Final Project Guidelines – WGS 111
INDEPENDENT TOPIC OPTION

Date Due: week of last class
Length: 5-8 pages

The final project should reflect feminist analysis of a media "text" of your choice, in which you apply concepts we've studied this term, bringing a gender, sexuality, race or class critique to your topic. This final research paper represents the cumulative effort of your work this semester, and should be **5-8 pages in length**, and must include a **minimum "Works Cited" list of five critical academic sources**, two or three of which must be taken from assigned course readings. Additional secondary sources may be cited at your discretion; be sure to distinguish between primary sources (the text, whether print or visual, that you wish to analyze or critique), and secondary sources (critical commentary on that text or media phenomenon). Secondary sources may include blog entries and comments as well as independent research including peer-reviewed academic books and journals, but **should also include at least two assigned readings from our course**. Depending on your topic, you may also find it interesting and informative to seek out *non-academic* critical responses, such as those emerging from social media platforms.

Your research paper should clearly identify the *topic* of your paper, but also suggest a *thesis argument* you wish to make, or an answer to a central *research question*. It is a good idea to set up the basic argument of the paper right away in a thesis statement at the end of the introduction; that way, your reader will not be wondering what claim you are attempting to make throughout the essay.

Some possible examples of valid topics might include analysis of an ad campaign such as ubykotex or the controversial PETA ad use of female models, a film or TV sitcom's representation of female figures or protagonists, fan fiction, blogs and their readership, race & gender representation in games or use of avatars, fashion magazines and their relationship/representation of female sexuality, masculinity as it is portrayed in a specific media site (such as those mentioned above), mashups, cyberactivism, gender analysis of social networking, photography, etc. If you have an idea and are not sure if it is viable, send me an email and ask.

Presentations – each project (some are being done in pairs or small groups, some individual) will give a short presentation on our last day of class – plan to show a brief clip or image related to your project, if relevant, and say a few words about the argument you are making or what you discovered. Classmates can give some feedback which then may serve as a basis for revision or completion of the final project, to be submitted by the end of that week. This should be relatively informal! Please do not think you have to read an entire paper or present every detail of the project in these presentations; the idea here is to share your work and give everyone a chance to get some peer review.

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SELFIE PROJECT OPTION 1

IMAGE PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT

Locate three photos of yourself on your phone, computer or posted to social networks you think are flattering. Locate three photos of yourself that you find to be unflattering, funny or embarrassing in some way.

Photo Essay (2-3pp)

Label your six photos A-F, and then write a 2-3 page photo essay in which you explain which pictures would be the best and worst to use for the purposes below. In your explanations, be as specific as you can (e.g. don't say "this photo looks professional," explain how and why you came to that conclusion, based on signifiers like clothing, background details, and so forth.)

- Facebook profile page
- Company profile for someone who works in a bank
- Dating site profile page
- History book showing what everyday life was like in 2014 in your country

Context Analysis (3-5pp)

Go back to your photo essay and take a look again at the photo you chose as best and worst for the category, "History book showing what everyday life was like in 2014." Now we are going to engage in a thought experiment: Pretend you are an archeologist from, say 5000 years from now, and these photos are the only existing records of human culture from 2014. What would you know about culture, based solely on these photos? What important information about our culture would be missing?

Using references to our background readings on selfies (Senft, Mead, Goffman, Althusser), explain how social/cultural ideas about gender, race, class, and embodiment inform our interpretation of these images, and how we assign meaning to them in different contexts. You may compare conclusions you have drawn in your **Photo Essay** to critical observations made by other selfie projects like one of these:

"I Too Am Oxford." The Tumblr site is here:

http://itooamoxford.tumblr.com/

"We are all Neda." Look at images here:

https://www.google.com/search?q=we+are+all+neda&client=firefox-a&hs=jsE&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&channel=fflb&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=iv4WVIfSAfaNsQSo-ILQBw&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1200&bih=643 Read more here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Neda_Agha-Soltan

"What I really do" meme at http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/what-people-think-i-do-what-i-really-do

"Which Picture Would they Use?" at http://iftheygunnedmedown.tumblr.com/

"Don't Shoot" Selfie taken at Howard University

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/style-blog/wp/2014/08/14/the-story-behind-the-viral-dontshoot-photo-at-howard-university/

"Women Laughing Selfie" meme at http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-28548179

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