

**WMST 512/AMST 530:
Feminist Research Methodologies:
The Politics of Intersectional, Interdisciplinary Knowledge Production**

**Professor Brandzel
Spring, 2011
Thursdays 3-5:30
Mesa Vista Hall 2131**

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

This graduate seminar examines feminist research methodologies and how they intersect and conflict with methodologies that might be more easily described as queer, postcolonial, decolonial and critical race methodologies. This course moves through and attempts to both settle and unsettle understandings of what makes a method, methodology, or epistemology “feminist,” “anti-racist,” “decolonial,” or “queer.” Rather than offer any sort of “toolkit” of feminist methods, this course examines how students, scholars and scholarship are positioned within social, cultural, historical and political contexts, and how these contexts produce the conditions, limits, and consequences of knowledge production. As a way into these issues, I have organized the course around Gayatri Spivak’s critical question, whether the subaltern can speak, and the ethical dilemmas this question/argument raises for scholars invested in social justice.

This is not to say that this course does not address what might appear to be more “traditional” topics of a feminist methodology course. In fact, while traversing the politics of intersectional, interdisciplinary knowledge production, we will encounter various “feminist” methods, such as oral history, case studies, archival research, visual and literary criticism, focus groups, content analysis, and fieldwork. However, our focus of inquiry will be on the theoretical, practical and political impact of these approaches. Moreover, by studying theories of methods of knowledge production, we will interrogate how scholars negotiate positionality, accountability, intersectionality, and interdisciplinarity. At the conclusion of the course, students will construct, argue for, and defend a methodological framework that is productive for their own research agendas.

Recommended Books: (copy on reserve)

- Sharlene Hesse-Biber, ed. *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2006). Noted as *Handbook*
- Caroline Ramazanoglu with Janet Holland, *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002). Noted as *FM*.
- Diane L. Wolf, ed., *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork* (Boulder: Westview, 1996). Noted as *Dilemmas*.

Required Books:

1. Rosalind Morris, ed., *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010)
2. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Press, 1999)
3. Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 2000)
4. Amanda Swarr and Richa Nagar, eds., *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010)
5. David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

6. Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)
7. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
8. Laura Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London: Zed Press, 2007)
9. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995)
10. David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)
11. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)

Required Materials:

Online access to WebCT

Course Requirements:

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| Attendance, Participation and Facilitation | 40% of Final Grade |
| Weekly Reading Responses | Incl. in Attendance/Participation |
| Presentations | 30% of Final Grade |
| Final Project | 30% of Final Grade |

Auditors: To audit this course you must be an almost full participant (attendance and active contributions to the discussions) and complete the weekly reading responses. Please note that I will not be able to give you written feedback on your weekly responses, but I would be happy to give you feedback during my office hours.

I. Attendance, Participation and Facilitation

Students are expected to come to class prepared, and actively participate (which involves talking as well as listening) in each class meeting.

Each student will facilitate class discussions at least twice during the semester, either alone or with colleagues, depending on class size. Facilitators should use the weekly reading responses from WebCT in order to construct a facilitation plan that enables us to clarify the main arguments and central interventions, as well as investigate the critical questions raised by the assigned readings. Your facilitation plan could include discussion questions for large or small groups and/or outside materials such as short videos, applicable case studies or current events that would help us delve deeper into the readings. Facilitators do not need to do a weekly response, but facilitators must meet in person at least once to plan their session. Moreover, facilitators must **send me a group email outlining their facilitation plan by Wednesday 10pm** (or sooner) so I can make changes to your plan, if needed.

II. Weekly Reading Responses

Students are required to post a weekly reading response paper on the course WebCT page (discussions section) *posted by 5pm Monday* prior to the class session starting February 10th*. As noted above, you do not need to do a reading response the week you are assigned to facilitate.

Please format your response as follows:

1. Thesis: (In one to two sentences, describe the main argument – problem and solution – of the article or book)
2. Summary: (A summary of the article or book (two paragraphs per book) that includes an explanation of the thesis, the main (supportive) arguments, methods and methodology, sources, and intervention(s) into applicable bodies of study.)
3. Analysis: (A discussion of two or three aspects of the reading that you find most interesting and generative. In your discussion, consider why this aspect is important, what it has brought to the text and to the issues of the course, how it might be applicable to other areas/issues/etc, and, if this is a criticism, how exactly you would rectify this “error” and what your solution would have added to the text. **As we move further into the course, your analysis should include synthesis of past readings.**)
4. Questions: (At least two suggested discussion questions for the facilitators to use if they would like.)

