*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 discussion, screenings, critical readings, and production assignments, 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 help students 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 develop an 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, transgender 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 (Guidelines for Class Discussion)**

Class discussion is a primary component of this course. Here are a few guidelines\* that support a climate of respectful and engaged discussion:

* Respect your peers. Disagreements are natural and welcome, but grant everyone courtesy whether or not you agree with what they say.
* Given the nature of the course, 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. For those listening to personal experiences, respect your classmates’ privacy when you leave the classroom.
* Feel free to dislike some of the work you see, but remember that our goal in discussion 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 do not have to express your own opinion on a subject, but if you do, expect others to disagree with you. You are free to change your mind on any topic at any time (one of the great benefits of being human). Personal transformation is encouraged.

*\* Guidelines partially adapted from ideas presented by Professor Carrie Rentschler, McGill University*

**PARTICIPATION AND 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. No cell phones. No laptops. No meals. Unobtrusive snacks and liquid caffeine acceptable.

**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 XC15 (students must supply SD card)
* Tripods / Canon batteries
* Lowel Elemental Kits
* Gel kit / Flexfill / sand bags
* Tascam DR-44 recorder (students must supply SD card/batteries)
* Shotgun mics / boom pole / XLR cables / stingers

**ASSIGNMENTS**

This course is a workshop in creating feminist media. As such, 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.

Artist Profile 15%

Bio and Artist Statement 15%

Creative Reading Responses 20%

Midterm Project 25%

Final Project 25%

**Artist Profile** (15% of final grade)

Select a female-identified media artist that inspires you and/or works in the specific medium you intend to pursue. I encourage you to consider makers from underrepresented socio-economic, cultural, or gender identity backgrounds. Discuss the significance of their content, both as a work of art and as a social commentary, and any relevant aspects of the artist’s life you feel contribute to the artist’s authorial voice. You should also present a 10- to 15-minute screening of their work. This can be an excerpt or a collection of short clips. Presentations will run throughout the semester; dates will be assigned on the second day of class (see schedule).

**Bio and Artist Statement** (15% of final grade)

You will write a draft and final version of your bio and artist statement. A bio is a summarized, narrative version of your resume, but shorter and with more personality. An artist statement explains your motivations and intentions regarding your body of creative work. Details and examples will be shared in class. This assignment is done in the context of the Societal Sphere—a concrete step toward increasing the representation of diverse voices in the creative industry.

**Creative Reading Responses** (20% 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 speaks to your reflections on the text. Be as straightforward or as creative as you like—the videos do not have to be a talking head (though they could be). Videos can include abstract ideas, monologues, dialogues, archival footage, etc. Unlike your midterm and final projects, production value is not as important as self-expression and progress toward cultivating a personal artistic voice. All video responses will be shown in class and you will be expected to discuss your work’s relationship to the reading you selected. Readings will be distributed two weeks before each due date. **Late submissions are not accepted.** If you miss the deadline, you forfeit the points allotted to that sphere. Note: different activities are planned for the Societal and Individual spheres (see schedule).

**Midterm Project** (25% of final grade)

Select one sentence 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 to the class both 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. Late submissions will be penalized 10 points for every day the project is late.

**Final Project** (25% 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 to the class both your proposal and your final project for feedback/critique. As with the midterm project, projects will be evaluated for the successful execution of your idea, originality of concept, and production value. Late submissions will be penalized 10 points for every day the project is late.

**ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE**

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

**WEEK 1: Thursday, September 7**

INTRODUCTION

* Class introductions
* Detailed syllabus review
* Receive introductory readings

**WEEK 2: Thursday, September 14**

INTRODUCTION, continued

* Initial housekeeping: Lenny Manzo (DPS), Jake Nadeau (EDC), schedule artist profiles
* What makes media feminist?
* Crash course in feminist history
* Screenings and discussion
* Receive Ethical Sphere readings

**WEEK 3: Thursday, September 21**

ETHICAL SPHERE

* 6pm: Meet at EDC, Demo Room B (Canon XC15 Demo with Nick Corsano)
* Screenings and discussion

**WEEK 4: Thursday, September 28**

ETHICAL SPHERE, continued

* **Ethical Sphere reading response due**
* Artist Profiles
* Screenings and discussion
* Receive Societal Sphere readings

