

WGST 3812A
Winter 2020
Feminist Activism, Social Movements, and Social Media:
Considering the #MeToo Movement

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Course meets: Wednesday 11:30 - 14:30

Includes: Experiential Learning Activity
Prerequisite(s): third-year standing and 1.0 credit in WGST

This course examines digital feminist social movements using the example of the #MeToo movement. On a variety of social networking sites (SNSs), #MeToo is being used by survivors of sexual harassment and sexual violence a space where they can speak about their experiences. While #MeToo is not the first online campaign to address experiences of sexual violence (ex., #BeenRapedNeverReported), it has garnered extensive attention online and from the mainstream media coverage. This coverage is, in part, due to several high-profile individuals who have been assaulted by men in positions of power and influence who have used the hashtag. The MeToo hashtag has spread globally and the issue clearly resonates with many people. It is active in more than 85 countries and has generated more than 1.7 million tweets.¹ Over the next 12 weeks we will use examples of online activism and the #MeToo movement to consider questions related to feminist activism, social movements, fourth wave feminism(s), and social media, including:

1. Why did #MeToo emerge and why did it emerge now?
2. What effect(s) has the movement had?
3. What are the potentials of online activism for feminism(s)?
4. What are the challenges of online activism?
5. Explore the relationship between online and offline activism?

In addressing these questions context matters. The impact of #MeToo is likely to vary from country to country and by race, sexuality, class, gender, [dis]Ability, among other factors. So, as we consider the questions outlined above, we have to also consider for whom it has or has not worked?

The course is designed to limit the amount of time spent listening to lectures and to have students actively engage with the readings, topics, and issues. It is organised

¹ (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/metoo-reaches-85-countries-with-1-7-million-tweets/>)

around readings and preparatory exercises and integrates reflections on the lectures, readings and the in-class work into the learning process. It is imperative that you bring your electronic devices (phone, tablets, and computers) to class as we will make extensive use of them. Try to ensure they are charged. If you are not wired and have no devices, most of the work is with partners or in groups.

Hashtag feminist activism is an emerging topic in the academy. Because of its emergent status, there is no textbook that has summarised the key debates and issues in a form easily accessible for classroom teaching. So, the course readings are primarily journal articles. This can be a bit more challenging than a textbook because the students will have to develop the summaries of the topics and issues based on the readings. There are about 25 pages of readings for most weeks. You will need to plan your time to ensure you can do the readings and the required summaries each week.

The course is designed to have students apply the readings and other course material to answering key questions. Much of this work is done in class and while attendance is not graded missing classes can impact on your ability to complete the course work. It is essential to attend class and to review what is being done each week and plan your time accordingly.

The topics covered in this course and the online material we will examine address difficult issues. This may be triggering for some students. Please consider this in planning your participation in the course. Health and Counselling Services (<https://carleton.ca/health/counselling-services/>) provides support for students. You can self-refer to these services. There are also community resources such as the Distress Centre (Distress Centre: 613-238-3311).

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand the role of social media in contemporary feminist social movements.
2. Students will understand the risks and benefits of online activism.
3. Students will further develop their critical reading skills.
4. Students will further develop their presentation skills.

Assignments

Week #2 - Jan 15 th	Reading Summary Due	10%
Week #3 - Jan. 22 nd	Assignment #1 due	10%
Week #4 - Jan. 29 th	Journal Submission #1	5%
Week #5 - Feb. 5 rd	Assignment #2 due	10%
Weeks 10 - 12	Group Presentations	20%
Week #11 - Mar. 25 th	Final Journal Submission	20%
	Final Essay	25%

All assignments must be submitted through CULearn. Late assignments will be penalised 10% per day - this will include each day of the weekends. If you are unable to complete any assignments due to illness or other issues, you should contact the Instructor. In cases of assignments missed due to illness, the assessment points for that assignment will be added to the grades for your final essay.

