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WMGS201: Intro to Women's and Gender Studies
Spring 2017
Podcast Project: A Social Media of One's Own?

A **[Social Media]** of One's **Own?**

"…within concepts of queer identity there is not only a move toward community and a desire for experimental play, but also a gesture of critique—a critique of the normalizing categorizations of people into gay or straight. Such is a critique, in short, of the heteronormative, of the proliferation of sexual subjectivities coupled with regimes of power [systems of oppression] that reproduce certain kinds of families, certain kind of acceptable intimacies, certain kinds of authorized lives." (Alexander | Losh 28)

Overview

As Launius and Hassel explain it, **feminist praxis** emerges from a **feminist stance** which:

- Stresses the importance of locating oneself within structures of privilege and oppression;
- Analyzes how systems of privilege and oppression operate in different contexts (e.g., one's own life and relationships, experiences of one's body, societal institutions, etc.);
- Prioritizes generating visions for social change and strategies for bringing about that change

(155)

This assignment asks that you locate yourself within structures of privilege and oppression by examining how systems of privilege and oppression shape and operate in social media. It asks that you apply your "knowledge to challenge oppressive systems and unequal traditions" to "support social justice and social transformation" (Berger and Radeloff; Hesse-Biber). To do so, you will merge theory and practice by collaboratively creating a podcast where you examine a specific form of social media through the lens of queer media theory, following Jonathan Alexander and Elizabeth Losh's study of YouTube coming-out videos. Your analysis should, first, educate your audience by giving us insight into how a specific form of social media may be either participating in or resisting normative ways of understanding sex, sexuality, and gender *and*, second, generate a vision for social change.

The Task

1. Analysis

Your group will do research on social media forms that you are interested in to identify one that you would like to examine in depth. Once you decide on one, you can start considering whether you will focus on an individual's account, for instance, or on a genre (e.g., the DIY video, Facebook activism, Snapchat [whatever it is that people do on it], Pinterest boards, etc.). You should refine your focus so that it is as specific as Alexander and Losh's is and have at least three examples that you can compare and contrast so that you can identify and examine rhetorical and representational patterns.

Your analysis should be rigorously modelled after Alexander and Losh's. The conversation you script for your podcast should be the result of answering the following questions:

- How and to what effect do/does [_____] represent themselves online?
- What kinds of representational practices are used by [_____] to figure out [_____]?
- What kinds of work–socially, culturally, personally, and politically–do such representations do?
- What are their possibilities and limitations?

2. **Research**

This assignment asks that you apply the knowledge you have garnered through this semester as well. This means that you should apply Alexander and Losh, but also draw form the many texts we have read. Which you draw from will depend entirely on your project. But the success of your podcast will <u>hinge considerably on how effectively and thoughtfully you apply the texts to your analysis</u>.

In addition, you should use Alexander and Losh as a resource. Throughout their article they quote queer theory, media studies, and feminist scholars. Identify potentially helpful sources that your group could read to inform your analysis of your object of study.
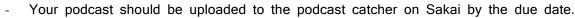
Required Sources: Your bibliography should consist of a minimum of five theoretical and scholarly sources that you use thoughtfully in your analysis and podcast.

3. **Podcast -** Write a script to record a twelve-minute podcast where you:

- Introduce your audience to the social media form that is the topic of your podcast
- Introduce your audience to the central question that you will explore about this social media form that you will explore.
- By way of creative and rigorous analysis of the social media form generate a discussion whereby you invite your audience to consider how this form perpetuates normative forms of representation and/or "creates [its] own normative understanding of rhetorically effective" forms that critique and/or resist normalizing categorizations of people into gay/straight, white/"of color," human/animal, able/disabled, and so on!
- Generate "a vision for social change" for your audience
- Employ special effects, editing, clips, music creatively and thoughtfully to create an optimal podcast

1. Script should be about 1500-words and should be written with a listening audience in mind–not readers. Do not read from your script word for word during the podcast recording unless you are "playing" with the podcast form. If you are recording a conventional podcast discussion, you should use bullet points that allow you to deliver your lines with spontaneity and substance.

2. Your podcast should include each group member's viewpoint. That is, every group member's voice and opinion must be heard during the discussion session of your podcast.
3. The podcast should last 12 minutes, including audio transitions and sound effects. Each member of the group should speak for 2 minutes (not continuously necessarily).
4. Use the technology and research resources creatively and rigorously to produce a high-quality podcast that is the result of careful and creative editing and execution.
   - Use the Library's resources for your project
   - Jenna Stoeber will come to teach us how to use Audacity.
5. The degree and quality of editing of the script will be evaluated–just as I grade your revision of critical papers and creative writing–and will impact the final outcome of your podcast.
6. Follow the guidelines provided by Jenna Stoeber as closely as possible given your access to, for instance, carpeted rooms. Your final podcast should be as free of editing mistakes and noise as possible. Use Mortvedt's The Studio (don't make things hard for yourselves!)

technological Requirements:

- Download Audacity
- Rent a snowball microphone from the Instructional Technologies office in Mortvedt Library or record at The Studio [this is what I recommend].
- Follow the guidelines provided in Jenna Stoeber's PowerPoint.
- Record your podcast in the sound studio.

