

Course Guide

Digital Media and Cultural Identities CM4210

Academic Year 2020-2021
Term 2
Master Media Studies
Media, Culture & Society

Lecturer

Dr. Giulia Evolvi

2. Program Overview

Wk.	Date	Subject(s)	Literature	Activities
1.	12 – 11-2020	Introduction: Digital Media and Cultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owens et al. (2010) - Szulc (2019) - Dumitrica (2019) 	Guest Lecture: Dr. Delia Dumitrica, Erasmus University Rotterdam Online
2.	19-11-2020	Representation & (hashtag) activism: #BlackLivesMatter, #Ferguson, and #noDAPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hall (1990) - Bonilla & Rosa (2015) - Hinzo & Clark (2019) 	Discussion about blog posts Hybrid
3.	26-11-2020	Religion and identity: veils and megachurches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Said (1979) - Wheeler (2014) - Klaver (2015) 	Guest Lecture: Dr. Miranda Klaver, Free University of Amsterdam Online
4.	3-12-2020	Intersectionality, neo-liberalism, and feminism: #MeToo, and #MuslimWomensDay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Banet-Weiser et al. (2019) - Clark-Parsons (2019) - Pennington (2018) 	Guests: Chi Mai Do & Lale Mahmudova, former students of the course Discussion about paper topics Online
5.	10-12-2020	Visibility and queerness: LGBT+ migrants and queer fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Butler (2006) - Dhoest & Szulc (2016) - Rahbari (2020) 	Guest Lecture: Dr. Ladan Rahbari, University of Amsterdam Online
		NO Classes/ Winter Break		Assignment: Blog participation
6.	7-1-2021	Mediating the norm: performance, selfies, and body image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goffman (1959) - Ging & Garvey (2018) - Yadlin-Segal (2019) 	Guest Lecture: Dr. Aya Yadlin-Segal, Hadassa Academic College Online
7.	14-1-2021	Presentations		Hybrid
8.	21-1-2021	Presentations	-	Hybrid
9.	Final Assignment	2-2-2021		

Check <https://eur.osiris-student.nl/#/nav/n4/onderwijscatalogus/extern/cursus?taal=EN&cursuscode=CM4210&collegejaar=huidig> for the latest timetable and dates

8. Course: Week-by-Week

The readings are listed in the suggested order. Some classes are online and some are hybrid, but this may change depending on the circumstances.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION DIGITAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

This session will introduce the notion of cultural identities and have students critically reflect on the novelties of digital technologies for identity articulation. Students will individuate and define key terms to be used throughout the course and start elaborating core questions to be answered during the term. Students will be encouraged to consider the notion of “identity” as fluid and dependent on various socio-cultural contexts.

Guest lecturer dr. Delia Dumitrica will present her research on cultural identities on Facebook. The session will be online.

Learning Objectives

- Students understand the key terms used during the course and critically address the notion of identity
- Students reflect on the characteristics of digital media and the changes they cause in the articulation of identities
- Students are familiar with course content and objectives

Required Readings

Owens, T. J., Robinson, D. T., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2010). Three Faces of Identity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 477–499.

Szulc, L. (2019). Profiles, identities, data: Making abundant and anchored selves in a platform society. *Communication Theory*, 29, 257–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty031>

Dumitrica, D. (2019). Facebook and cultural identity: Discourses on mediation among international students. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 15, 303–322. https://doi.org/10.1386/macp_00003_1

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the Course Guide
3. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
4. Prepare 1-2 discussion questions about the article of Dumitrica (2019)

WEEK 2: REPRESENTATION & (HASHTAG) ACTIVISM: #BLACKLIVESMATTER, #FERGUSON, AND #NODAPL

This session will be dedicated to different modes of identity representation in media. It will generally address how mass media (e.g. television) traditionally represent certain groups, with a focus on stereotypes and common misrepresentations. The students will reflect on how practices of representation and self-representation changes (or do not change) with social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. In particular, race and ethnicity will be analysed as

visible identity traits that can be subject to various forms of representation. By discussion the readings, students will analyse the cases of Black Lives Matter and Native American activism. The session will be hybrid.

