

AR335

Artificial Sex: Technology, Gender, and Sexuality

Seminar Leader: Anan Fries
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This practicing arts course invites students to develop their own artistic language at the intersection of digital art, performance and video to critically explore how recent technologies are reshaping sexuality and gender. Image- and video-generating large language models are currently flooding our devices with representations of hypersexualised bodies. Digital technologies have been used for abusive purposes, violating principles of consent and other legal rights and protections. At the same time, streaming platforms and social media have been essential tools for LGBTIQ+ communities to distribute information, find visibility, build networks and explore and perform identities. And AI companion chatbots are used by some to rehearse intimacy and explore new erotic imaginaries. In this practice-based course, we examine how digital culture and emerging technologies—such as biotechnological tools and artificial intelligence—are transforming traditional notions of gender, body and sexuality. We will critically engage with AI image generators, 3D scans, and artistically explore various subversive image-making and image-generating strategies. To support our work, we will study Hito Steyerl's concept of the "Mean Image", Elise Hu's notion of the "Technological Gaze", Luciana Parisi's Abstract Sex, and the Xenofeminist Manifesto by Laboria Cuboniks. The goal of the course is for each student to conceptualise and create a short video essay that expresses their own critical perspective on the interdependencies of technology, gender, and sexuality.

Assessment

Individual research

This course looks at the influence of emerging technologies on the human body, specifically its genders and sexualities, from a critical media perspective. The students are asked to study the proposed positions and develop their own opinions. During the course of the semester, each student is required to find their own research interest and with it, an individual topic for their individual project connecting to the theme of the seminar. Group work is not encouraged in order to give space to the development of individual perspectives and artistic approaches.

Artistic practice and theory

This course aims to productively interweave theory and practice. Students will be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine creative art work and critical thinking.

Participation and preparation

Students are required to complete their homework (readings, viewings, writing, creation of the video essay) and contribute creatively and meaningfully to the exercises and discussions. Students will receive a participation grade which is based on their in-class engagement and completion of homework. Please reserve 4 hours on average for weekly class preparation and asynchronous class work. Readings will be made available through Google Classroom.

Independence and responsibility

Students are also assessed on their ability to work independently and responsibly. They will be graded on their ability to communicate with Professor as well amongst themselves. This also includes their ambition to create artworks as well as their willingness to budget their time for all requirements connected to this class. This assessment also includes preparation, production, and cleaning up of spaces used at Bard College Berlin

Assignments

Deadlines are specified in the schedule

- Artistic research mood board / mind map
- Video essay
- Final Reflection

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time. Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from their professors in a timely manner. Inform their professors at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student

property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Students are expected to attend all off- and on-campus classes and performance visits from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, the instructor must be informed in advance.

You may encounter circumstances that prevent you from attending classes for which you may be excused, meaning that the absence will not impact your grade. These circumstances include illness, religious observance, military obligation, attendance at a conference, a Bard Network event, a civic engagement initiative, a research trip or another compelling circumstance outside of your control (i.e. court appearance, visa appointment, death of a family member). Optional non-academic travel, hosting visiting family and friends, or work schedules are not ground for excused absences. You will be allowed to self-report your absence one time, meaning that a notification informing your instructor about the reason for your absence before or within 24 hours of the class is sufficient. If you miss class more than once you will need to provide your instructor with appropriate documentation in order to be excused (i.e. a doctor's note).

Tardiness after fifteen minutes will be considered an absence.

All unexcused absences will lower the final grade by one step (i.e. if your final grade is a B, you will be downgraded to a B-).

Please note that Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students may make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (includes attendance, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for production, communication with Professor and other students):

40 %

Mind map/ mood board artistic research:

10 %

Final project:

30 %

Final reflection:

20 %

Schedule

*****PLEASE NOTE*****

This schedule is subject to change. The professor will keep you updated on any changes that might occur, so please check your emails regularly!

Due to absence of the professor there is no class in week 14. This class will be replaced by an excursion. Details will follow ahead of time.

Week 1: A Sexual History of the Internet

Tuesday Jan 27, 10-13.15

In-class activities:

Introductions

Collective reenactment of Mindy Seu's [A Sexual History of the Internet](#)

Week 2: Suck my code

Tuesday Feb 3, 10-13.15

Readings due:

VNS matrix: [A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century](#)

Laboria Cuboniks: Xenofeminist Manifesto

In-class activities:

Virtual tour of [Suck my Code Exhibition](#) with curator Mareike Schwartz

Q & A with Mareike Schwartz

Group Discussion on both manifestos

Write your own manifesto

Week 3: Subversive World-Making

Tuesday Feb 10, 10-13.15

Readings due:

Legacy Russell, Glitch Feminism - a Manifesto (excerpt)

Homework due:

Write your own tech manifesto

In-class activities:

Manifesto presentations

Glitch feminist artistic practices of [Jacolby Satterwhite](#) and [Anna Ehrenstein](#)

AV orientation

Week 4: Body Essay in the Pharmacopornographic Era

Tuesday Feb 17, 10-13.15

Readings due:

Paul Preciado, Testo Junkie (excerpt)

In-class activities:

Exercise: sketch and script a body essay

Week 5: The body under the Technological Gaze

Tuesday Feb 24, 10-13.15

Homework due:

Watch Ted Talk Elise Hu, [The Technological Gaze](#)

In-class activities:

Workshop Body Scan, Mixamo, meshy

Create scene/ chapter of a body essay with a 3d body

Week 6: Prompted violence

Tuesday March 3, 10-13.15

Homework due:

Finish scene/ chapter of a body essay with a 3d body

Watch [Another Body by](#) Sophie Compton and Reuben Hamlyn

In-class activities:

Conversation about Deepfake and Undress AI Generators

Exercise

Week 7: Prompted bias

Tuesday March 10, 10-13.15

Readings due:

Hito Steyerl, Mean Image

Lola Olufemi, Experiments in Imagining Otherwise

In-class activities:

Guest: [Janne Kummer](#)

Prompt Battle

Week 8: Artificial Romance

Tuesday March 17, 10-13.15

Homework due:

Experiment in Imagining Otherwise

Readings due:

The rise of digisexuality by Neil McArthur & Markie L. C. Twist

In-class activities:

Watch Artificial Sex by Anan Fries

Exercise with AI Companions

Week 9: Abstract Sex

Tuesday March 24, 10-13.15

Readings due:

Luciana Parisi: Abstract Sex (Excerpt)

In-class activities:

Shu Lea Cheang, UKI, 2023

Exercise: genetically engineered bodies

Spring Break

Week 10: Video essay

Tuesday April 7, 10-13.15

Assignment due:

Mind map/ mood board artistic research

In-class activities:

Presentation artistic research

Feedback

Choice of media

Week 11: Video essay

Tuesday April 14, 10-13.15

Homework due

Further develop video essay

In-class Activity

Work in progress presentation & feedback

Week 12: Video essay

Tuesday April 21, 10-13.15

Homework due

Further develop video essay

In-class Activity

Work in progress presentation & feedback

Week 13: Video essay

Tuesday April 28, 10-13.15

Assignment due:

Finish video essay

In-class Activity:

Internal presentation, group feedback

exhibition planning

final feedback round

Week 14: no class

Tuesday May 5, 10-13.15

Group work:

set up exhibition

Week 15: no class

Tuesday May 12, midnight

Assignment due:

Send link to video essay

Artistic reflection (1000-2000 words)

Inspection:

Date to be confirmed

Inspection of exhibition space with Professor, Studio Arts Manager Joon Park and students for delivering back any spaces used

Policy on the use of facilities:

The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.

Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are

shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110

Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 116 117