

WOMENSST 691B
ISSUES IN FEMINIST RESEARCH
GRADUATE SEMINAR

Spring 2012
Monday 4:40-7:00pm
Bartlett Hall Rm 209

Professor Angie Willey
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Office Hours: W 2:30-4:00 pm and by appointment
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Content Overview:

This course will begin from the question, “what is feminist research?” Through classic and current readings on feminist knowledge production, we will explore questions such as: What makes feminist research feminist? What makes it research? What are the proper objects of feminist research? Who can do feminist research? What can feminist research do? Why do we do feminist research? How do feminists research? Are there feminist ways of doing research? Why and how do the stories we tell in our research matter, and to whom? Some of the key issues/themes we will address include: accountability, location, citational practices and politics, identifying stakes and stakeholders, intersectionality, inter/disciplinarity, choosing and describing our topics and methods, and research as storytelling. The class will be writing intensive and will culminate in each student producing a research portfolio.

Course Objectives:

- For students to become familiar with feminist conversations about epistemology (the study of knowledge – what it is, how we know) and methodologies (how we go about producing new knowledges) and the relationship between them.
- For students to be able to discuss examples of feminist research in ways that engage key themes in these conversations.
- For students to develop new or ongoing research projects, incorporating key themes in these conversations.

Required Texts (available at Food for Thought, all other readings will be available electronically on Moodle):

Clare Hemmings (2010) *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Structure:

The course will be largely discussion based, with a flexible lecture/discussion format. Lectures will contextualize readings, not summarize them: it is imperative that students come prepared (with questions and comments) to discuss the key readings for each class period. You are expected to print all readings and bring them to class with you.

Assessment:

Participation (20%):

Attendance (both physical “showing up” and presence) is crucial.

About “good” class participation: “Good” class participation does not necessarily mean talking the most. There are many ways to promote dialogue in class, including asking questions, noticing if others are silent and trying to make space for more timid voices, allowing silences just to “be” for a few moments (often silence is not emptiness but rather intense thinking), talking to each other and not just to the instructor, reminding yourself that the goal is not to be “right,” but to collaboratively work through issues and problems.

You are expected to keep a notebook of key concepts from each of the readings and to bring this as well as written questions and comments to every class.

Weekly reflection papers/journals (40%):

These are informal, shared with your peers, and 2-3 pages single-spaced. They are due on Moodle by 10pm each Monday. Before Wednesday you will read and comment on the entries of your group members. Each paper/entry should identify key themes and concepts in the week’s readings and engage them with reference to your own research interests or project, depending on where you are in your own research. You have one pass to skip a reflection paper (NOT Week 5). If you turn an assignment in late without permission in advance, it will count as your missed assignment.

Research Portfolio (40%):

- Research proposal (5-10pages) – The proposal should have 4 sections: What (topic)? When/Where (Context)? Why (what’s at stake)? How (what do you plan/hope/propose to do)?
- Annotated bibliography on your topic (8-12 sources) – 3-5 sentence annotations that succinctly explain the importance of each text for your project, noting the inter/disciplinary, methodological, and/or theoretical approach of each author. (This should prepare you to explain your “what” and “when/where” and identify something you want to contribute to the conversation – your “why”)
- Annotated bibliography on feminist writings about research methods/methodologies/strategies you might be interested in using (min 5 sources) – [For example (in any relevant combination): “in-depth interviewing”, “statistical analysis”, “reading for racial resonances”, “archival research”, “performance as methodology”, “Foucauldian genealogy”, “internet research”, “queer/scavenger methodologies”, etc., etc. (see suggested readings)] (This should prepare you to explain your “how”)

- Book review on a recent or canonical/important book in your area of research (4-5pgs) – use class readings to address questions of epistemology, methodology, and method in your review.
- Reflection paper (2pages) – Reflect on how your portfolio demonstrates growth as a reader, writer, and/or researcher over the course of the semester.

Academic Integrity, University Policies, and Late Work

Academic dishonesty destroys trust and the good-faith work of a seminar. Students who get stressed about their grades or having enough time to complete an assignment are sometimes tempted to cheat—to download sections of a paper from the Internet, to borrow quotes or ideas from other students or published sources. Don't. It's not worth it. Chances are good you will be caught and will fail the assignment or the course. (See the UMass policy on sanctions and procedures on Academic Honesty, http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/#D) Cite all your sources, all the time.

If you have learning or other disabilities, it is my goal and that of the Disability Services to ensure that you have reasonable accommodations that minimize the impact of that disability on your learning or your ability to demonstrate what you have learned in the context of assignments. It is your choice whether to disclose the nature of your disability to me; you can simply access services through Disability Services (<http://www.umass.edu/disability/current.html>) and ask me to work with that office to provide appropriate accommodations. However, you do need to let me know that you will need accommodation at or near the beginning of the semester, well in advance of any assignments. If we agree on a modified timeline for the completion of assignments or alternative formats, you are still responsible for completing assignments in a timely way and attending class.

All students are required to have a UMass email account, which will be used for all correspondence for this course (if you attend another of the five colleges please let me know right away!). That and registration for this course will also provide access to Moodle, which we will use for supplementary course materials, readings, peer review, and to turn in assignments.

Please note: Syllabus is subject to change. If assignments or deadlines change, you will be notified via e-mail through the News Forum on our Moodle site. You are responsible for all Moodle announcements.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1

Welcome; introductions; share research interests, projects, and goals; and review syllabus. Form research communities / peer feedback groups.

Introducing Feminist Epistemologies and Methodologies

Week 2

Joey Sprague “The Field of Vision” and “Seeing Through Science: Epistemology” in *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, 2005.

Rooney “The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What that Reveals about Epistemology ‘Proper’”

Allen and Kitch “Disciplined by the Disciplines? The Need for an Interdisciplinary Research Mission in Women’s Studies”

Supplemental / Background Readings (optional):

Collins “Black Feminist Epistemology”

Narayan “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non-Western Feminist”

Harding “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology”

Longino “25 Years of Feminist Epistemology in Hypatia”

Week 3

George J. Sefa Dei “Critical Issues in Anti-racist Research Methodologies: An Introduction” in George J. Sefa Dei and Gurpreet Singh Johal *Critical Issues in Anti-racist Research Methodologies*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Dolmage and Lewieki-Wilson “Refiguring Rhetorica: Linking Feminist Rhetoric and Disability Studies” in Schell and Rawson (eds.) *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2010.

Hammers and Brown “Toward a Feminist-Queer Alliance: A Paradigmatic Shift in the Research Process”

McCall “The Complexity of Intersectionality”

Week 4:

Mohanty “Under Western Eyes”

Narayan “Contesting Cultures”

See Moodle for details on the additional reading

Week 5

Micciche “Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory”

Writing Assignment: Parody and Discourse, Inventional Argument, or Creating Interruptions (5-7p execution of one of these assignments, Peer feedback in class)

Thinking about Gender, Telling stories: Current Issues in Feminist Research

Week 6

Joan Scott “Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis” and “Experience”

Butler and Weed “Introduction” in *A Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott’s Critical Feminism*

Week 7

Butler “Speaking Up, Talking Back: Joan Scott’s Critical Feminism”

Weed “From the ‘Useful’ to the ‘Impossible’ in the Work of Joan W. Scott”

Wendy Brown “Epilogue”

TBA

Week 8

Clare Hemmings *Why Stories Matter* “Introduction” and Part I

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10

Why Stories Matter Part II

**Doing Interdisciplinary Feminist Research
(Assignments TBA)**

Week 11:

Week 12:

Week 13:

Week 14: Portfolio Workshop

Final portfolios due one week after classes end.