Learning Objectives

- Students think about the characteristics of digital media, and individuates similarities and differences with mass media
- Students reflect on the concepts of representation, stereotypes and commonplaces about certain groups
- Students discuss and problematize the notions of “race” and “ethnicity,” specifically in connection with activism

Required Readings

- Hall, S. (1990) The white of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media. In M. Alvarado & J. Thompson, J. (Eds.), *The media reader* (pp. 28-52). BFI.
- Bonilla Y., & Rosa. J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, 42, 4–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112>
- Hinzo, A. M., & Clark, L. S. (2019). Digital survivance and Trickster humor: Exploring visual and digital Indigenous epistemologies in the #NoDAPL movement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22, 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573911>

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
3. Watch the Ted Talk “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
<https://bit.ly/1kMOnud>
4. Prepare 1-2 discussion questions about the Ted Talk and post them on the discussion board you will find on Canvas.
5. Think about possible interesting news events you would like to explore in a blog post

WEEK 3: RELIGION & IDENTITY: VEILS AND MEGACHURCHES
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This session will reflect on religion as an identity characteristic that also intersects with gender, ethnicity, and migration background. It will introduce the notion of “minority” and diversity in terms of identity representation and self-representation. Students will familiarize with post-colonial approaches to the study of cultural identities and will reflect on different beliefs within migration society. Moreover, students will analyse the role of religion in contemporary society by looking at the embedding of technology within religious functions. Students will also start discussing the paper outline.

Guest lecturer dr. Miranda Klaver will present her research on megachurches. The session will be online.

Learning Objectives

- Students reflect on the role of religious identities in contemporary society
- Students discuss post-colonial approaches as a way to understand hybrid cultural practices
- Students debate the use of digital technology within religious communities

Required Readings

Said, E. W. (1979). Introduction. In *Orientalism* (1st Vintage Books ed edition) 1-28. New York: Vintage.

Wheeler, K. R. (2014). Remixing images of Islam. The creation of new Muslim women subjectivities on YouTube. *Online - Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2014.0.17364>

Klaver, M. (2015). Media technology creating "sermonic events." The Hillsong Megachurch Network. *CrossCurrents*, 65(4), 422-433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cros.12164>

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
3. Prepare 1-2 discussion questions about the article of Klaver (2015)

WEEK 4: INTERSECTIONALITY, NEO-LIBERALISM & FEMINISM: #MeToo AND #MUSLIMWOMENDAY

This session will analyse individual and collective strategies of identity representations online. Students will survey different modes of representation and self-representation by taking into account intersectionality. They will learn how identity traits such as gender, ethnicity, and religion can be performed on social media. It will also address the evolution of different waves of feminism, problematizing the concepts of "post-feminism" and "pop-feminism." Through the readings, students will become familiar with the implication of the #MeToo movements to counteract gendered aggressions and with different understandings of World Women Day.

Former students of the class Lale Mahmudova and Chi Mai Do will present their work. The session will be online.

Learning Objectives

- Students understand identity as being at the intersections of various characteristics
- Students think about how individuals and groups can control identity narratives and visibility through online actions
- Students discuss the notions of gender, misogyny and the history of feminism

Required Readings

- Banet-Weiser, S., Gill, R., & Rottenberg, C. (2019). Postfeminism, popular feminism and neoliberal feminism? Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in conversation. *Feminist Theory*, 0(0), 1-22 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700119842555>
- Clark-Parsons, R. (2019). "I SEE YOU, I BELIEVE YOU, I STAND WITH YOU": #MeToo and the performance of networked feminist visibility. *Feminist Media Studies*, 0(0), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1628797>
- Pennington, R. (2018). Making space in social media: #MuslimWomensDay in Twitter. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 42, 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859918768797>

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
3. Start thinking about topics that interest you for the final paper

WEEK 5: VISIBILITY & QUEERNESS: LGBTQ+ MIGRANTS, AND QUEER FASHION

This session will continue to analyse the notion of self-representation online. In particular, it will focus on groups that are considered as "non-mainstream" within certain context and how they visually portray themselves online. By so doing, students will problematize the notion of "queer" as something perceived outside of dominant social norms. They will also discuss identities in relation to social relations and the concept of family. In discussing the readings, students will think about non-conventional gender performances and the use of the Internet by members of the LGBTQ+ community. Students will also discuss different presentation formats for assignment 2, and decide respondents for the presentations.

Guest lecturer dr. Ladan Rahbari will present her research on queer fashion. The session will be online.

