle)
- Sync-watch: Place video dialogue with Radhika Gajjala and Sharon Irish
- Reflection Paper 2 due by the end of the week, on Moodle (11/07)

### **Section 3: Technology, Democracy, and Transformation**

MON 11/10 Readings & Collaboration:

- Virginia Eubanks, *Digital Dead End*, 1-48

Sync-watch: Infrastructure video dialogue with Lucy Suchman and Katherine Gibson Graham

MON 11/17 Readings & Collaboration:

- Virginia Eubanks, *Digital Dead End*, 49-152

- Sync-watch: Transformations video dialogue with Donna Haraway, Catherine Lord, and Beatriz da Costa

MON 11/24 Project Preparation

Reading TBD (selections from bell hooks, *Feminism is For Everyone*)

Thanksgiving

TUE 12/01 TBD

TUE 12/08 Project Presentations / Course Conclusions

**Final Projects Due Monday, 12/15, 8:30 PM**