



How To: Build a Feminist Internet

Riddhima Sharma

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About the instructor

Riddhima Sharma is a doctoral candidate at Bowling Green State University and the founder of a digital feminist platform, FemPositive. She previously taught courses around gender, law, and public policy at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai as visiting faculty and led numerous workshops around gender, digital media, gender-based violence and law in India. Presently, her research lies at the intersections of digital media, feminisms, and critical feminist pedagogy in India.

Course Description

This five-week online course will explore the ways in which feminist movements utilize the affordances of social media platforms to organize, raise awareness, and build communities in the Indian digital diasporas. Additionally, we will explore the kinds of challenges that activists face in using social media for social justice efforts. We will journey through the histories of feminist social justice engagement with the internet, move towards more contemporary forms of engagements with social media platforms, and work together to critically examine what kinds of activism social media platforms enable or constrain through our course modules. The course

format will be interactive and based on readings, discussions, group activities, and presentations.

Dates: **30th July-27th August 2022**

Days: **Every Saturday**

Time: **5-7 pm IST**

Course Objectives

Core questions we will explore in this course:

1. How have social justice activists, particularly feminists engaged with the internet?
2. What are the forms that feminist social justice activism has taken in the digital space, particularly on social media platforms?
3. What are the major critiques and challenges of performing social justice activism in social media spaces?
4. What are the ways in which intersectional social justice activism is negotiated in online spaces?

| Week | Topic | Readings |
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| Week 1, 30th July | Introduction: Histories of Gender, Activism and the Internet | Gajjala, Radhika. "Third World' perspectives on cyberfeminism." <i>Development in Practice</i> 9, no. 5 (1999): 616-619. Optional Readings: Wilding, Faith, and Cyberfeminist International. Where is feminism in cyberfeminism?. Vol. 2. na, 1998. Oishorjyo. "The History of Digital Technology Is Entwined With Sex Work." <i>Smashboard.org</i> (2021). |

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| <p>Week 2, 6th August</p> | <p>From the Streets to the Web</p> | <p>Subramanian, Sujatha. "From the Streets to The Web: Looking at Feminist Activism on Social Media." <i>Economic & Political Weekly</i> 50, no. 17 (2015): 71.</p> <p>Optional Reading</p> <p>Shafiq, Afrah. "Searching for Network: An Illustrated Story." <i>DeepDives.in</i>, July 11, 2016.</p> <p>Shankar, Karthik, and Raya Sarkar. "Why I published a list of sexual predators in academia." <i>Buzzfeed News</i>, October 25, 2017.</p> |
| <p>Week 3, 13th August</p> | <p>Power, Hierarchy, Discrimination: Contestations in the Digital Space</p> | <p>Munusamy, Kiruba. "Intersection of Identities: Online Gender and Caste Based Violence." <i>GenderIT.org</i>, June 7, 2018. Accessed August 19, 2020.</p> <p>Optional Readings</p> <p>Kumar, Vijeta. "Between rage and silence: being Dalit on Twitter." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i> 21, no. 1 (2021): 157-158.</p> <p>Mukherjee, Sreemoyee. "The Other Side of Cancel Culture – Who Gets Saved By Social Media." <i>Smashboard.org</i> (2021).</p> |
| <p>Week 4, 20th August</p> | <p>Building a Feminist Internet</p> | <p>"Smita Vanniyar on Building a Feminist Internet So Many Feminisms!" India Culture Lab. Accessed September 13, 2020.</p> <p>Optional Readings:</p> <p>Harad, Tejas. "Towards an Internet of Equals." <i>LiveMint</i>, August 31, 2018.</p> <p>Patil, Smita. "Debrahmanizing Online Sphere: On Larger Questions Of Caste, Gender And Patriarchy." <i>GenderIT.org</i> (2017).</p> |

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| Week 5, 27th August | Executing a Feminist Social Media Campaign | Participant presentations of the assignment |
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Assignment

Feminist Social Media Campaign

Feminist approaches to education argue the critical need for education and learning to be a tool for social change and consciousness raising. This project is an opportunity for you to actually apply what you learn in this course and develop a social media campaign around an issue addressed in our course which interests you.

In order to complete this project, you must follow these key steps.

Step 1. Choose Topic and Social Media Platform

Choose a social justice issue/topic at the intersections of feminist, anti-caste, queer, disability rights, or other transnational contexts/issues you are interested in to start a social media page/campaign on.

Questions to consider in choosing which social media to choose for your campaign from Facebook, Twitter or Instagram:

- What kind of activist campaigns does each platform enable? (for instance, one platform may be more suited for visual campaigns and another might be more text-based)
- What are the pros and cons of using each platform?
- Why might you choose one platform over another for your campaign and why?

Step 2. Outline your campaign

Think about what kind of campaign you will develop. Will it be a campaign creating awareness and inspiring action or will it be an educational campaign about a particular social justice issue through posters or videos on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter?

- What are the goals of the campaign?
- What will be the title of your campaign project?
- What hashtags (if any) will you use?

Some examples: In the past, students have developed campaigns like; an Instagram page which showcases women in STEM to create awareness around and encourage women to take up STEM careers, a Twitter hashtag project where the student discussed various myths around the sex binary and educate followers on the social construction of sex; shared feminist resources/research to support their arguments.

Step 3. Execution of the campaign (2-4 posts)

For this step, you must create at least 2-4 sample posts, and create a social media page and actually post the samples to start off your campaign.

In doing this step, observe what works and what doesn't with each post you create and share on your social media campaign page. Is one post doing better than another? What strategies are helping you gain more followers or post engagement? The progress of your campaign will be discussed at the end of every class.

The last session of the course will be dedicated to presentations by the participants on the feminist social media campaigns they have developed over the past five weeks.

Additional Readings

Haraway, Donna. 1985. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review* 80:65–108.

A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century ([A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century | Net Art Anthology \(rhizome.org\)](#))

Subramanian, Sujatha. "Bhujjan girls' anti-caste activism on TikTok." *Feminist Media Studies* 21, no. 1 (2021):154-156.

Sharma, Ditilekha. "Queer Expressions in the Online Space." April 2014.

Sharma, Riddhima. "Reflections on Digital Feminist Activism: The #LoSHA Movement." *DHARTI Medium Blog* (2021).

Kee, Jac sm. "Making A Feminist Internet: Movement Building In A Digital Age." *GenderIT.org* (2017).

Point of View Report: "Queering the Interwebs" (2018).

[Declaration] Decolonising The Internet: Second International Cyberfeminist Meeting.

Feminist Principles of the Internet