Learning Objectives

- Students discuss and problematize the idea of "mainstream" and "non-mainstream" identity
- Students think about how social networks can visually enhance the articulation of identities
- Students become familiar with the meaning of LGBTQ+ and learn about some online activities of LGBTQ+ people

Required Readings

- Butler, J. (2006). Subjects of sex/gender/desire. In *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (pp. 1–34). Routledge.
- Dhoest, A., & Szulc, L. (2016). Navigating online selves: Social, cultural, and material contexts of social media use by diasporic gay men. *Social Media+ Society*, 2, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672485>

Rahbari, L. (2020). Duffs and puffs: Queer fashion in Iranian cyberspace. *Middle East Critique*, 29(1), 69–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2020.1704503>

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
3. Prepare 1-2 discussion questions about the article of Rahbari (2020)
4. Blog Post is due this week

ASSIGNMENT 1: Blog Participation

Assignment Instructions

At the beginning of the course, students will be invited to the class blog. Students need to write a blog post about a news/event they came across and that is connected with the topic of the class. You can also decide to do a podcast instead of a post and post the link to the class blog.

Requirements

For this assignment, you will:

- Describe the main topic of your blog
- Critically analyze it by explaining how it is connected to digital media and cultural identities
- Engage with your peer's blog posts and leave at least four comments
- You can mention academic articles and works, but the language should be appropriate for a blog

It is possible to be creative: you can embed links, pictures, videos. And you can share and re-blog your post

Word count: minimum 500 words (5 minutes if it is a podcast)

DEADLINE: 17-12-2020

DEADLINE GRADES PUBLISHED IN OSIRIS: 7-1-2021

WEEK 6: MEDIATING THE NORM: PERFORMANCE, SELFIES, AND BODY IMAGE

This session will contextualize the previous discussions on "mainstream" and "minority" in relation to the way people present themselves as online personae. Students will reflect on authenticity of performances that collocates users within or outside what is generally considered "the norm." In particular, the session covers the idea of "normal" in relation to beauty standards and (dis)ability. Through the readings, students will reflect on the use of social media as vehicles of narratives about health and appearance. Students will also discuss presentations and decide the order they will be discussed.

Guest lecturer dr. Aya Yadlin-Segal will present her research on selfies. The session will be online.

Learning Objectives

- Students talk about the notion of authenticity in online profiles
- Students discuss performativity in relation to the physical appearance of online users
- Students reflect on (dis)ability and body image in relation to identity

Required Readings

Goffman, E. (1959). Performances. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (pp. 10–47). Anchor Books.

Ging, D., & Garvey, S. (2018). 'Written in these scars are the stories I can't explain': A content analysis of pro-ana and thinspiration image sharing on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1181–1200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816687288>

Yadlin-Segal, A. (2019) What's in a smile? Politicizing disability through selfies and affect. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24, 36–50. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy023>

Required Preparation

1. Check the preparation activities on Canvas
2. Read the assigned readings (in the suggested order)
3. Write 1-2 discussion questions about the article of Yadlin-Segal (2019)
4. Start working on presentations for week 7 and week 8

WEEK 7: PRESENTATIONS

Students discuss their presentations. This session will be hybrid

WEEK 8: PRESENTATIONS

Students discuss their presentations. This session will be hybrid

ASSIGNMENT 2: Presentation

The last two weeks will be dedicated to individual presentations. Each student will prepare a presentation about the final paper they are writing for the course.

Assignment Instructions

The presentation will be recorded at home before the class and posted on Canvas. Students can record a power point presentation, but it is also possible to be more creative: students can, for instance, make a video. During the term, you will have class discussions about possible presentation formats.

In class, students are required to discuss their classmates' presentation. The process will be as follows:

- The class will be divided in two groups: half of presentations will be discussed in week 7, half of presentations will be discussed in week 8

- Each student records a 5-10 minutes presentation and uploads it on Canvas at least three days before the class where the presentation is supposed to be discussed
- All students watch the presentations before coming to class and prepare discussion questions
- In class, students give a short pitch (1-2 minutes) of their topic. The pitch will make references to the presentation uploaded on Canvas, and contain discussion questions.
- The pitch is followed by a 4-5 minutes response done by a classmate. Respondents will be decided during the course of the term, and before Christmas break
- After the response, the respondent moderates questions from other students in a round-table style

Requirements

- Present the thesis statement of the paper
- Illustrate the main case study of the paper. It is possible to use also images, links, videos.
- Mention at least two articles discussed during the term and critically evaluate how they connect with the paper's topic. When making use of references in presentations, the same rules apply as in written texts
- Connect the paper with the overall theme of the course

DEADLINE: VIDEOS NEED TO BE UPLOADED THREE DAYS BEFORE THE CLASS WHERE THEY WILL BE DISCUSSED

DEADLINE GRADES PUBLISHED IN OSIRIS: 11-2-2021

WEEK 9: FINAL PAPER

ASSIGNMENT 3 : Final Paper

The paper will show your engagement with the class material, the ability to individuate a relevant case study and to critically assess it in relation with what discusses throughout the term.

