

Digital Violence: A Symposium
Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom
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Keynote Speakers:
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We live in an age where images of violence and violent exchanges proliferate and spread with unprecedented speed across multiple platforms. Graphic and disturbing images of violence—from viral videos of rape exchanged on Whatsapp, to the live streaming of fatal shootings on Facebook and Periscope—have become a staple of our digital condition. Similarly, resurgent forms of racialized, misogynistic, and homophobic violence are routinely documented, decried, or simply shrugged off as the ‘new normal’ of contemporary media culture.

While much attention is paid to the content of such encounters, and alarms sounded about the nature of our access and exposure to them, less concerted critical effort has been directed towards thinking specifically about how the technological affordances of networked media feed into and amplify this culture of violence. And yet, as Lisa Nakamura reminds us in relation to the viral racism that abounds on post-digital platforms, digital violence is always both ‘a product and a process’: the very real impact of violence in a digital age needs therefore to be traced through the often obscure, invisible, or simply mundane operations that both produce and sustain it (Nakamura 2014: 260). Following on from Wendy Chun’s more recent contention that ‘our media matter most when they seem not to matter at all,’ how might we re-frame our understanding of violence as inhering in (banal and often unconscious) *habits*, in contrast to more common-sense notions of violence as a spectacular affective disruption of the status quo (Chun 2016: 1; 13)?

This one-day symposium on Digital Violence seeks to theorize both the *concrete forms* of violence that proliferate and spread through our networked screens, and the *complex processes* that structure violence in a post-digital attention ecology. What are the social and cultural logics that underpin everyday instances of violence? In what specific ways have these cultural understandings been shaped by technological processes of mediation? Similarly, there is a vital need for scholars to identify uses of media, which might expose, critique, or appropriate violence in its various forms. What critical or creative practices of archiving, excavation, and uncovering are needed to unearth and engage violence in a digital age?

Possible topics and questions may include (but are not limited to):

- How are specific instances of violence captured, made visible, and/or obscured through the use of hashtags, such as #black lives matter, #notaskingforit, #WhyIStayed?
- What is the relationship between race, new technologies and violence? What critical methodologies might enable us to evaluate ‘how racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain the intersecting surveillances of our present order’

(Browne 2015: 9)?

- How has the emergent affect and attention ecology of social media impacted on the ‘resurgent forms of political violence’ in the era of Trump? (Andrejevic 2016).
- In what ways do social media platforms encourage ‘digital complicity’ with institutionalized forms of violence? (Kuntsman and Stein 2015).
- What role do social media and other digital platforms play in extending, countering, or buffering the ‘violent or negative affective states produced by an ever-threatening world’ (Grusin 2010: 112).
- What impact do the micro-temporalities and speeds of digital technologies and infrastructures have on the ways in which we understand and respond to violence and its relation to both human and non-human agents? (Nixon 2011; Parikka 2016).
- How do users of key platforms engage with and respond to images of violence? How are affective responses to violence solicited and conditioned by the affordances of such platforms? And what is the potential ‘political utility’ of a ‘social media novelty’ such as Facebook Live (Benson-Allott 2016)?
- How has digital feminist activism sought to challenge dominant cultural beliefs about violence and rape culture as ‘a fact of life’ (Phipps et al. 2017)? What ‘new connections’ might be enabled by particular uses of social media platforms and other examples of digital mediation (Keller, Mendes & Ringrose 2016)?

Conference Organisers: Tanya Horeck and Tina Kendall

Please send a 300-word abstract and a brief bio to Tanya.Horeck@anglia.ac.uk
by 31 July 2017.



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