Other requirements:

- Your podcast should be uploaded to the podcast catcher on Sakai by the due date.
- Your script must be in hard copy form and you must turn it in on the day of your presentation.

Presentation and Audience Guidelines

The main goal of this presentation is to:
- introduce your listeners to the project, its central questions, goals, accomplishments, challenges, and highlights of the process;
- play your podcast for us;
- answer questions posed by your peers about the content or the making of the podcast itself. How you answer these questions is important: your responses should be thoughtful and take seriously your peers' questions.

Requirements:

- Briefly introduce us to the central question of your podcast, indicate whether or not it changed as you developed your project. If so, make sure to give us examples of the original question(s) and the final question. All groups should clearly articulate the final question of their project in the introduction.

- Briefly recount the highlights of your process: what did you think you would do when you first started? How did the brainstorming and planning phase change this? How did the recording phase change this (even more)?
- Briefly name the three most important goals of your project: what do you want listeners to take away from this podcast? What effects and aspects of the podcasts we heard in preparation for the project did you hope to emulate? What other goals might you have had?
- Briefly name the three most important challenges you faced: which of these goals was hard to accomplish? What other objectives presented difficulties or turned out not to be what you expected?
- Finally: what do you think are the three main accomplishments of your project.

Requirements for peer audience:

On the presentation day, you will not be a passive member of the group. Instead, you will be a good peer and member of our class, listening intently and recording your responses to the podcast as you listen to it on a rubric that I will provide you with.

This rubric has a threefold purpose:

- Allow you to take notes as you experience the podcast and make sense of how the group's goals are met or not by the podcast.
- In taking these notes, will allow you to prepare a question that you would like to pose to the group.
- Will serve as evidence and participation as well as active engagement with the presentation.

In addition, as I grade each podcast, I will take into consideration how your audience responded to your podcast.

DATES AND DEADLINES

Grade Component: 26%

5/9: Audacity Training in class

5/11: Research | Deadline to choose topic

5/16: Research

5/18: Individual Conferences: make your appointment using Sakai. Come to the appointment with a draft of your script, ideally having started to test your recording. No draft, no meeting.

Presentation Date: Tuesday May 23rd 11:00-12:50

Podcast should be uploaded: Monday, May 22nd by 5:00pm — Make sure to test downloading it and listening to it in the classroom before the presentation

Community Values

"KNOW THYSELF"

There are many reasons why we should follow the Delphic maxim, "Know thyself." In the context of group work, we should know who we are in order to avoid either burdening our peers with extra work or depriving them of the opportunity to learn in our attempt to control everything. In order to make sure that you enter this collaboration with the best attitude, please reflect on the following questions.

1. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? A balance of both? A not-so-balanced combination of both?
2. Are you shy and generally content not to be the center of attention? If so, how can you make sure you remain comfortable during the presentation project while also offering everything you should and can give?
3. Do you tend to do more than your peers when you work in groups? Why? And how can you make sure that you are not carrying the burden of this particular presentation?
4. Do you have leader qualities and skills? If so, does your personality allow others to rely on you to organize, think, talk, and prepare a presentation? Can you think of ways in which you can use your abilities as a leader to delegate responsibilities so that everyone is charged with the same amount of work?
5. Whether you are an introvert or an extrovert, do you tend to leave the work up to whoever is willing to bear the brunt? And do you feel comfortable receiving a grade that you didn't earn? How can you make sure that for this presentation you give a fair amount of time, effort and enthusiasm and take into account the needs of others?
6. Always having something to say, when what you want to say is thoughtful, is a great thing. But do you tend to prefer your views over those of others? Perhaps you tend to be the first one to talk because you dislike an awkward silence or grow impatient when others don't participate actively? Have you ever realized that perhaps you should have listened to others' opinions first and not just shared your own? Whichever of these situations seems familiar, if you are the kind of thinker and reader that always has something to say, make sure that you both give others a chance to speak and learn and avoid doing the thinking for your peers.

If you feel that one or more of the members of your group are not contributing, you should not stay silent. Please let me know and we'll meet as a group to discuss your concerns and figure out a solution together.