Evaluating Information

Inquiry & Critical Thinking

Students need to think critically about the information they encounter and how they will use it in their course work, careers, and everyday life. In a 2012 study of how college graduates solve information problems once they join the workforce, Project Information Literacy researchers learned that employers found new college graduates skilled at finding information, but less skilled at interpreting research results. Most new college hires were prone to deliver a quick answer by using a search engine, entering a few keywords, and scanning a couple of pages of results. ([http://projectinfolit.org/](http://projectinfolit.org/))

The activities below emphasize evaluating information by considering the source’s authority and format, in the context of an information need.

Activities for Evaluating Information

- Provide students with two different information types (with two different goals) on the same topic by the same unnamed authoritative creator/author (for example, scholarly article and blog post). Use as discussion starter with students about context in relationship to authority.
- Ask students in professional or career-focused programs to consider who has authority within their areas of study and the origins of that authority.
- Ask students to find several scholarly sources on the same topic that take very different stands. How was it that the authors came to different conclusions? Does it have to do with authority?
- Ask students to brainstorm situations when traditional peer review might not accomplish its purpose.
- Ask students to create a citation "web" using a citation analysis database, and conduct a content analysis of the linked authors by affiliation (workplace, academic preparation, geography, and subject expertise). Do authors cite each other? Are there some authors who are outliers in the web? How do such connections impact information generation?
- Ask students to identify the format of the sources they find for a given research project and articulate why the chosen formats are appropriate for the information need.
- Ask students to find sources about the same topic in two divergent formats, e.g. newspaper movie review and literary journal movie review or scholarly article and a researcher’s blog. Have students compare and contrast the type of information found in each format, as well as articulate the processes underlying the creation of each format.

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Joss Whedon's 'Dollhouse' is no 'Buffy'


The wealthiest people, powerful and well-connected people who work for them can have some serious and weird issues. Let's just say the "Dollhouse" crew that sends Echo on missions won't do the vetting for any more prospective members of the Obama administration.

In the three episodes made available for review, Echo becomes a red-hot lover, a calm negotiator and an art thief, and has to deal with a pedophile, a psychotic killer and a greedy thief.

Fortunately, she has a handler, Boyd Langston (Harry Lenix), who is around to try to keep her alive. Boyd is hired by the group's clinical British leader, Adelle DeWitt (Olivia Williams). The cast also includes Reed Diamond ("Homicide") as DeWitt's adviser, Laurence Dominic; Fran Kranz as the resident geek responsible for programming Echo and other "Actives," give them their personalities and provide comic relief; Dichen Lachmann as another sexy Active, Sierra; Enver Gjokaj as a Russian informant, Lubov; and Tahmoh Penikett as FBI agent Paul Ballard, who is out to uncover what's going on in the Dollhouse even though everyone in the department thinks he's a fool.

Echo is described by the show's characters as "an empty hat until you stuff a rabbit in it" and "a talking cucumber."

The underground group is hired by wealthy, powerful and well-connected people who want Echo to be sexy and fun or disciplined enough to solve a serious problem like child kidnapping.

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“I’M NOBODY”

The somatechnical construction of bodies and identity in Joss Whedon’s Dollhouse

Holly Randell-Moon

Television and film writer Joss Whedon has produced a number of popular culture works which explore representations of what female bodies are seen to be capable of and how these representations affect what female bodies can do. Texts such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003), Serenity (2005), and Dollhouse (2009–2010) are as much celebrated for subverting gender and genre conventions as they are criticized for reinforcing sexualized images of women and violence. Instead of approaching Whedon’s texts in terms of their representations of gender, and how feminist or otherwise these representations are, this paper explores the ways in which Whedon’s texts suggest that subjectivity is textually and discursively constructed. In particular, I will stage a reading of his latest television program, Dollhouse, as a representation of the somatechnical construction of bodies and identity. Somatechnics refers to the inextricable connection between the soma, the material corporeality of bodies, and the techniques and technologies through which bodily being is produced and lived. By making visible the somatechnics of bodily being and the ways gender and embodiment are experienced through and produced by cultural and discursive technologies, Dollhouse emphasizes the role of power in the construction of embodied identity rather than something which always or inevitably oppresses and constrains bodies gendered as female.

KEYWORDS power; embodiment; subjectivity; technology; feminism; somatechnics

Introduction

The term somatechnics refers to the ways in which “material corporeality (soma) is inextricably conjoined with the techniques and technologies (technics) through which bodies are formed and transformed” (Joseph Pugliese & Susan Stryker 2009, p. 1). Approached through somatechnics, the body is not simply a vehicle that can be altered by the values and discourses of its surrounding culture or potentially modified by biotechnology. Rather, the body is always already marked by culture and the historical and political processes through which we come to embody sets of knowledge about gender, sexuality, race, and ability that constrain and enable the body’s actions in certain ways. This emphasis on bodily being as experienced through and produced by cultural and discursive technologies, makes somatechnics an appropriate analytical tool to examine the television and film work of Joss Whedon. Whedon’s work is characterized by an engagement with the links between representation, identity, and embodiment. Principally,