

FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODS
WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES 392
FALL 2011

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Course Time: Monday/Wednesday, 10-11.30 AM
Office Hours: Wednesday, 12-1 PM,
or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores feminist epistemologies and research methods. We will focus on how feminist scholars challenge dominant theories of knowledge and the major methodologies employed in the social sciences and humanities. Through lectures and workshops, we will ask how gender theory and feminist politics shape the kinds of research questions we ask, the types of materials we use, and how we define our relationships with our subjects. To reflect on and engage with feminist methods, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, write short memos reflecting on workshop topics, and draft a research proposal in stages over the course of the semester.

Course Rationale

This course is designed as a capstone course for junior and senior Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) majors. As such, it will differ from – but also build substantially upon – other courses in the WGSS Program. Its main purpose is to *synthesize what students have already learned* in other WGSS courses in order to enable them to *theorize and engage in practical applications* of this knowledge on projects related to their own interests in WGSS. In this sense, it aims to encourage active reflection on the nature and shape of women's/gender/sexuality/feminist studies as an academic discipline and/or field of interdisciplinary inquiry.

Course Requirements

This course aims to achieve these aims through three sets of course assignments, which are intended to complement one another in helping students gain familiarity with basic concepts, debates, and applications in feminist research. Because the learning curve may be steep, grades will be weighted more heavily as the semester progresses. All students are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding any of these assignments, but are encouraged to do so well in advance of the due dates either in person or via email.

- **Class participation** (25%) You are expected to come to class prepared and to participate actively in all class discussions, whether lecture- or workshop-based. This grade will be based on both attendance and contributions to class discussions.
- **Short research memos** (25%) Following each workshop, you will be responsible for coming to the next class with notes on how and why you might apply that concept/ method to study your topic – and in the case of films shown in class, with some thoughts responding to the question posed in the syllabus. The memos will not be handed in but a selection will be discussed in the next class. The goal of these memos is to help you brainstorm and develop various ideas for your research proposal. Specific memo assignments and their due dates are included in the syllabus. Absence policy: *If you are absent on the days we discuss the memos, you are responsible for handing in a copy of your notes to me by the following class.*
- **Research proposal** (50%) You will draft a research proposal in stages over the course of the semester. I will distribute guidelines for the proposal on the first day of class. Throughout the semester, you should treat the research proposal as a “work in progress,” to be revised

and further developed as the course goes on. Deadlines: a research question on September 21, a first section on October 12, a literature review on November 12, a second section on November 28, and the final paper on December 16. Lateness policy: Late papers *will not be accepted*, unless a valid reason for the delay is provided. In order to receive an extension, you must contact me *at least the day before* the paper is due.

Course Policies

This course seeks to promote active learning and a positive classroom environment. To help accomplish these goals, students should take note of the following course policies:

- **Attendance** is required. The readings serve as a background, not as a substitute, for the lectures and workshops. *You are also expected to incorporate references to the readings in your final paper.* Missing or not participating in discussions will result in a deduction in your class participation grade and will affect your ability to produce the best research proposal.
- **Late papers** and **email submissions** will not be accepted. Any requests for exceptions to these rules must be made in advance of the due date (i.e., at least the day before).
- The field of women, gender, and sexuality studies is fundamentally concerned with rethinking how and what we “know” about the world. To benefit most from this course, it is crucial that students **actively seek to make connections** between this and other courses in the WGSS Program, as well as **raise questions** when these links may be hard to see.
- **Making appointments** to meet with me is strongly encouraged at all points in the semester, especially – but not exclusively – when students do not understand content covered in the course, or have questions about the assignments. The best way to reach me is **via email** or **before or after each class session.**

Required Texts

All of the readings will be available on ARes (password “feminist”), with the exception of two books that are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Lina Leavy, eds. 2007. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 31: Course Introduction

No assigned reading – discussion of course aims and introduction to feminist epistemology and research methods.

September 2: NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

September 7: The Enlightenment and the Scientific Method

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. “Reason, Science and Progress: Feminism’s Enlightenment Inheritance.” In Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 23-40.

