RACISM & SEXISM ONLINE

SYD 6934 | Section 008   FAU FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY   **CRN 15467 | Spring 2021**

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3

Class details: Zoom, Mondays 4-6:50

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: none

Required Materials: There is <u>no textbook</u>. Readings available on *Canvas*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Digital sociology is broadly interested in how groups use technology in everyday life and how technology shapes social processes, especially in ways that contribute to social problems. This seminar will explore how racism and sexism—as interlocking systems of oppression—are produced online, structure online spaces, shape cultural norms, and are navigated by various social groups.

When it comes to exploring the online domain as one with far-reaching social implications, sociology is late to the game. So, in addition to sociologists, we will read work by scholars in communications, gender studies, political science, and media studies to consider issues of structure, culture, and power.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who read, thoughtfully participate in class discussions, and engage with assignments will:

o   Learn an overview of how social scientists explain the emergence and consequences of racism and sexism online

o   Evaluate the strengths/weaknesses of theoretical and methodological approaches to studying racism and sexism online

o   Identify new areas of inquiry and develop research questions to explore gaps in knowledge

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation **– 50 points/10% of course grade**

Read, show up, listen, and engage meaningfully. I find little merit in responding to every single comment or trying to outwit a classmate by showing that you know more. This isn't a competition; it's a gathering and chance to learn.

Response Papers **– 100 points/20% of course grade**

This assignment will help you practice reading to understand, connecting themes across readings, and linking readings to your own work or interests. There are twelve weeks of readings; you must complete response papers for **any 5 weeks of your choosing**. Response papers should be two-three pages (double-spaced) and consist of:
   o   one-paragraph summary of all the readings
   o   two-to-three paragraph critical analysis of the issue(s). For example, how do the readings connect? Do authors rely on the same assumptions? Do the authors have core disagreements? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the readings in helping us understand inequality online?
   o   concluding paragraph on how the authors' arguments and concepts are important, contradictory, or provocative for your own thesis topic, career aspirations, or future studies
   o   Submit these on *Canvas* by the start of class (Mondays 4pm)

Discussion Leader **– 100 points/20% of course grade**

This assignment is meant to help you develop your voice and confidence, and channel your analytic skills into developing questions that will spark discussion around readings. You will be responsible for leading **one** 2-hour discussion. You are welcome to incorporate videos and/or activities in your discussion. Be as creative or traditional in your approach as you want. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the class, you may be paired with another student.

In addition to these requirements, I am offering you a choice between two tracks. The **Research Track** is focused on producing a research proposal that can be used for a master's paper, grant, or dissertation. The **Applied Track** is centered on data collection, analysis, and intervention development.

Research Track
Research Question **–** 25 points/5% of course grade
   o   1-2 pages describing your originating research question, identifying key variables or processes of interest, and explaining the significance of the possible answers to the question

Annotated Bibliography **–** 50 points/10% of course grade
   o   select 10 academic sources that are relevant to your topic. Briefly (~1 paragraph per entry) explain its significance to your case. What will the source help you understand, explain, or examine?

Literature Review – 50 points/10% of course grade
- o 3-4 pages. What do we need to know from previous studies to understand the major variables or concepts you're interested in? Is there a major consensus among scholars about what you might expect to find, or do scholars disagree? What is missing from how other scholars have explored this topic?

Methods/Data – 50 points/10% of course grade
- o 3-4 pages. Which method is best fit for answering your question? Why? What are the limitations of using this method? What will your data be? How will you go about collecting and analyzing your data?

Final Proposal – 75 points/15% of course grade
- o 10-12 pages. This proposal will discuss your research problem, background literature, data/methods, and the significance of the project/potential findings to your discipline.

==Applied Track==

Virtual Ethnography – 150 points/25% of course grade

- o **Case Selection** (20 points): 1-2 pages. What is the community/space and research problem you seek to understand? Why is it important to explore this case?

- o **Annotated Bibliography** (50 points): select 7 academic sources and 3 sources from the news or public essays which are relevant to your topic. Briefly (~1 paragraph per entry) explain its significance to your case. What will the source help you understand, explain, or examine?