Week by Week:

Week #1 (Jan. 8th)- Course Overview

- Review syllabus & discussion of course Learning Goals
- In-class Activity: Difficult conversations/Tough Topics - Building a safe learning environment
- Discussion of Journaling

Preparation for next class

The readings for Week #2 are listed below. These are relatively short articles and commentaries and they describe online feminist activism and raise questions about these activities and provide a starting point for our discussion of #MeToo. Your notes on the readings will provide the basis for the class discussion. On the CULearn course site, you will find instructions on what to include in your reading summaries, the activity we will be doing in class next week, and for your first reflection report. You can use the work for these activities for your journal entries.

Week #2 (Jan 15th) - Feminists Using Social Media

Reading Summary due - electronic format - at the beginning of class

Required Readings:

1. Jane (2017). "Feminist Digilante Responses to a Slut-Shaming on Facebook."
[OPTIONAL: For some interesting follow-up see:
<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/tinder-troll-cops-12-month-good-behaviour-bond/news-story/a055ca92fbb17d8228d77f4ef3021715>]
2. Nyabola, Nanjala (2018). "Kenyan Feminisms in the Digital Age."
3. Higgs (2015) "#JusticeforLiz: Power and Privilege in Digital Transnational Women's Rights Activism."

Supplementary Readings/Commentaries:

1. Eagle, Ryan Bowles (2015). "Loitering, Lingerin, Hashtagging: Women Reclaiming Public Space Via #BoardtheBus, #StopStreetHarassment, and the #EverydaySexism Project."
2. Seidman (2013). "Who Needs Feminism? Lessons from a Digital World."

Lecture - Feminists Using Social Media

In-class Activity #1 - Reflecting on hashtag Activism. This exercise is the basis for your first reflection assignment. The reflection assignment is **due** (in electronic format) **at the beginning of class next week** (Jan. 17th).

In-class Activity #2- Visual representations of information - using Word Clouds.

Preparation for next week:

1. Readings: The reading goals for Week #3 are on WebCT. Bring your notes to class. They will form the basis of the in-class discussion so be prepared to present and discuss them.
2. Internet Searches: In class next week, we will be working on internet searches. **The exercise requires you to do an initial Internet search from an off-campus or residence site BEFORE class.**

Week #3 (Jan 22nd)- Social Movements in the Internet Age - Castells

Assignment #1 - due (in electronic format) at the beginning of class - 10%

Required Readings:

1. Castells, 2015 - Introduction (pages: 1 - 19).
2. Daud & Himelboim (2018). "A Social Networks Approach to Online Social Movement: Social Mediators and Mediated Content in #FreeAJStaff Twitter Network." (pages 1- 4 and Conclusion).

Lecture - Castells and Isa & Himelboim

In-Class Exercise #1 - Mapping the key ideas in Castells' theory of social media and social movements and in Isa & Himelboim's model of online social movements. This will be the basis for assignment #2 - due Week #5

In-Class Exercise #2 - Castells argues that the internet offers a space(s) where people can communicate outside of spaces controlled by those in power and where they can challenge dominant discourses. This exercise examines some of the limitations of that claim through a simple exercise where you perform a series of internet searches.

Preparation for Week #4 - Using the diagrams and/or summary notes you prepared for the Castells (2015) and Isa & Himelbiom (2018) readings as a starting point, consider how/if the ideas from the readings for week #4 might be integrated into the arguments using the diagram(s) or the summary.

Next week the first submission of your reflection Journals is due - in electronic format - at the beginning of class.

The readings for next week offer critiques of Castell's arguments about the potential of the internet to revolutionise social movements. The reading exercise for this week asks you to integrate the readings into the reading summaries and in-class discussion from last week.

Week #4 (Jan 29th) - Social Movements in the Internet Age - Critiques Journals submitted - in electronic format - at the beginning of class (5%).

Readings:

1. Fuchs (2012). Sections 1 thru 4 of "Reflections on Castells' ... - Social Movements in the Internet Age."
2. Brym et al. (2018). "Social Movement Horizontality in the Internet Age? A Critique of Castells in Light of the Trump Victory."
3. Kidd & McIntosh (2016), "Social Media and Social Movements."

