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Nerds, Geeks, and Bros
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Office/Student Hours: Monday 1-3, after class, & by appointment

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Course Description:
This course looks at the rise of the 'nerd' as a way to investigate shifts in masculinity, race, and power within the digital economy and computer science fields. We will examine the historical and cultural shifts that changed computer work from a feminine job to a masculine one. From examinations of popular culture, such as movies, we'll trace how the nerd figure became a new hero. The nerd hero is overwhelmingly male and white and represents shifts in gender and racial politics. Students will read from history, social science, communications, as well as study popular media such as movies, television, and advertisements. Through an investigation into the nerd, geek, and bro, figure students will see how women and minorities' innovations have been left out of history, as well as left out of the industry. By the end of the course, students will advance potential solutions to the inequalities in the technology industry.

Readings: All online, check schedule for URLs and if not listed, readings will be at www.fashioningsociology.com

In order to successfully complete this course, you should have access to a computer and a reliable internet connection. Please double-check that you are able to meet these system requirements for using Zoom.

> **Zoom Etiquette & Expectations:** You are expected to attend our synchronous class meetings held M/W/Th from 1-2:30pm, and to adhere to the following guidelines:
> - Leave the **video on** for the duration of the meetings. We are trying to mimic the classroom experience as closely as possible, which includes most people being able to see each other.
> - Please turn your **audio off except when you want to speak**, to minimize background noise while others are speaking.
> - Please **use the "raise hand" function** to contribute to discussion.
> - Feel free to use virtual backgrounds as long as they don't eat up too much of your bandwidth and interfere with your audio/video quality.
> - We are a scholarly community in pursuit of the free and open exchange of ideas. By registering for this class, you agree to treat each other and the professor with respect. To that end, during our first class meeting, we will collectively generate a list of guidelines for respectful discussion.

Assessment:

Attendance:
Fordham's university-wide policy is that 4 unexcused absences results in a failing grade. If you miss four or more and due to an emergency, family, personal, or medical reason, you must notify both myself and your class dean of the issue at hand with appropriate documentation. It is your responsibility to get readings/assignments for missed days from other students, and you are encouraged to come to my office to discuss topics you're unclear on.

Part of our overall learning experience is sitting, thinking, and talking together.

Concept-Connect (25%): Once during the semester you will have to bring in an example of an outside media supplement (an image, a campaign, a speech, video, article, hashtag trend, song…anything) that illustrates ONE concept from our scheduled reading for that day. You should spend no more that 1-2

minutes explaining the concept. You do not have to summarize the scheduled reading. In fact, if you do summarize, I will deduct points! You *do* have to show and tell us how your media object exemplifies ONE key aspect of the reading. Finally, please have ONE discussion question over the reading/your presentation for the class. You don't have to 'ask' the class, but you should be able to point out a tension or the underlying assumptions/structure of the text. We will schedule these the first week of class.

Exams, Midterm/Final (50%): Multiple choice, true false, possible short answer. These exams will be sent to you via a link to your Fordham email. You will have a block of time to complete the exams.

Final Project (25%): Our last session (or last two) we will have a mini conference on the state of inequality in the digital technologies industry. In groups or alone, students will create a brief presentation on a targeted solution to remedy gender and racial inequities. You will have to have research to back up your program, and present it in a compelling way. We'll work on these throughout the semester and you have free reign as to what you focus on. You may want to look at the field in general or maybe look at a particular company/platform. You will also have to create a one-page sheet or brochure for the audience. These should be a road map to your project, a document that is easy to understand. You will turn in a paper to me explaining your solution. More details to come. We will work on these in class throughout the semester and you'll have to turn in a proposal for approval (and to receive full credit on the final project).

GRADING SCALE:

100=A+	79-77 = C+
99-93=A	76-72 = C
92-90=A-	71-70 = C-
89-87=B+	69-60 = D
86-83=B	Below 58 = F
82-80=B-	

RULES/POLICIES: No cheating, no plagiarism. Respect each other and different opinions.

1. **Final grades are FINAL:** I do not negotiate grades. Do not ask. I do not need to hear about your GPA, or what grade you *need* or *must* get. You are responsible for your grades. Regardless of what other faculty tolerate, I do not negotiate grades with students. ALL GRADES ARE FINAL. If you wish to learn more about why you earned the grade you were assigned, you must see me during my posted office hours. Nonetheless, students should remember that coming early and often for help *does not guarantee* that I will pass you. *In the final hour, you need to demonstrate proficiency in the material, no matter how hard you tried*. Coming to class, trying hard/studying many hours in college is a given. In the end, you must produce college-level work.