- o **Analytic Memos (**80 points): 3-4pages. Submit two (40 points/each) papers inclusive of fieldnotes and preliminary analysis. What have you been observing? What are your new insights? What new questions have you developed about this case?

Public Sociology Essay –100 points/25% of course grade
- o 8-10 pages. Describe how racism and/or sexism manifested in the community/space you observed; how your respondents reproduced, contested, and/or generally navigated racism/sexism; interventions you believe will help address these issues; and what is at stake more broadly if we do not take what is occurring with your case study seriously.

In addition:
- o Check your FAU email **daily**, as information regarding this class will be emailed.
- o Keep copies of all completed assignments & work until final grades are posted.
- o Be sure to discuss grade posting omissions and errors with me immediately.

o Deadlines for your track-specific assignments are Fridays 10pm. This is because: I want you to use your weekends to rest as much as possible. Since our class is on Monday, I'd also prefer you focus on making sure you have your readings completed in preparation for discussion. With all of that said, if you need more time to complete an assignment, you are welcome to take it without penalty to your grade. I encourage you to be honest with me and yourself about how you are handling the course load and whether or not it is feasible for you to complete assignments within a timely manner.

GRADING

Grades can be accessed on *Canvas*. All grades in this course must be earned. There will be no curving or extra credit offered. A grade of "Incomplete" will only be given in cases of emergencies late in the semester, when the majority of CRs have been submitted, and when official documentation is provided. **Please inform me of any difficulties or hardships negatively affecting your class performance <u>as soon as possible</u> to maximize the amount of time available to manage the problem.**

Letter grades will be assigned based on <u>total points earned</u>. The grading scale is as follows:

Grade Component	Points
Participation	50
Response Papers	100
Discussion Leader	100
Track Requirements	250
TOTAL	**500**

Course Grade	Point Range
A	470 or more
A-	450-469
B+	435-449
B	420-434
B-	400-419
C+	385-399
C	370-384
C-	350-369
D+	335-349
D	320-334
D-	300-319
F	0-299

CLASS CONDUCT AND EXPECTATIONS

Keep It All In Good Faith

I expect all submitted work be completed in good-faith and refrain from derogatory comments and dehumanizing language about other people, cultures, and groups. While critical engagement with course material is required, interrupting, attacking and passive-aggressive trolling are not conducive to the learning outcomes. Discussions are to be framed using rules of evidence and should always be presented in a respectful and civil manner. This is paramount to a quality educational experience. To be clear, each person in the classroom has something of value to contribute, but not all opinions are equal. Put another way, anyone on the street can give me an opinion on any of the other topics we will explore. **But this is a social science class, and you are a graduate student—you are reading expert sources on issues, which means <u>you now know more than the average person on the street.</u>** Both within discussions and writing assignments, you must use critical evidence that does not rely on mere personal beliefs, anecdotes, or opinions.

If a student is being disruptive or disrespectful (rude, inappropriate, and/or harmful to others) either in the classroom or during class-related communications online or in-person, they will receive one verbal warning from the instructor. However, if the behavior is viewed as seriously disruptive, no warning will be issued, and the student will be dismissed from class and receive no credit for participation. If negative behavior persists following this dismissal, I will request a meeting with the student and Department Chair to discuss and document a plan for changing behavior. Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Chair and the Academic Dean.

Intellectual Property

The research ideas you discuss in class are your intellectual property. You are not, under any circumstance, to use the ideas of other students, including those from class discussions or presentations. You are also not to cite or share another student's research ideas without written permission from the student.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1 (Jan 11) Welcome!

→ Introductions, syllabus review, Q&A

→ I will randomly assign discussion leader topics this week. You are welcome to swap topics, but the order must be finalized by Jan 18th.

2 (Jan 18) NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Day)

→ Email me with the track you decide on (Friday Jan 22 @ 10pm)

3 (Jan 25) Racism, Sexism, and Digital Sociology

This week is an overview of how to think about racism and sexism from a sociological perspective, and a brief introduction to digital sociology.