Lecture - Critiques of Castells

In-class Activity #1 - Mapping Assignment - basis for Assignment #2

In-class Activity #2 - Final Presentation Preparatory Work - brainstorming topics - done in groups of 3 to 5 people.

Preparation for Next Week

1. Collect information - facts, statistics (if appropriate), and research for your presentation and for your final essay. You can use the course readings as a starting point. These will provide you with information and key words that you can use to further develop your search for articles.
2. Article summaries - prepare summaries of two journal articles related to your topic and indicate how the articles contribute to the understanding of the topic or issue. This might include if it suggests you could narrow the topic/idea for the talk. See the course site on CULearn for detailed instructions.

Week #5 (Feb 5th) - Feminist Engagement with digital media - context & contradictions Assignment #2 due - in electronic format - at the beginning of class (10%)

Readings:

1. Baer, Hester (2016) "Redoing feminism: digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism."
2. Jackson, Sue (2018). "Young feminists, feminism and digital media."
3. Loza, Susana (2014). "Hashtag Feminism, #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, and the Other #FemFuture."
4. Titus, Divya (2018). "Social media as a gateway for young feminists: lessons from the #IWillGoOut campaign in India"

Lecture - Social Media and Feminist Activism - in the context of Neoliberalism and "Waves" of Feminisms.

In-class Activity - Presentation planning #2

Preparation for Week #6.

For the rest of the course, we will focus on the #MeToo movement. We begin with the history of the movement. To prepare for this class do some research and develop an history of the #MeToo movement including:

- (a) A timeline - noting what your source(s) identify as key events/key actors
- (b) A listing of the resources you used to create the timeline - ideally integrate these into your timeline - using footnotes or other means
- (c) Any thoughts or questions you have about the movement, the timeline, the sources.
- (d) One source you would recommend to the class and why you would recommend this source.

This material must be included in your course journals and will be submitted at the end of term.

Midterm Break

Week #6 (Feb 12th) - Considering # MeToo and "Fourth Wave"

Readings

1. Rottenberg (2019). "#MeToo and the prospect of political change."
2. MacKinnon (2019). "Where #MeToo Came From and Where is it Going"
3. Gilmore (2017). "He Said/She Said"
4. Charles & Wadia (2018). "New British feminisms, UK Feminista and young women's activism."

In-class Exercise #1:

Get into groups of 3 to 5 people and using your timeline research and the Tanyo Burke video (link below) and the readings to answer the following questions:

- What is/are the goal(s)/purpose(s) of #MeToo
- Were their key actors and events that have shaped the movement?
- What kinds of behaviours does #MeToo target - do we need to distinguish among these behaviours (why/why not)?
- Is #MeToo important (to/for whom)? Why/WhyNot?
- Why do you think #MeToo emerged when it did and went viral when it did?
- Will #MeToo persist? If yes, where in what contexts and with what impact? If no, why will it not persist?

In-class Exercise #2 - Is #MeToo a social movement?

Use the readings (Castells, Isa & Himelboim, Brym et al., Fuchs and Kidd & McIntosh to consider #MeToo) and the **VIDEO**: Tarana Burke - Why #MeToo is a Movement, not a Moment. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP3LaAYzA3Q> to answer the following questions:

- Is #MeToo a social movement?
- Does #MeToo require us to 'rethink' our concepts of social movements in light of the digital age.
- What Questions/Concerns/Issues do you have about the #MeToo movement?

Week #7 (Feb 26th) - #MeToo - Promises & Pitfalls

Readings:

1. Gilmore, Leigh (2017). "He said/She said: Truth Telling and #MeToo"
2. Mendes, Kaitlynn, Jessica Ringrose and Jessalynn Keller (2018). "#MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism."
3. Tambe, Ashwinin (2017). "Reckoning with the Silences #MeToo."
4. Zarkov & Davis (2018) "Ambiguities & dilemmas"
5. Salter (2013) "Justice and revenge in online counter-publics: Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media."

These articles raise a number of issues. Most are concerned with the complexity of the use of hashtag activism (from a variety of perspectives) and with the need to consider this complexity in considering #MeToo.

- Failures of the legal system to address the harm of gendered violence.
- Limitations of digital activism.

