

trans/forming feminisms: media, technology, identities

An international conference at the University of Otago
23rd - 25th November 2015

Confirmed keynote speakers:

- Sandra Grey, Victoria University, Wellington / Tertiary Education Union President
- Audrey Yue, The University of Melbourne
- Tracey McIntosh, The University of Auckland

The conference is organised by the Department of Media, Film and Communication, University of Otago, in conjunction with the following:

- Dunedin Free University
- Fresh and Fruity Gallery Collective
- Blue Oyster Art Project Space
- The Tertiary Education Union (Otago branch)

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Discussions of feminist theory and activism have taken on a new dynamism in the past decade. Online media spaces – such as twitter, tumblr and blogs like *Jezebel*, *feministing* and *autostraddle*– have provided a key site for the debate of what it means to be a feminist in the contemporary moment. Hashtag flashpoints over popular cultural figures such as Beyonce, Iggy Azalea, Miley Cyrus and Lena Dunham as well recent social movements around #thisiswhatafeministlookslike #feminismisforwhitewomen and #slutwalk have generated broader popular, and critical, discussions around identity- and gender-based politics. Further, activists around feminist, trans* and Queer politics have integrated technology as an important means for consciousness-raising as well as enabling broader struggles against patriarchy, hetero-normativity and non-inclusive forms of feminism. Alongside this, numerous academics (Sara Ahmed, Jack Halberstam, Tiziana Terranova) are moving 'online' to use web spaces as a means for disseminating theoretical work to a broader audience.

Technology, too, can refer to the inchoate category of non-human. Thus what does it mean for gendered bodies and technologies to intersect? This will also tackle the category of the 'transhuman' and the usefulness of gendered subject categorization to contemporary feminist thought and organising.

All this points to an invigoration of feminist theory and politics which we are signaling via the prefix 'trans' – as a way of gesturing towards not only trans* politics, but the notion of transformation, change and the animation of new modes of being, thinking and doing 'feminism'.

This conference brings together international scholars and activists from diverse disciplinary and radical political backgrounds to foster discussions around theorizing

and doing feminist activism. In particular *trans/forming feminisms* focuses on the intersections and tensions between contemporary feminist conceptualizing, activism and media technologies. It aims to combine theory with on-the-ground organizing in a productive and transformative discussion, and to provide a forum to unpack the tensions between intellectual imperatives, praxis, and mediated modes of feminist communication and activism.

trans/forming feminisms is organised collectively and we aim to produce a genuinely open space for the interaction between activists and academics. Thus we also encourage creative and praxis / performance-based proposals and ideas for skillshares and workshops which will run alongside more traditional academic papers.

Topics and approaches on which we would welcome proposals for papers and panels include the following but are not confined to them, and are in no particular order:

- How does the 'mediated self' and Web 3.0 enable particular modes of feminist practice?
- How do media platforms, such as social networking sites, constitute and reproduce forms of white bourgeois feminism and how can intersectional feminism counter this?
- What are the cultural politics around 'trigger warnings' and 'call outs' on social media platforms?
- How do contemporary gender and feminist politics intersect with theories of the 'transhuman'?
- How are the politics of intersectional feminists performed and consolidated online?
- What are the political and theoretical implications of the popularising of terms such as 'cis', 'trans*' and 'Queer' via their foregrounding on social media sites such as tumblr and twitter?
- How do media formations (technologies, institutions, practices) operate in relation to feminist politics in different geographic contexts?
- What does 'rape culture' mean in the current Web 3.0 context?
- What is the relationship between sexual violence and media representations?
- How might mediated practices empower women to fight back against sexual violence?
- What is the role of media in fermenting radical changes in global gendered oppression?
- How has the ongoing proliferation of gendered identities affected feminist theoretical engagements and the broader political movement?
- Who is the feminist subject in the contemporary moment?
- What the relations between media technologies and the non-cis-male subject?

Topics and approaches on which we would welcome proposals for skillshares and workshops include the following but are not confined to them, and are in no particular order:

- narrativising / writing feminism in the contemporary university
- practical activist workshops – how to take action / deal with institutions such as the police; what is rape culture and how *whanau* / family and friends can battle this
- skillsharing between feminist academics / strategies for being feminist in the university context

Dunedin

Dunedin is a beautiful small city, located in the South Island of New Zealand. A true 'university town', it buzzes with student life and academic activity. It hosts a number of independent art galleries, bookshops and radical institutions. Alongside these cultural sites, Dunedin offers stunning opportunities for nature tourism and is a perfect taste of New Zealand's natural beauty. Tramping (hiking) tracks are within easy distance of the town, as is the striking Otago Peninsula, home to albatross colonies and rare penguin breeds.

Please send panel proposal, paper abstracts, and proposals for info booths or skillshare / workshops to the collective at:

transformingfeminisms@riseup.net by 12th June 2015 as an email attachment in Word.

Papers will be 20 minutes long, with ten minutes for questions. Panels will generally be made up of 3 speakers and a chairperson.

Skillshares will run for 1-2 hours and can take diverse and creative formats.

Infoboosts will be stands in shared / communal space – tables and chairs will be provided.

Panel and skillshare proposals should provide an outline of the panel idea and its relations to the conference theme (200 words max), and provide abstracts of the 3-4 speakers (250 words maximum per abstract), and the name of a person who will chair the pane. Paper abstracts, infoboost ideas and skillshare proposals should be 250 words maximum and should explain the connection to the conference theme.

Registration fees:

Academic: NZ\$200

Postgraduate / casual lecturer: NZ\$75

Activist: NZ\$55

Registration includes lunch and refreshments (including a 'cocktail function') for the duration of the conference.

Researchers from countries where it is difficult to fund research travel should consult the conference organisers.

Collective members:

Rosemary Overell, Vijay Devadas, Catherine Fowler, Massimiliana Urbano, Kevin Fletcher, Catherine Dale, Rebecca Stringer, Katharine Legun, Annabel Cooper, Maud Ceuterick

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/transfem15>; Web page:
<http://transformingfeminisms.noblogs.org/>