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Teaching Methodology and Methods through Rhetoric and Social Media

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In Fall of 2021, I had the honor of teaching a course, "Rhetoric and Social Media" at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the English Department at the University of Florida. This course was intended to establish a space for analysis, discussion, and content development surrounding the intersections of rhetoric and social media. Given that my students and I (and the rest of the world) were (and are) still navigating a pandemic during this course, and given that we were trying to learn together in Florida, a state that has continued to attack academic freedom, the goal of the course was to establish a space for analyzing and discussing how people use social media to establish spaces for resistance, survival, and joy.

In the course description, I communicated to students that

> our goal in this course will be to analyze how social media activists and researchers use social media platforms to communicate information. Importantly, we will also research the infrastructure of social media platforms to better understand the algorithms used to both build and collect information on social media. With attention to methodology and method, we will then develop our own social media projects to showcase the intersections of rhetoric and social media in relation to our own scholarly and activist interests.

Course readings included *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* by Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, Brooke Foucault Welles, and Genie Lauren, Laura March's Social Toolkit (https://lauramarch.com/portfolio-item/social-toolkit/), André Brock's "From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation," Temptaous McKoy's *Y'all Call It Technical and Professional Communication, We Call It #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and Their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies*, Michael Trice and Liza Potts' "Building Dark Patterns into Platforms: How GamerGate Perturbed Twitter's User Experience," John Gallagher and Aaron Beveridge's "Project-Oriented Web Scraping in Technical Communication Research," McKinley Green's "Risking Disclosure: Unruly Rhetorics and Queer(ing) HIV Risk Communication on Grindr," Sweta Baniya's "Transnational Assemblages in Disaster Response: Networked Communities, Technologies, and Coalitional Actions during Global Disasters," and Janet Chávez Santiago's "Tramando la Palabra/Weaving the Word."

As we read these texts, students and I primarily discussed two questions: "What methodologies are these scholars and activists using in their work?" and "What methods are these scholars using in these projects?" Through these questions, I wanted students to understand that first, there is a difference between methodologies and methods, and second, that our

methodologies, the frameworks that we use to read, gather, understand data (and the world), influence *all* methods. Often, especially in projects related to technology, methodologies are ignored in preference for expansive methods that demonstrate technological skill. However, methodologies always influence our research praxis.

Thanks to the generosity of colleagues across multiple countries, students also benefitted from Zoom visits from several of the scholars whose work we read. A huge thanks to Janet Chávez Santiago, Temptaous McKoy, Suban Nur Cooley, McKinley Green, John Gallagher, Aaron Beveridge, Michael Trice, Liza Potts, Laura March, Cherise McBride, Anna Smith, Sweta Baniya, and Ashley Beardsley for visiting our course and sharing their expertise.

As students read this scholarship, asked questions, and interacted with authors, they were also asked to develop their own social media research projects. The goal of this project was to trace any social medial conversation that students are interested in, and to explicitly discuss the methodologies and the methods that they used to research the conversation they chose. Students thus used web scraping methods to analyze data sets through intersectional feminist methodologies, used Chicanx feminist methodologies to do a content analysis of specific hashtags, and more.

The three pieces included in this issue of the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* are written by undergraduate students in this social media course. These students — Malori Malone, Savannah Baggett, and Noreen Khan-Qamar — each explore different social media conversations as they practice using methods and methodologies that they deem appropriate for their specific project. While each project is different, what stood out to me, and what motivated us to send these projects off for publication, is how these students showcase their reasoning through methodology, methods, and their intersections as undergraduate students. I'm very proud of these students' work and I hope they can help us continue conversations about the need to expand our teaching of methodology and method in our digital rhetoric courses and programs.

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