Your reading responses will be graded based on the following:

100 = if you demonstrate mastery of the material and show exceptional insight and effort.

90 =if you demonstrate a satisfactory understanding, but have areas that need improvement.

80 =if your response demonstrates a lack thought/analysis, or unfamiliarity with the readings.

70 = if your reading response is incomplete

60 = you did not turn it in on time (I will not provide any feedback)

0 = you did not turn it in

III. Research presentations

You will have one or two (depending on enrollment) research presentations in the class in which you will present on a critical concept, debate, or article/essay that has made an impact in critical methodologies. The presentation will be from 10-20 minutes, to be determined, depending on enrollment. I will hand out a list of research topics and sign-up list in the first few weeks of the course. I have created a list of topics, mostly involving feminist methodologies, and will be assigning them to particular weeks after we have achieved a steady enrollment. This list is far from complete, so if you have suggested topic you would like to add to this list, please let me know by the end of January.

Your agenda will be to research the topic, and then create a presentation in which you will inform us about the topic while making a unique and creative argument about it. Make sure that you contextualize the topic, such as the background information on it as well as the ways in which it has been taken up. Please do not merely summarize the article/issue/debate. Your presentation should be polished and professional, as if it were a conference paper/presentation or a guest lecture. You should, then, prepare by writing a paper, outline, note cards, or however you prepare for such an event. You will not be handing in your written work, but will be graded fully on the content of the presentation.

Examples of concepts/debates/articles include:

1. Feminist battles on theory versus practice versus praxis
2. Donna Haraway's "situated knowledges" & Richa Nagar's "situated researcher"
3. Critical race theory and (counter)storytelling as method
4. The corporatization of the university
5. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*
6. Edward Said, the role of the public intellectual
7. The academic-military-industrial complex
8. Academic knowledge and research funding
9. Intersectionality as methodology
10. Judith Butler, "Against Proper Objects" and the boundaries between queer and feminist studies
11. Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought" and Patricia Zavella, "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with Chicana Informants"
12. Jayati Lal, "Situating Locations: The Politics of Self, Identity and 'Other' in Living and Writing the Text," and Adrienne Rich's "politics of location"
13. Chandra Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes" and "Under Western Eyes Revisited"
14. Kirin Narayan, "How Native is a Native Anthropologist?" and Shahnaz Khan, "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age,"
15. Nell Irvin Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known," and her final chapters in *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*.
16. Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience" and responses to it
17. Judith Stacey, "Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?" and Lila Abu-Lughod's article under the same title
18. Robyn Wiegman, "Feminism's Broken English" and humanities vs social sciences
19. Martha Vicinus, "Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All Facts and No Theory" and the issue of identifying "lesbians" in history

IV. Final Project

You have two choices for your final project for this class, and your choice will depend on where you are at in your graduate program. Both options will be 10-15 pages long.

Option 1: Argument paper on your methodology for upcoming MA thesis or dissertation. The paper will offer a critical review of methodologies in the project's background literature, followed by a proposal and justification for the methodologies to be used in the student's research. Both aspects of the paper must engage conversations in methodologies discussed in class.

Option 2: Argument paper on feminist, queer, decolonial, postcolonial, critical race methodologies. Using a topic of your choosing, offer a thorough and convincing argument by engaging directly with a debate(s), issue(s), or dilemma(s) raised in class.

The following elements are required elements of your final project:

1. Email correspondence or meeting with me as early as possible in the semester to discuss possible topics that are useful to your own research agenda and directly applicable to the key debates raised in the course.
2. One page project proposal with a preliminary list of sources, due no later than February 24th.
3. An annotated outline of the paper, due no later than April 14th.
4. A draft of at least 6 pages and feedback exchange with writing group during the last week of classes.
5. A short **but formal** presentation on your topic during Finals Week
6. A final project of 10-15 pages, due Finals Week.

A Short List of Methods, FYI

While this course is not about how to conduct or practice methods, it might be helpful to have a preliminary list of different types of methods that we might come across in this class. Please note this list is far from complete, and you are invited to add to it.

- Discursive Analyses: Textual, linguistic discourses, content analysis, conversation analysis, and interpretation
- Readings: psychoanalytic, symptomatic, close readings.
- Historical Analyses: Oral Histories and Testimonials, Archival Research, Genealogy
- Interviewing and Focus Groups
- Ethnographies and Fieldwork
- Visual Approaches: Film, Media, Art
- Quantitative Analyses: Surveys, Statistical Analyses, Census-based Research
- Participatory Action Research
- Deconstruction, Intersectional, etc.

