Feminist Use of Digital Humanities:
Grad Student Approaches + Perspectives

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Roadmap

Introduction

Exploring Fat Counterpublics on Instagram --- Charlesia McKinney

Indigenous Intertribal Digital Networks for Social Change --- Sierra Watt

DH in the WGSS 101 Classroom --- An Sasala

Namibian Women Freedom Fighters and their Perspectives on Namibian Independence: A Life History Approach --- Mariah Crystal

Conversation + Questions
Exploring Fat Counterpublics on Instagram

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Why Study Fat Activists?

- Fat is regarded as an acceptable prejudice in American culture as anti-fat ideologies construct fat as a social, medical, political, and moral problem (Cooper, 2016; McMichael, 2013; Sobal, 1999).

- Fat is a feminist issue as we consider the institutional impacts toward fat folks in regards to media representation, mental health, romantic relationships, education, housing and weight-based employed discrimination (Avverett and Korenman, 2013; Rothblum, 2009)
Project Background

Initial Research:
● I observed how fat activists used social media, particularly Instagram, to garner more agency for the sake of controlling their own narratives in the face of anti-fat ideology.

Current Research:
● Now I am investigating how activists use the platform to carve out their own space to create community through reappropriation.
Why Instagram?

- Prioritizes visual elements
- Public/Private
- Hashtags
Argument

Fat activists use hashtags to build subaltern counterpublics within Instagram. Forging fat counterpublics is a collective act of resistance that requires reappropriation to effectively expose social hierarchies affording opportunities to reclaim public space.
What are publics?

“According to Habermas, the idea of a public sphere is that of a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" or "common interest" (Fraser, 58)

“To participate in any public or counterpublic is to aspire to convince or persuade others” (Weisser, 611)
What are counterpublics?

- **Counterpublics**
  - If/when an individual/group can’t find an established community within a public sphere they can create their own alternative group/community (Asen, 2000)

- **Subaltern Counterpublics**
  - “Subaltern counterpublics seek to write themselves back into public conversations rather than detach from them” (Weisser, 2008)
  - Counterpublics can serve as “sites of safety, encouragement, and nurturing” (Fraser qtd in Weisser)
What is reappropriation?

- Reappropriation is an emergent act of rhetorical resistance that effectively exposes social hierarchies within public spheres; it is the practice of taking back, of reclaiming and regaining an identity for socially disempowered groups (Galinsky et.al, 2013)

Founder of @eff_yrbs ✌
#effyourbeautystandards

Los Angeles, CA
tessholliday.com

701 Following  67K Followers

The fact that this post, about #guncontrol got such low engagement really tells you where people’s heads are at. People care about posting cute selfies than actually taking a stand against the monsters that are killing are children.
“Dear critics: making fun of my body will never make you a better person. It will never fix the void you feel with yourself, & the issues you have when you look in the mirror. The real issue isn’t that I’m fat, or my size, it’s that you are scared of seeing someone that is happy AND fat. I don’t need to be “fixed” because I’m not the broken one. History has proven that hate is never the answer .. close your mouth and open your heart.

Unedited photo by the amazing Anthony Evans
#effyourbeautystandards”

- Tess Holliday
- #effyourbeautystandards - 3.3M
- #bodypositive 7.2M posts
- #bodyacceptance - 229k posts
- #fatacceptance - 72,3k posts
- #fatpositive - 82.8k posts
Why does this matter?

- Counterpublics are an active site of resistance and resistance better ensures survival.
- Reappropriation signals an opportunity for socially disempowered groups to regain power and agency.
- It prompts action.

Fraser, Nancy. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” Social Text. 56 – 80.


THANK YOU!

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Indigenous Intertribal Digital Networks for Social Change

Tribal Sovereignty through:
- Social Movements
- Intertribal Solidarity
- Online Counter-Narratives
Crowdsourcing and DH

Creative Crowdsourced Potential:
#StandingRockSyllabus

Contents:
- Preface
- Key Terms
- Oceti Sakowin Oyate Territory and Treaty Boundaries 1851–present
- Timeline of United States settler colonialism
- Readings by Theme and Topic

Suggested Citation:
NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective. 2016. “#StandingRockSyllabus.”
https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/
#StandingRockSyllabus

Education Tools:
Compatible with Module Format

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Indigenous Realtime Counter-Narrative: Maps of the Camps, Proposed Pipeline and Reservation Lands
Indigenous Realtime Counter-Narrative: Historical Timeline
Legal Precedent

Timeline of United States Settler Colonialism

1492-1502 Columbus leads expeditions to the “New World,” where he and his ships seeking a passageway to India establish colonies in the Antilles/Caribbean. In the pursuit of gold, Columbus and the colonists begin intertribal violence to further indenture Indigenous inhabitants across the Antilles/Caribbean.

