Women’s and Gender Studies

2013 STUDENT CONFERENCE

Hosted by the

Joint Chair in Women’s Studies

University of Ottawa, April 11, 2013



CONFÉRENCE ÉTUDIANTE 2013

en études des femmes et du genre

Organisée par la

Chaire conjointe en études des femmes

Université d’Ottawa, le 11 avril 2013

We thank the Conference Committee:

Joanna Dean, from the Department of History at Carleton University, Michael Orsini, Director of the Institute of Women’s Studies at the University of Ottawa, and Pamela Walker, Joint Chair in Women’s Studies at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa

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**Pamela Walker**

**the Joint Chair in Women’s Studies,**

**for Carleton University and the University of Ottawa**

**invites you to the**

**JCWS 2013 STUDENT CONFERENCE**

**ON**

***GENDER – CULTURE – SOCIETY***

**WHEN: Thursday, April 11, 2013 Conference Committee:**

**TIME: 9:15 am – 2:45 pm Pamela Walker, JCWS**

**WHERE: Room 4007 Joanna Dean, History, Carleton University**

**Social Science Building Michael Orsini, IWS, University of Ottawa**

**120 University Private**

**University of Ottawa**

**PROGRAM**

**Welcome: 9:20 - 9:30**

**Session One: 9:30 - 10:45 Displacements**

**Zoe Gross,** Carleton University

Title: Constructing Whiteness and Locating Power in East Africa: Racialization, Desirability and Status of ‘Others’ With Access

**Jill Thayer,** Carleton University

Title: Who Belongs? Gentrification and Community Change

**Break: 10:45 - 11:00**

**Session Two: 11:00 - 12:00 Translating Feminisms**

**Anna Bogic,** University of Ottawa

Title: Simone de Beauvoir and Feminist Philosophy: Transatlantic Dialogues in Translation

**Zahira Sarwar,** Carleton University

Title: Arab Muslim Feminism(s) as Feminist Theory: A Critical Exploration of the Literature and Discourse

**12:00 – 1:00 LUNCH offered during the POSTER PRESENTATION**

**Poster Presentation: 12:00 – 13:00**

**Anastasia Marie Szakowski,** Carleton University

Title: Text Savvy, Media Illiterate

**Burcu Danisment,** Carleton University

Title: Guns, Men and Community: Reclaiming a Feminist Identity within Video Games

**Session Three: 13:15-14:30 Technology, Media and Gender**

**Courtney Constable**, Carleton University

Title: Mother Monster, Social Networking, and Identity Activism: Lady Gaga’s Mobilization of New Media Platforms to Distribute Activist Images of Hegemonic Gender and Sexuality Transgression

**Alexandra Born,** Carleton University

Title: Being Jane Cyborg: Subjectivity and the Medically and Technologically Defined Body

**Maria Arseniuk,** University of Ottawa

Title: The Game: Deconstructing Urban Masculinities in HBO’s The Wire

Each panelist will give a 15 minute presentation, and a question period will follow each panel.

**Closing Remarks 2:30 – 2:40**

***Constructing Whiteness and Locating Power in East Africa:***

***Racialization, Desirability, and Status of ‘Others’ with Access***

**Zoë Gross**

In the East African countries of Kenya and Tanzania, whiteness is associated with wealth and privilege. This paper proposes that white Western women are understood as desirable to black East African men as an avenue to participate in an idealized Western lifestyle of wealth and opportunity. This location of difference and heightened social status positions white Western women as ‘Others’ with access, inverting conventional Western academic conceptions of racialization.

In engaging with the experiences of my MA thesis research participants, I reflect upon scholarly literature that questions normative and romanticized understandings of international development (for example, Goudge, 2003; Heron, 2007; Loftsdóttir, 2009; White, 2002), the location of whiteness in the West and in the global south (for example, Bashkow, 2006; Fanon, 1952; Frankenberg, 1993; Fox, 2012) and inter-racial transnational intimate relationships (for example, Jónasdóttir, et. al. [eds], 2011; Nagel, 2010; Nyanzi & Bah, 2010). I situate this paper as an inter-disciplinary feminist analysis of critical race and whiteness studies and theories of sexuality and desire.

I consider: What understandings of race, class, gender and sexuality shape daily and intimate interactions between black East African men and white Western women working in the field of international development? How do these individual interactions reflect, reinforce and potentially resist broader ideological transnational structures of neo-colonialism? While it may seem that relationships between these two social groups may break down racial and class barriers, I suggest instead that the perceptions and realities of these relationships actually reiterate (neo)colonial power dynamics and racial hierarchies.