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. "Can Feminists Tell the Truth? Challenges of Scientific Method." In Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 41-59.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

September 12: Feminist Approaches to Theories of Knowledge

Tuana, Nancy. 1996. "Revaluing Science: Starting from the Practices of Women." In *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, ed. Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 17-35.

Cixous, Hélène. 2000. "Feminine Writing and Women's Difference." In *French Feminism Reader*, ed. Kelly Oliver. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 253-275.

Jaggar, Alison M. 1989. "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." In *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 145-171.

September 14: Gender as an Analytic Category

Scott, Joan Wallach. 1988. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." In *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 28-50.

Hawkesworth, Mary. 2006. "Gender as an Analytic Category." In *Feminist Inquiry: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 145-175.

September 19: Workshop on Researching "Sex" and "Gender"

Guest: Amy Cislo, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Cislo, Amy Eisen. 2010. *Paracelsus's Theory of Embodiment: Conception and Gestation in Early Modern Europe*. Brookfield: Pickering & Chatto, 1-7 and 77-96.

Memo due on September 21: How do you employ sex/gender as an analytic category in your research project?

September 21: Feminist Standpoint Theory

**Research question due.*

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. "From Truth/Reality to Knowledge/Power: Taking a Feminist Standpoint." In Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 60-79.

Brooks, Abigail. 2007. "Feminist Standpoint Epistemology: Building Knowledge and Empowerment Through Women's Lived Experiences." In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 53-82.

September 26: Workshop on *Kitchen Stories*

*Memo due October 3: What does *Kitchen Stories* share with feminist critiques of the "scientific method"?*

September 28: NO CLASS

October 3: Essentialism and Intersectionality

Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1989. "Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought." In *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon, 114-132.

McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs* 30 (3): 1771-1800.

October 5: Workshop on Intersectionality and Interdisciplinary Research

Guest: Rebecca Wanzo, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Wanzo, Rebecca. 2009. *The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1-13 and 145-183.

Memo due October 10: Which feminist methodologies does Wanzo use in her book?

October 10: Postmodern Challenges to (Feminist) Epistemology

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. "Escape from Epistemology? The Impact of Postmodern Thought on Feminist Methodology." In Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 83-104.

Canning, Kathleen. 1994. "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19 (2): 368-404.

DOING FEMINIST RESEARCH

October 12: Workshop on Beginning a Feminist Research Project

**First section due.*

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland. 2002. "Choices and Decisions: Doing A Feminist Research Project." In Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 145-164.

Hart, Chris. 1998. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1-43.

Memo due October 17: Using the template provided, what is your approach – and general plan – for your research project?

October 17: Feminist Interviewing

**Schedule a personal appointment this week to discuss your literature review plans.*

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. 2007. "The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing." In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 11-148.

Puwar, N. 1997. "Reflections on Interviewing Women MP's." *Sociological Research Online* 2 (1).

Kirsch, Gesa E. 2005. "Friendship, Friendliness, and Feminist Fieldwork." *Signs* 30 (4): 2163-2172.

October 19: Workshop on Conducting Interviews

Presser, Lois. 2005. "Negotiating Power and Narrative in Research: Implications for Feminist Methodology." *Signs* 30 (4): 2067-2090.

Luff, Donna. 1999. "Dialogue Across the Divides: 'Moments of Rapport' and Power in Feminist Research with Anti-Feminist Women." *Sociology* 33 (4): 687-703.

Memo due October 24: How and why might you apply – or not apply – interviews in your research project?

October 24: Feminist Action Research and Ethnography

Gatenby, Bev and Maria Humphries. 2000. "Feminist Participatory Action Research: Methodological and Ethical Issues." *Women's Studies International Forum* 23 (1): 89-105.

Buch, Elana D. and Karen M. Staller. 2007. "The Feminist Practice of Ethnography." In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 187-221.

Stacey, Judith. 1996. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" In *Feminism and Social Change: Bridging Theory and Practice*, ed. Heidi Gottfried. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 88-103.

October 26: Workshop on Participatory Action Research

Guest: Shanti Parikh, Department of Anthropology/African and African-American Studies Program

Parikh, Shanti. Forthcoming. "Going Public: Modern Wives, Men's Infidelity, and Marriage in Eastern-Central Uganda."

