Pentimento:
Feminisms, Technology, and Science
HU 5112, Fall 2009

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Office hours: 11-2:00, T/Th

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Class hours: 9:35-10:50 a.m.
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What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.
—Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition

Feminists share the belief that women, too, are fully human.
—Sandra Harding, Sciences from Below

The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality.
—Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women

The argument that women’s relationship to technology is a contradictory one, combined with the realization that technology is itself a social construct, opens up fresh possibilities for feminist scholarship and action.
—Judy Wajcman, Feminism Confronts Technology

This course traces social, political, and cultural issues that have gradually emerged in technical communication, technology studies, and science as a result of feminist examinations of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical ability. The course begins with a review of selected scholars who have theorized technology and human interaction and whose conspicuous silence about gender, class, race, ethnicity, and the physical body establishes the gaps that subsequent feminist scholarship has sought to bridge. Focusing on feminist historiographers and theorists, the course explores the aforementioned gaps with an examination of the ways in which modern and anti-modern feminists aim to foreground and bridge them, for women in particular. Turning to recent alterations in the scope of technical communication and technology studies, the course takes up the work of postmodern feminists, who probe issues of power and control in such contexts as cross-cultural communication, medical rhetorics, and disability studies.

Goals:
This seminar aims to:
• Contextualize the historiographies of U.S. feminist undertakings with the goal of seeing “feminism” as plural and contradictory
• Recover classical understandings of episteme, phronesis, and techne in order to appreciate how they have marked—and can be used to resist—dominant attitudes toward science and technology
• Appreciate the complexity of feminist science and technology (FST) projects
• Interrogate the twin dangers of gender essentialism and technological determinism
• Entertain feminist calls for research that critique and counter the modern and the postmodern
• Consider how you might—or not—locate yourself as a feminist in your own scholarship and teaching

Required Texts:

Additional shorter texts, available in .pdf. Use the following instructions to access them:
1. Go to: http://courses.mtu.edu and login (ISO)
2. Select HU 5112
3. Double click the PDF folder
4. Double click the article you want (which will download to your computer)

Projects:
Talk: Position paper
Once during the semester, each participant will select a text from the calendar and prepare a position paper, both written and oral. for it. The purpose is to give you practice in close reading and critical response and to give other participants paths into discussion about the text.

Include in the written position paper (3-4 pages): a contextualization of the piece; a brief summary of the author’s general argument and main points; a focused and succinct examination of key passages; an assessment of the author’s contribution and/or shortfalls in light of the context in which the piece was written.

Add to the oral presentation (8-10 minutes): discussion questions that advance others’ efforts to understand the author’s argument and your assessment of it.

Cross Talk: Journal map
Once during the semester, collaborating in teams of two, participants will prepare and present a map, both visual and written, for one of those journals suggested below. The purpose of the journal map is to immerse you in the intersecting and diverging discussions about feminisms, science, and technology.
The visual map, for instance a simple table, covers the sections marked “V” below; the co-written map covers the sections marked “W.” Both are due on the day you choose to present (15-20 minutes).

Once you have chosen a journal, all available from Van Pelt e-journals:

1. Review five years (2003-08) of the major articles, not book reviews or letters. Use the abstracts or introductions at this stage:
   a. in the feminist journals, identify articles that take up technology or science
   b. In the technical communication/studies, composition studies, or science journals, identify articles that focus on the underrepresented, for instance, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, race, class, or ethnicity
   c. Listen, also, for silences about these topics (Why? The U.P. is not represented on some maps; consider the implications of our absence)

2. Summarize, in a sentence or two, the major arguments of each pertinent article (V)

3. Describe, in a word or two, the approach(es) used in the article: feminist, empirical, rhetorical, for instance (V)

4. Assess, in a sentence or two, the contribution of this article, at the time it was published, to feminist studies of technology and science (V)

5. Step back from the “sites” of the particular articles. Using them as “markers,” “map” the general theoretical, research, and/or pedagogical directions they suggest, across the five years (W)

6. Assess the contributions of this journal to feminist studies of technology and science (W)

Feminist, Gender Studies, or Women’s Studies journals
Differences
Feminist Studies
Genders
Hypatia
Journal of Feminist Philosophy
Women’s Studies International Quarterly
Women’s Studies Quarterly
Signs

Technical Communication, Technology Studies, or Science journals
IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication
Journal of Business and Technical Communication
Journal of Science Education
Journal of Technical Writing and Communication
Technical Communication Quarterly
Technology and Culture

Rhetoric or Composition Studies journals
College Composition and Communication
College English
Computers and Composition
Rhetoric Review


Talking Back: Seminar paper or research proposal
Participants are encouraged to advance their own scholarly interests and research agendas, which includes writing a seminar paper or research proposal in light of feminist epistemologies and/or research methodologies (8-12 pages). A statement of topic and purpose, an outline, and a working bibliography are also required.

Participation and Attendance:
The success of this seminar depends on careful preparation and engaged participation. Attendance is expected. In case of emergency or unforeseen conflict, or if you know in advance that you must miss a class, let me know as soon as possible. I will not accept late or incomplete work.

Grading Criteria
Seminar paper 40%
Journal map (visual and written) 30%
Position paper (oral and written) 20%
Participation and attendance 10%

Additional Information
MTU's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).

Safe Place
I am a member of Safe Place. Its mission statement: "The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech's campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting to all members of the University community."
5112 Calendar*

September 1  
Introductory readings for the course and each other

September 3  
Grimke, Truth (Man Cannot) & Petit

September 8  
(Friedan & Brasseur) (Ranney & Harding 1-16, SfB)

September 10  
Feminism beyond Modernism, Flynn

September 15  
Back to the Rough Ground 2, Dunne

September 17  
Artifacts, Winner

September 22  
Cunning Intelligence, Détienne & Vernant

September 24  
Metis, Dolmage & Women's Studies, Brady

September 29  
Back to the Rough Ground 1, Dunne

October 1  
Arendt, THC, "Labor"

October 6  
Arendt, "Work"

October 8  
Arendt, "Action"

October 13  
Arendt, "Vita Activa"

October 15  
Wajcman, FCT, Chapters 1-3
Journal map

October 20  
Wajcman, Chapters 4-6
Journal map

October 22  
Harding, SfB, Part I (chapters 1-3)
Journal map

October 27  
Harding, Part 2 (chapters 4-6)
Journal map

October 29  
Harding, Part 3 (chapters 7-9)
Journal map

November 3  
Seigel, Instructions for Systemic Change
Journal map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>Marika Seigel, Assistant Professor, MTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10</td>
<td>Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>Harding, Feminist Epistemologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>Statement of topic and purpose for seminar paper or research proposal due</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>Maura Taaffe, Ph.D. candidate, RTC, MTU</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 24</td>
<td>Thanksgiving holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Nugent, chapters 2 &amp; 3                                           Outline and working bibliography due</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>Jim Nugent, Assistant Professor, Oakland U</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>Seminar paper/proposal presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>Seminar paper/proposal presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 17 (noon)</td>
<td>Seminar paper or research proposal due</td>
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</tbody>
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*Unless noted as one of the books for 5112, readings are in .pdf and can be downloaded from [http://courses.mtu.edu](http://courses.mtu.edu). Refer to the syllabus for instructions.*