***Who Belongs?***

***Gentrification and Community Change***

**Jill Thayer**

Hintonburg and Mechanicsville are neighbourhoods in Ottawa that have historically been associated with the working class, poverty and transience. The neighbourhoods are currently experiencing a demographic shift as more affluent residents move to the area in search of a trendy urban neighbourhood. The processes of urban (re)development and urban intensification have reconfigured the community image and consequently the neighbourhoods are now hotbeds of real estate activity. As the neighbourhood further becomes constructed as a desirable place to live it becomes more difficult for the residents who historically dwelled within the community to afford it. The processes of gentrification in the neighbourhood are exclusionary because they do not take into account the various experiences of community in the area.

This paper seeks to examine the processes of urban re-development that have occurred and are occurring in Hintonburg/Mechanicsville in Ottawa. My research will locate discourses of gentrification, citizenship, community and displacement within a feminist and social justice framework to problematize and disrupt normative discourses regarding urban re-development, community and diversity. Key questions to be examined are 1) what are the affects of gentrification on community members, 2) how is citizenship and community experienced by residents in a gentrified or gentrifying neighbourhood, 3) how is diversity constructed within a gentrified community and 4) how is poverty commodified in Hintonburg/Mechanicsville?

***Simone de Beauvoir and Feminist Philosophy:***

***Transatlantic Dialogues in Translation***

**Anna Bogic**

This paper examines Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist philosophy and writing in its journey between North America and Europe. Specifically, I discuss the reception of the French-language publication of the “feminist bible, ”Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe,* in France in 1949, as well as the now controversial circumstances that surrounded the first English translation in 1953. The paper analyzes the factors that lead to the “eclipsing” of Beauvoir’s philosophy in its American edition, including the consequent influence of the English translation on major American feminist thinkers, such as Betty Friedan and Kate Millett.

I further draw links between the French and the American women’s liberation movements and the exchange of feminist ideas through translation. Lastly, I conclude by discussing the complex ways in which the efforts to complete a “better” second translation of *The Second Sex* still struggle to legitimize Beauvoir’s status of philosopher and to ensure a lasting legacy of the French feminist writer.

***Arab Muslim Feminism(s) as Feminist Theory:***

***A Critical Exploration of the Literature and Discourse***

**Zahira Sarwar**

My aim in conducting this research is to explore the field of Arab Muslim feminism(s) to examine what this field can contribute to Western university level feminist theory courses. I will also explore some of the reasons why this is a field rarely studied in Western academic institutions by looking at the various rifts within this movement, such as divisions between secular and religious Muslim feminists, as well as the issue of native informants in the West who speak on behalf of all Muslim women. I will engage in a discourse analysis of the literature on the topic of Muslim feminism(s) and anti-Orientalist literature, including but not limited to the works of Valentine Moghadam, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Jasmin Zine, Amina Wadud, and Nahla Abdo. The contributions made by this research will seek to foster discussions around the topic of Muslim feminism(s) in universities and inclusion in feminist theory curriculum.

I hope to present my research through a 15 minute paper presentation by beginning with brief definitions of some of the various types of Muslim feminism(s) and then proceeding to outline where and how some of the divisions within this group arise. I will also speak to questions pertaining to some of the obstacles I have faced thus far in my research, such as locating Muslim feminist scholars when so few of them use this label to describe themselves. I will conclude by presenting the status of where my research is currently at and where I hope to take it.

***Mother Monster, Social Networking, and Identity Activism: Lady Gaga’s Mobilization of New Media Platforms to Distribute Activist Images of Hegemonic Gender***

***and Sexuality Transgression***

**Courtney Constable**

I propose to conduct a presentation outlining my research about the ways in which musical and performance artist Lady Gaga mobilizes new media and social networking capabilities (ex. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LittleMonsters.com) in order to distribute images that transgress hegemonic understandings of gender and sexuality in an attempt to generate discussion about normative binaries and social limitations within a mainstream audience.

My research investigates how social networking enables the development of a dynamic online community, where individuals can act not only as passive consumers of Lady Gaga’s artistic and activist texts, but also as active producers, re-creating her original images and re-communicating their own understandings of her messages in order to contribute directly to her activist causes. By conducting an inter-textual analysis deconstructing both Lady Gaga’s original Yoü and I and Haus of Ü texts, as well as several receptions texts created by fans, I seek to understand the ways in which new media usage facilitates contemporary identity activism.

This analysis is informed by key identity theorists such as Judith Butler, Susan Bordo and Iris Marion Young, as well as fundamental theories of participatory and convergence culture, as outline by scholars such as Henry Jenkins and Marshall McLuhan. Important emergent themes within my analysis include empowerment, hyper-sexualization, and performativity. My study contributes to evolving understandings of what constitutes activism and how developing technologies can play a role in contemporary social advocacy.