********I will probably change, delete or ADD readings to this schedule. I will always give you notice but you must come to class to stay abreast of any changes.**

******Please email me if you are having trouble with the course material in anyway.

******Plagiarizing in any way, shape or form will result in a zero for that assignment or test. I will report it to your advisor, class dean, and fill out a report for the academic integrity committee to review. I take this very seriously so please see me if you're nervous about properly citing your work. Please see the academic integrity policy below.

IMPORTANT!! Each class period will be a blend of discussions of readings and in-class activities. This course requires you to share your work, as well as offer **kind** and **thoughtful** critiques of your peers' work.

Schedule:

Feb 1:   Intros

Foundational Theories

Feb 8:   "Gender Codes: Defining the Problem" by T Misa, URL: https://media.wiley.com/product_data/excerpt/94/04705971/0470597194.pdf

Feb 22:   "A Question of Genius" by Anne Faust-Sterling (www.fashioningsociology.com)

                             James Damore's Google memo: https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3914586/Googles-Ideological-Echo-Chamber.pdf

Mar 1:   Brotopia, Intro and chapter 1 (www.fashioningsociology.com)

                             "Technology as Masculine Culture" by Judy Wajcam (scroll to chapter 6 in below link)
URL: https://monoskop.org/images/3/38/Wajcman_Judy_Feminism_Confronts_Technology.pdf

Nerds
Mar 8:   *War Games*, movie

                             No Girls Allowed: https://www.polygon.com/features/2013/12/2/5143856/no-girls-allowed

Mar 15:   "Beards, Sandals, and Other Signs of Rugged Individualism" by Nathan Ensmenger (www.fashioningsociology.com)

Mar 22:   "The Male Gazed: Surveillance, Power, and Gender" by Kate Losse URL: https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-male-gazed

                             Catch up, Review

Mar 29:   **Midterm**

Geeks
Apr 5   "What Gender is Science?" by Maria Charles URL: https://contexts.org/articles/what-gender-is-science/

                             "She's Geeky: The Performance of Identity among Women Working in IT" (www.fashioningsociology.com)

"The Anatomy of Interest"
http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/project/gendergap/www/papers/anatomyWSQ99.html

Apr 12   "Ambient Belonging" …*coming soon*
"An Inegalitarian Paradox: On the Uneven Gendering of Computing Work around the World" …*coming soon*

"Here's the Clearest Picture of Silicon Valleys Diversity Yet" URL
https://revealnews.org/article/heres-the-clearest-picture-of-silicon-valleys-diversity.yet/

"Black and Brown Tech Workers Share Their Experiences of Racism on the Job" URL: https://www.latimes.com/business/technology/story/2020-06-24/diversity-in-tech-tech-workers-tell-their-story

Bros

Apr 19   Tech Leavers Study: https://www.kaporcenter.org/the-2017-tech-leavers-study/

"Sex and the Startup: Men, Women and Work" by Kate Losse, URL:
https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/sex-and-the-startup-men-women-and-work

Brotopia, "Sex and the Valley: Men Play, Women Pay"
(www.fashioningsociology.com)

Apr 26   Presentations

May 3   Presentations

Final TBA (online)

Additional Readings (for your pleasure or your projects):

1.)   **We will not fix diversity in tech unless we end discrimination URL:**

   https://medium.com/@ncernecka/we-will-not-fix-diversity-in-tech-unless-we-end-

   discrimination-a2ffb61b1234

2.)   **If you think women in tech is just a pipeline problem, you haven't been paying**

   attention

   URL: https://medium.com/tech-diversity-files/if-you-think-women-in-tech-is-just-a-pipeline-problem-you-haven-t-been-paying-attention-cb7a2073b996

3.)   **Investors prefer entrepreneurial ventures pitched by attractive men URL:**
   https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/111/12/4427.full.pdf

4.)   Don't Be Evil: Fred Turner on Utopias, Frontiers, and Brogrammers
https://logicmag.io/justice/fred-turner-dont-be-evil/

5.)   Gender Job Segregation
https://thesocietypages.org/specials/hidden-figures-and-feud-pop-culture-tales-of-occupational-segregation/

6. Excerpt from *Uncanny Valley* by Anna Weiner URL: https://nplusonemag.com/issue-25/on-the-fringe/uncanny-valley/

7. Whiteness, race, diversity: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/20/the-tech-industrys-gender-discrimination-problem