

A Feminist Salon: Finding and Making Our Carrier Bags for Feminist HCI

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Abstract

Various feminist theories have been implemented in HCI and design over the past two decades. These *feminisms* are diverse in their lineages, spanning intersectionality, critical race theory, posthumanism, disability studies, and much more. In addition to the diversity of theories employed, how they are used is equally varied, bringing rich depth to HCI research methodologies, design, and evaluation. While plurality and diversity are strengths and defining features of feminism, they can also serve as barriers to entry for junior researchers or others interested in entering the field. In this workshop, we seek to address this challenge by bringing together feminist scholars to openly discuss and share their challenges, experiences, and breakthroughs when using feminist theory in their work. This full-day workshop focuses on setting a vision for feminist HCI by naming and co-creating introductory material. This material, our *carrier bags*, serves as the stories we want to tell about feminist HCI to future generations: *How does feminist theory shape research? What connections does feminist theory bring forward? What does it mean and feel like to be a feminist HCI scholar?* Specific outcomes of the workshop will include a living resource of feminist HCI literature and a speculative textbook for feminist HCI.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **HCI theory, concepts and models.**

Keywords

feminist theory, feminist HCI, teaching HCI

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1 Introduction

I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news.

– Ursula K. Le Guin [18]

In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* [18], Le Guin outlines the importance of the stories we tell. Speaking of science fiction, or the “*mythology of modern technology*”, she criticizes the stories conventionally told about technology, stories that reinforce the logics of domination and capitalism. Instead, she offers another perspective that focuses on technology as carrier bags, receptacles, clutches, backpacks, baskets, and containers for culture and relationships. In this workshop, we aim to take on this task of finding and making our own carrier bags for feminist HCI by bringing together a diverse group of feminist HCI scholars to create a set of materials that allow for different entry points into using feminist theory in HCI.

It has been 16 years since the concept of feminism was introduced to HCI with the seminal paper by Bardzell [2]. In this paper, Bardzell introduces feminist standpoint theory [11], outlining four ways this branch of feminism can impact HCI research, and summarizing qualities of feminist interaction design which include pluralism, participation, advocacy, ecology, embodiment, and self-disclosure. Since then, the field has seen a rise of many different feminist and critical theories ranging from critical race theory [21, 29], critical disability studies [15, 16, 22], queer theory [12, 19, 24], posthumanism [5, 17, 20], and entanglement theories [9, 13, 27] among many others. Along with the diverse range of feminist theories, HCI scholars apply theory in a stunning array, like shaping the research process [7], structuring participatory approaches [10], or directing research attention to new modalities of knowing [4]. The many feminisms in HCI are a symptom and strength of feminism, which embrace plurality and refuse one definition or set of methods.



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Yet the barrier to entry for feminist HCI remains high. On the one hand, there is no comprehensive introductory textbook for the topic. Current HCI textbooks [14, 26] do not go into detail about feminism beyond mentioning it categorically as “alternative lense(s)” [26, p.11] or omitting the word feminism/feminist entirely [14]. On the other hand, it is precisely the successful uptake of *feminisms* in HCI, which requires extensive groundwork across many branches of theoretical and applied texts to make sense of feminist HCI. For junior researchers or others who want to understand the field, they face challenges such as the steep learning curve that comes from grasping the vast body of theoretical literature [25, pp. 71-72], making sense of their own standpoints [28], translating theoretical concepts into research practice [1, 6], and the dissonance that arises when Western epistemology embedded in critical feminist theories clash with local empirical research [23, 30].

This workshop emerges as a response to these challenges by bringing together feminist scholars in a caring and inclusive space to share their challenges, discuss diverse ways of teaching feminist theory use for HCI, and share their practices of working with feminist theory. Drawing on the idea of salons from the gatherings held during the 16th and 17th centuries in Italy and France [3], we seek to create a gathering for feminist scholars to debate, collate, and share their experiences with and knowledge about feminism. This workshop aims to create community and connections across different feminist branches in HCI. Working together, the main outputs of the workshop will be to develop introductory material through the creation of a living archive of feminist texts and a speculative Feminist HCI textbook.

