

Women in Computing History Final Project

For the final project your goal is to create something that shows us how attention to gender (and sexuality, race, and class) changes the main narrative of the history of computing. It should help people understand how we can talk about and teach this history in a way that goes beyond the notion of just adding women to computing history but not really changing the main contours of that history or the reasons for writing it.

What do women's perspectives bring to our understanding of computing's past and present that we wouldn't have known otherwise? How does it expand our notion of what computing is and was? And what is a woman, anyway? What categories, other than gender, do we need to be attentive to in order to define what women are in any given historical period and why they are important to our changing understandings of technological "progress"?

Parameters

You have enormous leeway with your final project and I encourage you to be creative with what you produce. Whatever you produce, however, it needs to fulfill the following criteria:

1. Your project must be public-facing in some way. Its audience needs to be bigger than just this class. Who will you try to engage? Who would you really like to be able to engage, even if you fail? How might you succeed at doing this?
2. What you produce needs to have a specific, discrete, and describable impact on you and others. In other words, you should be able to show how people have been affected by what you've produced and how they've interacted with it. You should show specifically how your project affected other people, and whether or not this matched up with what you expected or wanted. You might figure this out by doing a survey of people who engaged with your project, for instance.
3. Your project needs to be intersectional, not just about "women." Try not to take for granted any invisible categories of privilege. What is a woman, anyway? How do we think about gender, race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality and other categories that structure our assumptions about women in computing? How can we make these assumptions visible and learn from them?

What you need to produce/turn in

1. You need to come up with something that fits the parameters above and either create it, or describe it in enough detail so that someone else could create what you're talking about from your description. You may also do a combination of both—for instance, a prototype of a board game along with a description of how it is played etc. (If you create something that you really want to keep, you can show it to me and describe it instead of passing it in. If you choose this option you should be sure you're well-prepared to do this on our final exam date and you should also take photos that you include in what you turn in.)
2. A paper of no fewer than 6 and no more than 10 pages that links what you've produced to what you've learned in class. Your paper should discuss the context of your artifact by talking about the different themes of our course, and it should talk about how the insights you gained from class influenced what you created and how it works as a teaching tool. What's the point of what you're doing? What the new insight that your project helps people understand, or that you hope it conveys? What's the most surprising thing you learned during class or in the process of completing this project? Is that something you were able to convey with the artifact you created? Your paper should also discuss how you fulfilled the parameters listed above, but that should not be all that your paper does.