**Being Jane Cyborg:**

**Subjectivity and the Medically and Technologically Defined Body**

**Alexandra Born**

The current medical anthropology literature on diabetes is failing to capture the experiences of women who use insulin pumps in the treatment of type 1 diabetes and maintains a lack of diversity in the representations of people with diabetes. Turning to the lived experience of women who use insulin pump technology may inform theoretical perspectives on the relationship between identity, illness and technology. Cyberfeminism sees that the increasing presence of technologies signals the end to the sex/gender nexus through the hybridization of bodies and machines (Wajcman, 2007). Technology may become the vehicle to challenge essentialist associations of women with the body. As an extension of technofeminist theory, I suggest that medical technology may reconfigure the relationship between women and their diabetic bodies.

Reflecting on my personal experiences living with type 1 diabetes and using insulin pump technology, I am exploring whether the cyborg (human-machine hybrid), as proposed cyberfeminists, is a viable identity that speaks to the lived experience of having type 1 diabetes in a technological age as a woman. My proposed methodology includes semi-structured interviews that focus on the impact of technology on the sense of self. Snowball sampling technique is proposed to locate the small research population in the Ottawa area. This research will bring together the technofeminist theory, medical anthropological accounts of diabetes and the lived experiences of women to analyze impact of insulin pumps on the identity of diabetic women.

***The Game:***

***Deconstructing Urban Masculinities in HBO’s The Wire***

**Maria Arseniuk**

Critics hailed *The Wire*, an HBO series based in Baltimore, MD which investigates the complex interlocking systems of the drug trafficking institution, as one of the decade’s most progressive dramas. *The Wire’*s intersectional approach to gender, race, class and heteronormativity illustrates the decline of America’s working class while simultaneously highlighting systemic corruption in institutions of power. I propose to conduct a media analysis within the framework of masculinities theory to deconstruct the representations of three of the show’s central characters: Wallace, Omar Little and Jimmy McNulty.

*Objectives:*

Applying academic masculinities theorization to a popular culture representation of urban male identity based on the author’s lived experience will demonstrate the systemic nature of racism, classism and heteronormativity embedded in America’s legal, economic, and political systems.

*Methodology*:

A critical viewing of the series in its entirety (five seasons) followed by an analysis informed by literature on the significance of intersectionality to hegemonic understandings and portrayals of masculinities. A working bibliography is attached.

*Interdisciplinary Nature:*

The central theme of my presentation is best articulated through the combined use of the feminist theory of intersectionality, queer theory, masculinities and media theory. I suggest the findings will be of interest not only to scholars interested in gender and women’s studies, but sociology, cultural, critical and media studies as well.

***Text Savvy, Media Illiterate***

**Anastasia Marie Szakowski**

Advertising for youth (15-24) culture exerts a powerful influence on identity formation and judgments about gender performance. The sophisticated rhetoric of contemporary advertisements that target this age demographic is largely coded in a branding of sexualized lifestyles.

Media literacy education provides popular culture consumers, especially youth, with the necessary tools to make informed decisions about what they will accept, reject, and/or transform. Media literacy programs in Canada have promised to deliver these tools via provincial and territorial education curricula with the goal of targeting a wide range of age groups.

Research, however, indicates that most media literacy programs are directed toward elementary school children in a scattered way. Media literacy education is not regulated across provinces and territories nor is it required. The purpose of this research is to examine the media literacy (or lack thereof) of young adults in relation to representative gendered and sexualized contemporary advertisements.

***Guns, Men, and Community:***

***Reclaiming a Feminist Identity within Video Games***

**Burcu Danisment**

Gaming technologies are generally depicted as gendered spaces that exclude individuals on the basis of gender, race, and sexuality. Many researchers write that video games lack female representation and are mainly played by heterosexual, young, and white males. Adrienne Shaw (2010) notes that, “for most of the last two decades gaming has been considered an odd, insular subculture, the territory of teenage boys and those who never outgrew their teens.”

However, this notion of gaming culture and identity is changing rapidly. Females who play video games are changing and challenging these mascuilinist spaces to create a space for themselves. Therefore, it is important to redefine what gaming identity is because females who play video games reclaim the traditional gaming identity by playing video games, which are not deemed as “girl friendly.”

This research paper is different from other literary works on video gaming because I write about my own experiences and perspective as a feminist power gamer. Analyzing my own experiences as a feminist power gamer, I argue that invisibility within video games does not stop other female players from playing. I will examine how being a feminist power gamer influence my views on video gaming and how it helps me to recognize and challenge sexism, violence, and racism within First Person Shooter games. I will also compare and contrast the different representations of femininity, body, and race within *Borderlands 1* and *Borderlands 2.* In addition, I will examine the concept of fandom and gamification.