Assignment Instructions

The paper should follow the logic and structure of an essay, not of a research paper or a report. In the essay, students need to address a thesis statement. A thesis statement is based on a case study that illustrate, exemplifies, and clarify certain aspects of a theory or of previous work on a topic. In specific, students will discuss the case study engaging with the literature read for class.

An example of thesis statement is: "In this paper, I use X case study to illustrate/challenge Y", where Y is a theory or an argument made in the previous literature on the topic.

The **case study** must be an online campaign, movement, or event that illustrate how digital culture conditions, challenges, and influences the articulation and negotiations of cultural identities. Some examples of case studies:

- A hashtag campaign in response to a specific event
- A website or blog giving voice to a minority group or making visible non-traditional identities
- A Facebook page or YouTube channel where debates about cultural identities occurs
- An event (such as a march, a protest, a performance) that regards cultural identities and has been organized through online communication

In choosing the case study, remember that identities are fluid and that the most interesting examples lie at the intersections of various identity traits. The case can be local, national or transnational, based in your country or in another country. You can use a case discussed in class, but you need to deepen the class discussion with new information/perspective.

Requirements

The final paper should make use of at least four articles read during the term and four academic articles found by the student. It is important that you engage with the readings and compare/contrast their claims in relation with your case study, do not simply quote them. You can make use of non-academic references (newspaper articles, videos, documentaries) to illustrate the context of your case study and its impact.

Word count: 2000-2200 words

DEADLINE: 2-2-2021, 17:00 PM (DUTCH TIME, VIA CANVAS)

DEADLINE GRADES PUBLISHED IN OSIRIS: 23-2-2021

9. Literature

- Banet-Weiser, S., Gill, R., & Rottenberg, C. (2019). Postfeminism, popular feminism and neoliberal feminism? Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in conversation. *Feminist Theory*, 0(0), 1-22 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700119842555>
- Bonilla Y., & Rosa. J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, 42, 4-17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112>
- Butler, J. (2006). Subjects of sex/gender/desire. In *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (pp. 1-34). Routledge.
- Clark-Parsons, R. (2019). "I SEE YOU, I BELIEVE YOU, I STAND WITH YOU": #MeToo and the performance of networked feminist visibility. *Feminist Media Studies*, 0(0), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1628797>
- Dumitrica, D. (2019). Facebook and cultural identity: Discourses on mediation among international students. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 15(3), 303-322. https://doi.org/10.1386/macp_00003_1
- Ging, D., & Garvey, S. (2018). 'Written in these scars are the stories I can't explain': A content analysis of pro-ana and thinspiration image sharing on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1181-1200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816687288>
- Goffman, E. (1959). Performances. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (pp. 10-47). Anchor Books.
- Dhoest, A., & Szulc, L. (2016). Navigating online selves: Social, cultural, and material contexts of social media use by diasporic gay men. *Social Media+ Society*, 2, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672485>
- Hall, S. (1990) The white of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media. In M. Alvarado & J. Thompson, J.(Eds.), *The media reader*: BFI, 28-52
- Hinzo, A. M., & Clark, L. S. (2019). Digital survivance and Trickster humor: Exploring visual and digital Indigenous epistemologies in the #NoDAPL movement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573911>
- Klaver, M. (2015). Media technology creating "sermonic events." The Hillsong Megachurch Network. *CrossCurrents*, 65(4), 422-433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cros.12164>
- Owens, T. J., Robinson, D. T., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2010). Three Faces of Identity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 477-499.
- Pennington, R. (2018). Making space in social media: #MuslimWomensDay in Twitter. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 42, 199-217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859918768797>
- Rahbari, L. (2020). Duffs and Puffs: Queer Fashion in Iranian Cyberspace. *Middle East Critique*, 29(1), 69-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2020.1704503>
- Said, E. W. (1979). Introduction. In *Orientalism* (1st Vintage Books ed edition) 1-28. New York: Vintage.
- Szulc, L. (2019). Profiles, identities, data: Making abundant and anchored selves in a platform society. *Communication Theory*, 29, 257-276. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty031>

- Wheeler, K. R. (2014). Remixing images of Islam. The creation of new Muslim women subjectivities on YouTube. *Online -Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, 6, 144–163. <https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2014.0.17364>
- Yadlin-Segal, A. (2019) What's in a smile? Politicizing disability through selfies and affect. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24, 36–50. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy023>