- Lupton, Deborah. 2015. "Life is Digital" and "Theorizing digital society" in *Digital Sociology*

- Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. 2016. "What is Intersectionality" in *Intersectionality*

4 (Feb 1) It's Not A Glitch, It's a Feature

While many scholars focus on psychological explanations for racism and sexism online (disinhibition frameworks centered in individual bigotry), others take a more structural approach, considering the role of cultural norms and the architecture of online spaces.

- Nakamura, Lisa. 2013. "Glitch Racism: Networks as Actors within Vernacular Internet Theory." *Culture Digitally*

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. "Searching For Black Girls." In *Algorithms of Oppression*

- Citron, Danielle Keats. 2014. "How The Internet's Virtues Fuels Its Vices." In *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*

→ Research Question or Case Selection Due Friday Feb 5 @ 10pm

5 (Feb 8) Violence Against Women

How do we explain the rise of, persistence, and women's understanding of revenge pornography, stalking, trolling, and misogynistic language online?

- Sobieraj, Sarah. 2018. "Bitch, Slut, Skank, Cunt: Patterned Resistance to Women's Visibility in Digital Publics." *Information, Communication & Society*

- Henry, Nicola, Asher Flynn, and Anastasia Powell. 2020. "Technology-Facilitated Domestic and Sexual Violence: A Review." *Violence Against Women*

- Amunsden, Rikke. 2020. "A Male Dominance Kind of Vibe: Approaching Unsolicited Dick Pics as Sexism." *New Media & Society*

6 (Feb 15) Black Cyberfeminism and Women's Unpaid Labor Online

The theory of Black Cyberfeminism provides a lens through which to understand and address the specific ways Black women experience and reshape digital spaces.

- Cottom, Tressie McMillan. 2016. "Black Cyberfeminism" in *Digital Sociologies*

- Hampton, Rachelle. 2019. "The Black Feminists Who Saw the Alt-Right Threat Coming." *Slate*

- Jackson, Sarah J., Moya Bailey and Brooke Foucault Welles. 2020. "Visions of Black Feminism," in *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*

- Nakamura, Lisa. 2015. "The Unwanted Labour Of Social Media: Women Of Colour Call Out Culture As Venture Community Management." *New Formations*

→ Annotated Bibliography Due Friday Feb 19 @ 10pm

7 (Feb 22) Gaming Culture

Gaming culture is considered a particularly toxic aspect of the internet. What are the contours of this culture? What are its consequences for other social spaces?

- Ortiz, Stephanie M. 2019. "The Meanings of Racist and Sexist Trash Talk for Men of Color: A Cultural Sociological Approach to Studying Gaming Culture." *New Media & Society*

- Massanari, Adrienne. 2017. "#Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures." *New Media & Society*.

- Gray, Kishonna L. 2018. "Gaming Out Online: Black Lesbian Identity Development and Community Building in Xbox Live." *Journal of lesbian studies*

8 (Mar 1) Responding to Racism and Sexism

How do targets of racism and sexism react to firsthand and vicarious harassment? What are some of the challenges of addressing and preventing harassment?

- Sobieraj, Sarah. 2020. "Just Get Off The Internet." In *Credible Threat: Attacks Against Women Online and the Future of Democracy*

- Eschmann, Rob, 2020. "Digital Resistance: How Online Communication Facilitates Responses to Racial Microaggressions." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

- Cote, Amanda C. 2017. "I Can Defend Myself: Women's Strategies for Coping with Harassment While Gaming Online." *Games & Culture*

→ Literature Review or Memo #1 Due Friday Mar 6 @ 10pm

9 (Mar 8) Influencers

How are influencers navigating and shaping broader ideologies about race and gender?

- Lewis, Rebecca. 2018. "Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube."

- Lawson, Caitlin E. 2020. "Skin Deep: Callout Strategies, Influencers, and Racism in the Online Beauty Community." *New Media & Society*

- Drenten, Jenna, Lauren Gurrieri, and Meagan Tyler. 2020. "Sexualized Labour in Digital Culture: Instagram Influencers, Porn Chic and the Monetization of Attention." *Gender, Work & Organization*

10 (Mar 15) Online Dating

How do people negotiate desire online in ways that reinforce exclusionary boundaries?