**WEEK 5: Thursday, October 5**

SOCIETAL SPHERE

* **Midterm project proposal due**
* Proposal presentations
* Screenings and discussion
* Intro to bios / artist statements

**WEEK 6: Thursday, October 12**

SOCIETAL SPHERE, continued

* **First draft of bio / artist statement due**
* Artist Profiles
* Screenings and discussion
* Receive Social Sphere readings

**WEEK 7: Thursday, October 19**

MIDTERM PROJECTS

* **Midterm project due**
* Screening of midterm projects / class feedback

**WEEK 8: Thursday, October 26**

SOCIAL SPHERE

* Artist Profiles
* Screenings and discussion

**WEEK 9: Thursday, November 2**

SOCIAL SPHERE, continued

* **Social Sphere reading response due**
* Screenings and discussion
* Receive Domestic Sphere readings

**WEEK 10: Thursday, November 9**

DOMESTIC SPHERE

* Artist Profiles
* Screenings and discussion

**WEEK 11: Thursday, November 16**

DOMESTIC SPHERE, continued

* **Final project proposal due**
* **Domestic Sphere reading response due**
* Proposal presentations; schedule one-on-one meetings
* Screenings and discussion
* Receive Individual Sphere readings

**WEEK 12: Thursday, November 30**

INDIVIDUAL SPHERE

* Collaborative Individual Sphere reading response: The Long Take (in-class activity)
* Screenings and discussion

**WEEK 13: Thursday, December 7**

ONE-ON-ONE PRODUCTION MEETINGS

* No class as regularly scheduled
* One-on-one rough cut screenings (time/date TBD)

**WEEK 14: Thursday, December 14**

FINAL PROJECTS

* **Final projects due**
* **Final bio / artist statement due**
* Screening of final projects / class feedback
* Bemoaning the fact that our time together has come to an end

**Diversity Statement**

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. 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 contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 617-824-8528 or by email at diversity\_inclusion@emerson.edu.

**Violence Prevention and Response Statement**

Emerson College provides confidential assistance for any students who have been impacted by sexual assault, stalking, and abusive relationships. Violence Prevention and Response (VPR) supports all students no matter when or where they experienced harm, whether they had a personal experience or are concerned about a friend. VPR is here to listen and offers information about options and rights, assists with requesting academic and workplace accommodations, helps with no-contact orders, goes with to medical/legal/on-campus appointments, and connects students with on and off-campus resources. All conversations are private and confidential. Further information about VPR and other on/off-campus resources is available at www.emerson.edu/vpr.

**Disability Statement**

Emerson College is committed to providing equal access to its academic programs and social activities for all qualified students with disabilities. While upholding this commitment, we require all Emerson students to meet the high standards of achievement that are essential to the College’s programs and services. To advance these dual aims, the College will provide reasonable accommodations to disabled students who request accommodations through the College’s Disability Services Office (DSO), if the DSO determines that accommodations are both medically necessary and reasonable. Please note that a requested accommodation will only be approved as ‘reasonable’ if it does not compromise any essential requirements of a course. Students who wish to request a disability accommodation must submit their request to the DSO, and not to faculty, since only the DSO is authorized to approve or deny any requests for accommodations. College employees and student’s family members cannot request accommodations on a student’s behalf. Rather, students who wish to request accommodations must themselves contact the DSO since Emerson’s philosophy is that its students are independent and self-determined and students with disabilities—like non-disabled students—have control over their lives here at Emerson and are ultimately responsible for making their own decisions. Students who know at the start of a semester that they will need accommodations must submit their accommodation requests to the DSO within the first two weeks of the semester. If a student becomes ill or disabled during the course of a semester, or discovers after the start of a semester that he or she needs a disability accommodation, he or she is encouraged to submit his or her request to the DSO as soon as possible since the process of approving accommodations takes time, and approved accommodations will not be granted retroactively. The Associate Director for Disability Services can be reached at: 617-824-8592, [dso@emerson.edu](mailto:dso@emerson.edu), 216 Tremont Street, 5th floor.

**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: <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.

**Visual and Media Arts 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). The VMA Student Production Safety Manual is required reading for all students participating on any Emerson film or your professor or as a PDF at www.emerson.edu/sites/default/files/Files/AboutEmerson/trf-vma-safety-manual.pdf. 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.