1493 Papal decrees establish that Catholic monarchs may claim the “New World” as part of their dominion over peoples living there.

1500s-1888 Britain, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain colonize the Antilles/Caribbean Island/North America, and Central and Southern Americas. Indigenous peoples are enslaved and killed, and also traded, and move in relation to European empires. European empires, the United States, and later in Latin American states establish plantation economies relying on enslaved Black labor. Up to the 1800s, approximately 15 million Indigenous people from America and Africa were captured by the slave trade and plantation economy fueled by American slavery.

Daniel Bacon revolt against the Governor in order to protect the indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans united, providing a source for indentured labor in the colonial labor force by the racial status of indentured European and African American status.

Readings by Theme and Topic

In the syllabus, we have marked as precisely as possible the nationalities and affiliations of Indigenous scholars, though we accept that any shortcomings are ours alone.

Basics of Settler Colonialism

- Kauanui, J. Kēhāulani (Kanaka Maoli) and Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism Then and Now.” Poltica & Societa 2: 235-258. (PDF)

Indigenous History of North America
#StandingRockSyllabus

Indigenous Realtime Counter-Narrative: Sources on Parallel Issues from Indigenous Authors (such as environmental racism; over-policing of brown communities; gender violence; and, cross-racial solidarity movements, among others)

Gendered Violence and Settler Colonialism

- Casselman, Amy. 2015. Injustice in Indian Country: Jurisdiction, American Law, and Native Women. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. (PDF)

The NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective contributors are:

Anne Spice (Tlingit), Audra Simpson (Kahnawake Mohawk), Crystal Migwans (Anishnaabe of Wikwemikong Unceded), Elsa Hoover (Anishnaabe), Jamey Jesperson, Jaskiran Dhillon, Margaux L Kristjansson, Maria John, Matthew Chrisler, Paige West, Sandy Grande (Quechua), Sheehan Moore, Tamar Blickstein, and Teresa Montoya (Diné)
Digital Possibilities

Coalition and Network Building
Wider Audience
(New) Media Access
Correcting Misinformation
DH in the WGSS 101 Classroom

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2017-19 HASTAC Scholar
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Roadmap

- Class Overview
- DH Definitions + Uses
- Flash Projects
- Project Deep Dive
Class Overview

➔ Full semester, on-campus
➔ 30 students (23 on good days)
➔ 3 days a week, 50min
➔ ½ concepts, ½ activism
➔ Mon: Lecture
➔ Wed: Discussion
➔ Fri: Practical Application
Adding DH to WGSS 101

Digital Humanities 3 Ways

1. Humanities approach to digital tools + technology
2. Digital/Computational approaches to the Humanities
3. Merging the above to create new tools, techniques + critiques

What Is Digital Humanities?

Erm, still working on that one!

Eileen Hegarty

NB: Refresh the page to get a new definition. Quotes were pulled from participants from the Day of DH between 2009-2014. As of January 2015, the database contains 817 rows and randomly selects a quote each time the page is loaded. If you want to do something cool with the data, I am providing a download for the CSV I compiled here.

Made by Jason Heppler. Problems? Questions? I'm @jaheppler on Twitter.
Project 1: Algorithmic Bias, Statistics + Facial Recognition Software Racism

Project 2: LGBTQ+ Archives + Tools for Remembering*

Project 3: Activism, Indigenous Resistance + Countermapping

Project 4: Co-Parenting w/ Alexa**

*KU Research! Tami Albin’s LGBTQAIIP oral histories in KS

**Title taken from Rachel Botsman’s 2017 NYT op-ed
Activism, Indigenous Resistance + Countermapping

Countermapping as visual + geographical resistance to colonial map making practices and the forced occupation of lands.

3 Maps:

- The Red Dress Project
- Mapping Indigenous L.A.
- Native-Land.ca
Project in 3: Explore, Note, Discuss

-What info is provided? How is it represented?
-How does this connect to activist practices?
-What is your experience of reading the map?
Student Observations

- Saw + understood land/space in new ways
- Intimacy + Complicity
- Guilt + Shame
- Newfound Reverence
Namibian Women Freedom Fighters and their Perspectives on Namibian Independence:
A Life History Approach

“Combatting the Double Oppression of Namibian Women is an Integral Part of SWAPO’s Struggle,” published by SWAPO in the 1970s in England.

“Woman with a child and a gun on her back,” part of a calendar published by Liberation movements Churches Exile Women SWAPO on England in 1975 in London.
Kathleen Sullivan: 
"That Girl" Who Shook Things Up
Ottilie Abrahams

- Principal
- Teacher
- Activist
Future Plans
Public Memory

Shark Island...
Thank You.