

APPENDIX A: Performance Art Selfie Sample Assignment

WRT490: Feminisms and Digital Rhetorics

The #Performanceartselfie

This project is an opportunity for you to engage with the concepts that we have discussed so far in class on feminism, intersectionality, cultural and digital rhetorics, and identity, and put them to use in a format that we have not yet explored: the selfie. As part of your reading on feminism and digital rhetoric, you have discussed and explored topics within the feminist community regarding the debate on the role of selfies, particularly for women and minority groups. Many of you raised important and compelling questions in your responses to these readings that deserve further consideration. For this project, you will:

- 1) Take, and submit, your digital selfie by the due date on XX. Please send it via a Dropbox folder so that you can submit the photo in the highest resolution possible.
- 2) Give your photo a brief title and select a brief quote from your written reflection that you would like to present with your image (see below)
- 3) Along with the photo, please submit a one-page reflection. This reflection should engage with and discuss the following:
 - a. The thinking and process behind composing your selfie: who is your intended audience? What are you hoping to convey?
 - b. Your answer to 1-3 questions from the selfie project reading responses. These are your questions from the reading responses. Choose the questions that you would like to engage with, and that you think will allow you to expand on via your digital photograph!
 - c. Indicate whether you would like your photo to be displayed in the Writing and Rhetoric Production Lab and/or hallway.
 - d. Select a brief quote from your response that you would like to have appear with your photograph in the photo installation.
- 4) Make sure your name is on your one-page document. You can submit everything to the Dropbox folder.

Your reading response and dialogue questions* (choose the questions to which you want to respond!)

- 1) Does white feminism clash with the representation of women of color? Whether it is intentional or not?
- 2) Based on the above articles, is it possible for a white woman to post a selfie and not be representing the patriarchal society, even though they are in the majority? How would they empower that selfie? Or will a white woman's selfie always be seen as yet another reflection of a society built on expectations of beauty?
- 3) What's the difference between selfies are regular portraits? Why do selfies have such a negative connotation to them? What makes them worse than regular portraits?
- 4) Do you believe that posting selfies just for affirmation from followers is entirely a negative thing? Meaning, is desiring confirmation that you look nice a bad thing or a good thing?
- 5) Do you believe that the selfie movement supports intersectional feminism?
- 6) Based on your own experiences, how have you used selfies? As a means of representation? As a validation tool? As a confidence-booster? A combination of these? Some other way?
- 7) Do you have a certain thought process you undergo before liking or skipping over a selfie? Describe. How did this thought process/attitude come about? Will your thought process change after reading these articles on selfies?
- 8) Do you think selfies are empowering or hurting women's self-esteem? Why?
- 9) Are there other ways we should be teaching young people to express themselves?
- 10) The Jezebel article focuses on the female relationship to selfies. Do men face similar standards when it comes to appearance?
- 11) This makes me want to ask what qualifies as "proper representation" of other people. I myself cannot fairly state what proper representation of black, queer, or trans people would be because I am none of those but I would love to see it discussed more often: What qualifies as fair/good representation of black, queer, or trans beauty?

- 12) What are some common thoughts you have before posting a selfie (or not posting a selfie) on social media? Do you filter it? Ask your friends about it? Think about the caption?
- 13) Is how you brand yourself on social media the same way you'd brand yourself at work?
- 14) Is there any kind of concrete line that can be drawn between what is an "acceptable selfie" and one that is too motivated by narcissism? Is there a detectable difference at all, or is the idea of the narcissistic selfie simply a mark of the times?
- 15) I'm wondering what future platforms will emerge that encourage the selfie trend and encourage its users to take radical, political, creative directions with their selfies? Is this possible or even necessary or will users take these directions on their own as is also proven through current platforms and movements that have emerged? I'm also excited to see how this expansion of beauty standards continues to permeate into the mainstream especially since social media users are now primary targets and resources for media industries and positive representation of Black, queer, fat, etc. people has begun to improve. When will we really see these identities and hear their stories every day in mainstream media and what will it take? What more than social media and selfies alone?
- 16) So what if a selfie is never posted and stays on the camera roll. The debate then becomes can it be still be empowering for the photographer to claim their body privately or is it a narcissistic way to feed vanity? This is an interesting idea not brought up by any of the authors who study the selfie suggesting selfies are only taken with the intention they will be publicly shared.
- 17) Do you feel pressure to take selfies? Why or why not?
- 18) Do you think most women feel pressured to take selfies? Or, more specifically, to take the "perfect" selfie that displays their physical attractiveness? Why or why not?
- 19) How can we retreat from a society that views the selfie as a societal beautification tool and instead use it as a tool for self-expression? Why do some view selfies as a cry for help and others view it as an empowerment tool?
- 20) Can photo-editing apps such as FaceTune be included in the radical politics of #selfies? If someone is making the choice to edit their photos (smooth their skin, conceal blemishes, or change the lighting), is that included in the act of representing themselves or is that a betrayal to the idea that selfies can be representation to the underrepresented?

*Students agreed to contribute their questions to the assignment sheet for other students to respond. Ideally, students in a class will develop their own questions and contribute the questions to the assignment sheet as prompts or idea-generators for the selfie project.