- Niesen, Molly. 2016. "Love, Inc: Toward Structural Intersectional Analysis of Online Dating Sites and Applications" in *The Intersectional Internet*

- Thompson, Laura. 2018. "I Can Be your Tinder Nightmare: Harassment and misogyny in the online sexual marketplace." *Feminism & psychology*

- Robinson, Brandon Andrew. 2015. ""Personal Preference" as the New Racism: Gay Desire and Racial Cleansing in Cyberspace." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

11 (Mar 22) #BLM

Black Lives Matter offers us a case study of how social media and social movements converge to challenge anti-Black racism.

- Garza, Alicia. 2014. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement." *Feminist Wire*

- Ray, Rashawn, Melissa Brown, Neil Fraistat, and Edward Summers. 2017. "Ferguson and the Death of Michael Brown on Twitter: #BlackLivesMatter, #TCOT, and the Evolution of Collective Identities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

- Clark, Meredith D. 2019. "White Folks' Work: Digital Allyship Praxis in the #BlackLivesMatter Movement." *Social Movements Studies*

- → Data/Methods or Memo #2 Due Friday Mar 26 @ 10pm

12 (Mar 29) #MeToo

Tarana Burke's 2006 creation was designed to bring awareness to and support the needs of sexual assault survivors, especially Black young girls and women. The public (and some scholars) quickly adopted a colorblind framework, downplaying the role of gendered racism in sexual assault.

- Gray, Kishonna. 2020. "#Me2, #me#4, Black Women and Misogynoir." In *Intersectional Tech: Black Users in Digital Gaming*

- Mendes, Kaitlynn, Jessica Ringrose, and Jessalynn Keller. 2018. "#MeToo and the Promise and Pitfalls of Challenging Rape Culture through Digital Feminist Activism." *European Journal of Women's Studies*

- Clark-Parsons, Rosemary. 2019. ""I See You, I Believe You, I Stand With You": #MeToo and the Performance of Networked Feminist Visibility." *Feminist Media Studies*

13 (Apr 5) Organizing a White Male Backlash Online

Online spaces provide effective cover for, and means of connecting, white men who seek an outlet for their perceived victimization on the basis of their race and gender.

- Daniels, Jessie. 2018. "The Algorithmic Rise of the 'Alt-Right'." *Contexts*.

- Ging, Debbie. 2019. "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*

- Rafail, Patrick, and Isaac Freitas. 2019. "Grievance Articulation and Community Reactions in the Men's Rights Movement Online." *Social Media + Society*

14 (Apr 12) How We Get Free

We end the seminar by considering how marginalized people experience online spaces on their own terms.

- Williams, Apryl A. 2017. "Fat People of Color: Emergent Intersectional Discourse Online." *Social Sciences*

- Jackson, Sarah J., Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles. 2018. "#GirlsLikeUs: Trans Advocacy and Community Building Online." *New Media & Society*

- Lu, Jessica H., and Catherine Knight Steele. 2019. "'Joy is Resistance': Cross-Platform Resilience and (Re) Invention of Black Oral Culture Online." *Information, Communication & Society*

15 (Apr 19) Presentations

→ Present a 5-minute talk on your proposal/public sociology essay.

Proposal / Public Sociology Essay due April 26th

UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES & STATEMENTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT
As a student at Florida Atlantic University, you are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high-quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require accommodation due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) CENTER STATEMENT
Life as a student is physically, mentally and emotionally challenging and draining. If you find this stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services -- individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few -- offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For locations and appointments, go to http://www.fau.edu/counseling/

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY
In accordance with regulations of the Florida Board of Governors and Florida law, students have the right to reasonable accommodations from the University in order to observe religious practices and beliefs with regard to admissions, registration, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations, and work assignments. The details of this policy, as it pertains to FAU, may be found in the University Catalog and University Regulation 2.007, Religious Observances.

ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT
Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

COVID-19 STATEMENT
All students in face-to-face classes are required to wear masks during class, and students must sanitize their own workstations upon entering the classroom. Taking these measures supports the safety and protection of the FAU community. Students who do not adhere to these rules will be asked to leave the classroom and/or be removed from the course. Students experiencing flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), or students who have come in contact with an infected person should immediately contact FAU Student Health Services (561-297-3512).