CULS 5409 Special Topics in Visual Culture Stories

Ethnography of Sexuality and Digital Media

Prof. Katrien Jacobs
kjacobs@cuhk.edu.hk
Room 307
Leung Kau Kui Building

Course Description (Chinese and English)

The section of Special Topics in Visual Culture Studies is an advanced research seminar that will be conducted in English and will require students to carry out and write up a major ethnographic project. Students will be asked to submit a 2-page proposal for a research project in the second week of class and will be selected on the basis of that proposal.

Throughout the semester, students will have lectures, screenings and workshops to prepare and discuss their own research projects. Students will also be encouraged to respond to theories of gender/sexuality, media and social activism, while partaking in extensive debates about trends in sexuality and politics in Chinese and non-Chinese contexts. For their research projects, students will focus on a media environment/platform and a sexual trend of their choice to examine how sexuality is being visualized and redefined by media users. They will learn how to apply innovative and interdisciplinary research methods and to prepare an academic argument by means of text and audio-visuals.
Assessment Scheme

500 word Research Proposal 10%

To be submitted in week 2

Attendance and participation, weekly presentations 20%

Weekly presentations are NOT just summaries of readings, but apply ideas from readings to current debates and art/media productions within specific culture(s). Make sure to do your reading a bit in advance so that you can process it and relate it to current debates, as well as find a dynamic way to present it.

Midterm: Presentation of online ethnographic project 30%

Final Project: Paper and audio-visual diary based on online ethnographic project 40%

Course Syllabus

Week 1. Sept 6 Introduction

Overview of syllabus, division of weekly presentations

Week 2. Sept 13 Hard-Core Porn and Counter-Porn

Research Proposals Due

Reading:

Screenings: Sola Aio, Silk Labo, Pink and White, Nenna Joiner

Student presentation on porn and counter-porn within diverse cultural contexts

Week 3. Sept 20 Ghost Sexualities in Chinese Visual Cultures
Reading:
Judith Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, University of Hawaii Press, 2007 (Chapter 1)

Screening, Chor Yuen, *Intimate Confessions of a Courtesan* and Ivan Lai, *Erotic Ghost Story III*

http://womenspornographyin-chinaandhongkong.rhcloud.com/intimate-confessions-of-a-chinese-courtesan-%e6%84%9b%e5%A5%B4-1972/

http://womenspornographyin-chinaandhongkong.rhcloud.com/erotic-ghost-story-iii-%e8%81%8a%e9%b9%b8%e8%b1%94%e8%ad%9a3%ef%bc%9a%e7%87%88%e8%8d%89%e5%92%8c%e5%b0%9a-1992/

Presentations on ghosts and sexuality in Chinese visual cultures

**Week 4. Sept 27 Trans Ethnographies**

Reading:

Screenings:

Episodes of *Transparent* TV Series and mini-documentaries This is Me
https://www.amazon.com/Closets/dp/B010BYPAYA/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1500815307&sr=1-1&keywords=This+is+Me

Fan Popo, *Be A Woman*

Presentations on Arnold and Bailey; Transgender Communities and Debates

**Week 5. Oct 4 Sexuality and Social Movements**

Readings:

Katrien Jacobs, “Disorderly Conduct: Feminist Nudity Activism in Chinese Protest Movements”

Presentations on gender/sexuality and its relationship to social activism

**Week 6. Oct 11 Workshop: Online ethnography: methods of observation and participation (KKB computer lab)**

**Week 7. Oct 18 Social Media and Dialogic Sexual Politics**

**Reading:**

Presentations on gender/sexuality and social media within specific cultures

**Week 8. Oct 24 Student presentations online ethnography**

**Week 8. Oct 27 (Friday) Exhibition opening The Ghost of Sister Ping**

**Week 9. Nov 1 Women’s Boys’ Love Manga (Danmei)**

**Reading:**

Katrien Jacobs and Holly Hou “Hong Kong Boys' Love Fans and Radical Online Erotica”

Presentations on BL Manga fandoms within specific cultures

**Week 10. Nov 8 Workshop: From ethnographic case study to academic paper (KKB computer lab)**

**Week 11. Nov 15 Individual Consultations about Final Papers**
Week 12. Nov 22 Student Presentations and feedback

Week 13 Nov 29: Student Presentations and feedback.

*Final papers due Friday Dec 1*

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe recent developments in contemporary art and media by studying aspects of the body, gender and sexuality.
2. Identify key theoretical approaches to contemporary sexuality and queer studies.
3. Understand contemporary representations of sexual politics and censorship within local culture and network culture.
4. Apply research methods in visual culture and online ethnography.

Feedback for Evaluation

- End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class.
- Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

Background articles

Gender Bent, “Woman?” On the irony of trans-exclusion by black and African feminists
http://www.afropunk.com/m/blogpost?id=2059274%3ABlogPost%3A1460067

Michelle Goldberg, “What is a Woman. The dispute between radical feminism and transgenderism.
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/04/woman-2

See a selection of pornography news articles at
http://www.womenspornographies.com/references

Kyle Casey Chu, “How Queer People of Color are Combating Sexual Racism”

References


Farrer, James Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai, 2002 University of Chicago Press.


Jones Amelia, Body Art: Performing the Subject, Univ of Minnesota Press, 1989


Pei, Yuxin and Sik Ying Ho, ‘Gender, Self and Pleasure; Young Women’s Discourses on Masturbation in Contemporary Shanghai,” Culture, Health, and Sexuality, 1:5 (2009), pp. 515-528.


Yau, Ching (2010) “Porn Power: Sexual and Gender Politics in Li Han-hsiang’s Fengyue Films,” in Yau Ching (ed) As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press.