Academic Integrity

Ethics and honesty are critical to academic and life success. You are expected at all times to follow university policies concerning academic integrity. Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The university reserves the right to take disciplinary action including dismissal against any student who is found responsible for academic dishonesty or who otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student who has been judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and for the course.

Special Accommodations

If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the office for Services for Students with disabilities. Appropriate accommodations may then be provided for you. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent full demonstration of academic ability should contact us personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

*Please note I am greatly indebted to the posting of online syllabi from Scott Morgensen, Wendy Kozol, Gilian Creese, and Linda Peake. This syllabus reflects and includes many of their ideas and conceptions.

Schedule --- Part I: Methodological Frameworks

(January 20): Hello

Introductions to the course.

(January 27): Epistemology, Method, and Methodology

Please read the following chapters in the following order, on WebCT

General introductory information on relationship between epistemology, theory, method and methodology

- Chapter 1, "Feminist Research," by Hesse-Biber, *Handbook*
- Chapter 7, "From Theory to Method and Back Again," by Hesse-Biber and Piatelli, *Handbook*
- Chapter 11, "The Link Between Theory and Methods," by Rosser, *Handbook*
- Chapter 8, "Choices and Decisions," by Ramazanglu, *FM*

Knowledge Building:

- Chapter 3, "Feminist Standpoints," by Harding, *Handbook*
- Chapter 5, "The Politics of Border Crossings," by Kim, *Handbook*
- Chapter 4, "Postmodern, Poststructural, and Critical Theories," by Gannon and Davies, *Handbook*
- Chapter 6, "Feminist Interdisciplinary Approaches," by Kitch, *Handbook*

(February 3): Feminist Dilemmas, Overview

These chapters should also be read in the following order. They discuss or touch upon some of the common "issues" that are debated within feminist methodologies, such as the politics of experience, the challenges of intersectionality, the politics of location, positionality, insider/outsider statuses, reflexivity and voice (writing), "native" informants, participatory action research, truth in testimony & memory. Also, as part of your preparation, please find your discipline's official statement on research ethics to read and bring to class to share.

- Chapter 1, "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork," by Wolf, *Dilemmas*
- Chapter 21, "Authority and Representation," by Roof, *Handbook*
- Chapter 25, "Holistic Reflexivity," by Hesse-Biber and Piatelli, *Handbook*
- Chapter 26, "Feminist Research Ethics," by Preissle, *Handbook*
- Chapter 5, "Escape from epistemology?" by Ramazanglu, *FM*
- Chapter 6, "Researching Others," by Ramazanglu, *FM*
- Richa Nagar and Susan Gieger, "Reflexivity and Positionality Revisited" (online link)

*****Reminder: meet or correspond with me about final project*****

(February 10): Can the Subaltern Speak?

Rosalind Morris, ed., *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) – Selections TBD

*****Reading responses due now and forever more*****

*****Reminder: meet or correspond with me about final project*****

(February 17): Towards a Decolonial Methodology

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Press, 1999)
Research Presentation(s): TBD

*****Reminder: meet or correspond with me about final project*****

(February 24): Oppositional Consciousness, Differential Methods

Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 2000)
Research Presentation(s): TBD

*****Project Proposals with Preliminary List of Sources Due*****

(March 3): Theory, Practice, and Praxis

Amanda Swarr and Richa Nagar, eds., *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010)

Research Presentation(s): TBD

(March 10): No Class

Working on Projects

Begin reading David Valentine and/or Sunaina Maira

Schedule --- Part II: Applications

March 17: Spring Break

Working on Projects

Reading David Valentine and/or Sunaina Maira

(March 24): The Politics of Ethnography

David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)

(March 31): Accessing the Feminist Subject

Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Research Presentation(s): TBD

(April 7): Speaking of/for the Feminist Subject

Laura Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London: Zed Press, 2007)

Research Presentation(s): TBD

(April 14): Intersectional Methodologies of Empire

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995)

Research Presentation(s): TBD

Annotated Outlines of Paper Due

(April 21): Queer Methodologies of Racialization

David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

Research Presentation(s): TBD

(April 28): Very, Very Queer

Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)

Research Presentation(s): TBD

Configure writing groups

(May 5): Last Week of Classes

Drafts of paper due

Drafts must be at least 6 pages long. We will not meet as a class, but you will schedule meetings with your writing group to talk over papers and provide feedback to each other.

Exam Week: Scheduled exam period TBA

Presentations and final paper due