Parikh, Shanti. 2007. "The Political Economy of Marriage and HIV: The ABC Approach, 'Safe' Infidelity, and Managing Moral Risk in Uganda." *American Journal of Public Health* 97 (7): 1198-1208.

Memo due November 7: How and why might you apply – or not apply – action work in your research project?

October 31: Workshop on Feminist Ethnography

Guest: Carolyn Sargent, Department of Anthropology/Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Sargent, Carolyn. 2006. "Reproductive Strategies and Islamic Discourse: Malian Migrants Negotiate Everyday Life in Paris, France." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20 (1): 31-49.

Sargent, Carolyn and Stéphanie Larchanché-Kim. 2006. "Liminal Lives: Immigration Status, Gender, and the Construction of Identities Among Malian Migrants in Paris." *American Behavioral Scientist* 50 (1): 9-26.

November 2: Workshop on *Born into Brothels*

**Draft literature review due.*

Memo due November 7: In what ways is *Born into Brothels* a feminist ethnography – or not?

November 7: Feminist Archive and Internet Research

Rupp, Leila J. 1997. "How Wide the Circle of the Feminist 'We.'" In *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 130-155 and 268-276.

Aptheker, Bettina. 2002-2003. "Red Feminism: A Personal and Historical Reflection." *Science & Society* 66 (4): 519-526.

Madge, Clare and Henrietta O'Connor. 2002. "On-line with E-mums: Exploring the Internet as a Medium for Research." *Area* 34 (1): 92-102.

November 9: Workshop on Archival Research

Guest: Andrea Friedman, Department of History/Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Freedman, Estelle B. 1998. "'The Burning of Letters Continues': Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality." *Journal of Women's History* 9 (4): 1-11.

Memo due November 16: How and why might you employ – or not employ – archives or the internet in your research project?

November 14: Workshop on Textual Analysis and Literary Theory

Guest: Vivian Pollak, Department of English/Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Readings to be announced.

November 16: Feminist Text and Content Analysis

Leavy, Patricia Lina. 2007. "The Feminist Practice of Content Analysis." In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 223-248.

Messner, Michael and Jeffrey Montez de Oca. 2005. "The Male Consumer as Loser: Beer and Liquor Ads in Mega Sports Media Events." *Signs* 30 (3): 1879-1909.

**Written Memo due November 21: How and why might you apply – or not apply – text analysis in your research project?*

November 21: Workshop on Kinsey

Memo due on November 28: What does Kinsey suggest about the use of surveys for analyzing human sexuality?

November 23: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 28: Feminist Surveys and Statistical Analyses

**Second section due.*

Miner-Rubino, Kathi and Toby Epstein Jayaratne. 2007. "Feminist Survey Research." In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 293-325.

Scott, Jacqueline. 2010. "Quantitative Methods and Gender Inequalities." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13 (3): 223-236.

November 30: Workshop on Quantitative Techniques

Guest: Diana Z. O'Brien, Department of Political Science

O'Brien, Diana Z. 2012. "Quotas and Qualifications in Uganda." In *The Impact of Gender Quotas*, ed. Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. New York: Oxford University Press.

Murray, Rainbow. 2010. "Second Among Unequals? A Study of Whether Frances' 'Quota Women' are Up to the Job." *Politics & Gender* 6 (1): 93-118.

Memo due December 5: How and why might you employ – or not employ – quantitative methods in your research project?

December 5: Original Feminist Research Methods

Reinharz, Shulamit. 1992. "Original Feminist Research Methods." In *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 214-239.

Wilkinson, Sue. 2004. "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method." In *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. New York: Oxford University Press, 271-295.

Memo due December 7: What is an original feminist method you might use in your research project?

December 7: Workshop on (Original) Feminist Research Methods

Reinharz, Shulamit. 1992. "Conclusions." In *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 240-269.

Fonow, Mary Margaret and Judith A. Cook. 2005. "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy." *Signs* 30 (4): 2211-2236.

Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. 2004. "Some Thoughts by an Unrepentant 'Positivist' Who Considers Herself a Feminist Nonetheless." In *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. New York: Oxford University Press, 320-329.

FINAL PAPER DUE ON DECEMBER 16 BY 2 PM TO MY MAILBOX IN 207 SEIGLE HALL