

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES
FEMINIST RESEARCH SPEAKERS SERIES 2016-2017 PRESENTS

Rape Culture Unveiled: Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence

a lecture by **Dr. Anastasia Powell**

Thursday, June 16, 2016, 5:30-7:00

**Senate Chamber
(Arts and Convocation Hall 326)**

Abstract:

It is perhaps unsurprising, though nonetheless problematic, that digital technologies are being used to facilitate sexual violence and harassment against women and girls. In particular, smartphone applications, dating websites, social media platforms and intimate digital images are all being used to facilitate sexual assaults as well as to shame, humiliate and blackmail victim-survivors. Behaviours include the sending of sexually explicit material via a mobile phone, email or the Internet without the consent of the subject; the distribution of rape-jokes, rape-memes and promotion of rape-supportive attitudes; the doctoring of photographs to create sexually explicit images; threats of sexual violence, including publicly posting the names and addresses of women who 'deserve to be raped'; and the use of online dating and other sites to procure a sexual assault. What such behaviours reveal is the nature and extent of rape culture - the widely held societal norms and attitudes that condone, normalise or minimise sexual violence against women in our communities.

This talk considers recent disturbing trends in online sexualised violence and the promotion of rape culture in cyberspace. More than the violation of individual women's sexual autonomy, I suggest, such practices shine a light on a societal tolerance and even acceptance of sexual violence against women. Yet, digital technologies are also arguably enabling new modes of challenge and resistance to rape culture - and this talk will also consider how we might address and prevent rape culture in cyberspace.

Biography:

Dr Anastasia Powell is Senior Research Fellow in Justice & Legal Studies at RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia), specialising in policy responses, legal reform and primary prevention of sexual and family violence against women. Anastasia has published widely in these fields, including four books (*Sex, Power and Consent*, 2010: Cambridge University Press; *Domestic Violence: Australian Public Policy*, 2011: Australian Scholarly Press; *Preventing Sexual Violence*, 2014: Palgrave Macmillan; and *Rape Justice*, 2015: Palgrave Macmillan), and has contributed to policy specific research on violence against women for the Victorian State and Australian Commonwealth Governments. Most recently Dr Powell was a recipient of a prestigious Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) exploring citizen participation in responses to crime and justice via social media, which reflects her recent research at the intersections of gender-based violence, technology, justice and digital culture. From 2013-2015, Dr Powell has been working as a Chief Investigator on an ARC Discovery Project (with Dr Nicola Henry), titled *Technology-facilitated sexual violence and harassment: violence against women in cyberspace and the implications for legislative and policy reform*. The project examined the ways in which technologies (including mobile phones, video recordings, online spaces, social media) are being used in connection with sexual violence and harassment against women. Currently, Dr Powell is working on two books forthcoming in 2017: *Sex, Violence and Justice in the Digital Era* with Palgrave Macmillan (co-author, Dr Nicola Henry), and *Digital Criminology: Crime and Justice in Digital Society* with Routledge (co-authors Dr Robin Cameron and Dr Gregory Stratton).



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