- Women are still not believed by some people.
- Naming and shaming.
- Questions related to “whose lives matter?”
- ‘Rights’ of those accused & the complexities of their situations.
- “Permission from above” for misogynist, racist, xenophobic behavior

Week #8 (Mar. 4th) - Reflections, Responses & Backlash

Readings:

1. Salter, Michael (2013). “Justice and revenge in online counter-publics: Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media.”
2. Snider, Naomi (2018). "Why Didn't She Walk Away?" Silence, Complicity, and the Subtle Force of Toxic Femininity, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 54:4, 763-777, DOI:10.1080/00107530.2018.1525240. To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2018.1525240>

Preparation for Week #9 - What Happened/s Next

Review the news feed relating to the impact of #MeToo. Consider what happened in the short term (e.g., people losing their jobs) and find out/explore what happened in the longer term (e.g.: did the people who were fired get new employment? Were women punished for calling these men out?).

Week #9 (Mar. 11th) - Has #MeToo been successful?

Readings

1. Adkins, Karen (2019). “When Shaming Is Shameful: Double Standards in Online Shame Backlashes.”
2. MacKinnon, Catherine (2017) - article from Week #6.
3. Monroe, Kristen Renwick (2019). “Ending Sexual Harassment: Protecting the Progress of #MeToo.”

Website:

<https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list/cody-wilson>

This is a list of people of influence who were accused of sexual harassment. What happened to them?

Small Group Discussion - Has #MeToo Been Successful

Get into small groups of 3 to 5 people and answer the following questions (using the newsfeed your group members collected and other resources we have used in previous classes):

How do we 'know' when a social movement has been/is being successful - consider this on local, national, and international levels. To answer this we have to consider the goal(s) of the movement:

- Is the goal changes to/in the wider social institutions? If we are hoping that the movement will contribute to social change does it do so? Specifically, does it challenge cultural norms/beliefs? Will this lead to institutional change?
- Is the goal to provide empowerment through support? If we are aiming to empower victims what does that empowerment 'look like'?
- Is the goal to build connections and coalitions? We have seen discussions of coalition building and discussions of divisions and exclusions. How do these impact on your sense of this as a social movement?
- How would we research the question of success/failure?

Week #10, 11, and 12 (Mar. 17th, 23rd, 30th) - **Presentations (25%)**
Estimating we can do a maximum of 5 groups per class.

Week #11 (Mar 25th)

Journals submitted - in electronic format - **at the beginning of class (20%)**.

Essay due - in electronic format - **at the beginning of class (25%)**.

Course Regulations:

1. **Grading** -- In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course		
DEF = Deferred (See above)			

2. Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

www.calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

(a) Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at **613-520-6608** or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*).

*The deadline for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for final exams for **Fall 2019** exam period is **November 8, 2019**.

(b) For Religious Obligations

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

(c) For Pregnancy

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

(d) For Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

(e) Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

(f) Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the

procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties.

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including but not limited to: a grade of zero, a failure or a reduced grade for the piece of academic work; reduction of final grade in the course; completion of a remediation process; resubmission of academic work; withdrawal from course(s); suspension from a program of study; a letter of reprimand.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management. Documentation is prepared by instructors and departmental chairs. The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism. The Dean reviews the allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

(g) Assistance for Students:

Academic and Career Development Services: <http://carleton.ca/sacds/>

Writing Services: <http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/group-support/pass/>

Important Information:

- Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).
- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.
- Carleton University is committed to protecting the privacy of those who study or work here (currently and formerly). To that end, Carleton's Privacy Office seeks to encourage the implementation of the privacy provisions of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) within the university.
- In accordance with FIPPA, please ensure all communication with staff/faculty is via your Carleton email account. To get your Carleton Email you will need to activate your [MyCarletonOne account](#) through Carleton Central. Once you have activated your MyCarletonOne account, log into the [MyCarleton Portal](#).

- Please note that you will be able to link your MyCarletonOne account to other non-MyCarletonOne accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid MyCarletonOne address. Therefore, it would be easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://students.carleton.ca/>