2 Workshop Description and Structure

This full-day workshop is open to 15–20 participants. By bringing HCI and design researchers into the same room, we aim to host a salon that allows for exchanging, comparing, and learning from one another’s engagements with feminist theory. We will facilitate both full-group discussions and plan for smaller working group activities. The first part of the salon will include a show and tell, where participants will bring work (their own research or another’s) that exemplifies feminist HCI. The group activity will serve as an entry point for discussing the rich and generative differences and similarities across feminist HCI research. We will conclude the first half of the workshop with a round table of the visions participants have for introductory feminist HCI materials, offering initial suggestions like a collective archive of feminist research and a speculative feminist textbook. After lunch, participants will divide into smaller groups to work on developing and building out their shared vision of introductory feminist materials, with the opportunity to contribute to other groups throughout the afternoon. The workshop will conclude with a reflection and community dinner. We will invite participants to join a tri-weekly reading group and provide access to infrastructure so that we can collectively continue to grow the developed material during the workshop, creating a living archive.

On-Site requirements For the workshop, we will need space for 15–20 people to comfortably move around with tables and seating for at most 5 groups. Additionally, we will require access to Wi-Fi,

a projector and screen, five flip charts, markers, pens, sticky notes, scissors (one per table), and highlighters for group activities. The organizers of the workshop will bring additional crafting materials.

Time	Activity
9.00	Introduction to the workshop topic, participants and organisers
9.30	Show and tell
10.00	Coffee break
10.30	Sharing visions for a collective feminist HCI
12.00	Lunch break
13.00	Small group activities: - Feminist HCI literature collation - Feminist HCI textbook development - Other activities suggested by the participants
14.30	Coffee break
15.00	Wrap-up small group activities
16.00	Sharing group outcomes
17.00	Go out for dinner

Table 1: Workshop Structure and Overview.

2.1 Participation

An important aim of this workshop is to attract a wide range of feminist scholars in HCI, so that we can have a plurality of diverse voices contributing to the discussions.

Recruitment and selection of participants. Beginning in early June 2026, we will launch a website that contains information about the workshop and how to participate. As a group of organizers, we represent a diverse range of feminist HCI scholars, working in different sub-domains of HCI, and will draw on our professional networks to invite participants to join the workshop. Additionally, we will advertise the workshop on LinkedIn, the Feminist HCI Slack and signal groups, PhD-Design mailing list, fempower.tech, and other relevant listservs.

Participation will be determined based on a one-page response to the prompt: *What feminist papers, projects, and artifacts would you include in an Introduction to Feminist HCI course? And how would you imagine teaching it?* We will select participants based on engagement with the topic and their background working with feminist theories.

Link to call for participation.

<https://sites.google.com/view/nordichi-feministhci-workshop/home>

3 Organizers

Derya Akbaba is a Postdoctoral Researcher at KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Her research is focused on transposing feminist epistemologies to research methods and practices in data visualization and HCI, exploring how power and privilege shape foundational assumptions, design spaces, and the development of technology. She has led and facilitated numerous workshops on feminist theory for academics, industry professionals, and the public.

Jooyoung Park is a PhD candidate at KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Situated in the intersections of HCI, design, and STS, her

research explores designing with discomfort as a feminist design sensibility for intimate care technologies. She is interested in devising new body-centred design research methods and practices, and making alternative everyday healthcare technologies that are grounded on feminist crip conception of embodiment, health, and dis/ability. Jooyoung has led or co-facilitated workshops on soma-based and feminist design research for intimate care at international conferences, such as ACM NordiCHI, TEI, and Nordes.

Stacy Hsueh is an Assistant Professor at University of Nottingham. Her work draws on intersectional feminist theories and feminist disability studies to interrogate power inequities in computing, particularly as they impact disabled communities. Her current research examines the novel institutional forms that emerge in the shadows of automated decision making and explores how people in low-income communities navigate and resist the unequal power terrains these systems create. She employs critical design methods and community-led action research to co-imagine tools and processes that enable participatory governance of AI systems.

Elisa D. Mekler is an Associate Professor at IT University of Copenhagen. Her research focuses on the import, uptake and translation of theory into HCI research and practice. Although a relative newcomer to working with feminist and queer theory [8], Elisa has developed and taught introductory modules on HCI theory, encompassing feminist HCI and entanglement theories.

Amir H. Payberah is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at KTH. His research explores AI through intersectional feminist and decolonial perspectives, examining how data and large language models both shape and are shaped by power. He leads the Co-Liberative Computing research group, which approaches computing as a sociotechnical practice embedded in power structures and works toward more inclusive and accountable AI models.

Vasiliki Tsaknaki is an Associate Professor at the HCI and Design Section, at IT University of Copenhagen. Her research combines materials experiences, computational crafts, speculative and somatic design methods, with a focus on critical and feminist perspectives. Vasiliki has organized many workshops on craft and bodily interactions and fabulation as a feminist approach. She has also taught introductory HCI courses and recently developed and taught a Critical Computing BSc course at ITU, where feminist theories are core.

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