

## **Themed issue on 'Digital Labour'**

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

*Feminist Review* is calling for articles and Open Space pieces for a themed issue on Digital Labour.

Digital labour refers to a range of tasks executed by humans on, in relation to, or in the aftermath of digital platforms. On-demand logistics services, micro-work platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, data economies generated by social media sites, and online retail portals all comprise digital labour. So does the emotional work of withstanding the stress of high-tech workplaces with long hours and nebulous corporate Human Relations (HR) policies. To the extent that it is mediated by platforms, digital labour is also intrinsically bound to hardware: mobile phones, computers, and data servers on which software runs and operates. What is common in the many forms of digital labour is an active celebration of worker flexibility, from the precarious workers concentrated in sectors of the Western labour market, to the non-Western countries where vast swathes of online and below-the-line work happens. As such, digital platforms supply an actual labour market with large numbers of individuals virtually excluded from formal employment and consigned to permanently unstable working conditions. Digital labour is thus experienced predominantly as a modern version of on-demand piecework.

As awareness of digital labour conditions grows, this themed issue draws attention to the gendered and racialised foundations of this in/formal digital economy. This work is the flip side of the mythical white, male 'brogrammer' or software developer enjoying the comforts and benefits of large multinational tech firms. Given the large proportion of marginal subjects, such as women, urban poor and minorities, taking up digital work in the absence of other alternatives, there is an urgent need to understand the structural elements of digital labour. We are especially interested in the continuities that exist with traditional factory, domestic, agricultural and manual work.

The social effects of a contingent workforce with growing numbers of self-employed, raise policy problems regarding adequate welfare and subsistence to fit the needs of an at-will service class. This themed issue is therefore concerned with the ways that race, gender and class status are embedded in digital platforms and with the formation of a global precariat across the spectrum of high-tech production and consumption. Our aim is to put feminist thinking at the forefront of existing sociological studies of work and technology, so as to show the ways in which feminist theory is central to adequately accounting for the nuances of labour value.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- the on-demand economy: gig work, virtual work and crowd work
- below-the-line artificial intelligence: piecework in AI and machine learning
- engineering culture and minority voices in STEM
- informal labour economies, past and present
- productivity services and personalisation of outsourcing
- gender, voice and personal assistance, including the history of delegation
- call-centre work and the dynamics of offshoring
- electronics assembly work and circuits of production
- emotional labour in software design
- on-line and off-line resistance against digital capitalism (and sexism and misogyny)
- AI, robotisation and post-work imaginary

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Full articles or Open Spaces pieces to be submitted by 16 May 2018.

Manuscripts should be submitted through Feminist Review's online submission system and in FR house style. See <http://www.feminist-review.com/> and [http://www.palgrave-journals.com/fr/author\\_instructions.html](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/fr/author_instructions.html).