

Women's Studies 691b
Graduate Seminar: Issues in Feminist Research

Course Information

Professor	Miliann Kang Assistant Professor, Women's Studies, UMass Amherst
Office Location & Number	Bartlett 73 (basement), 577-0710 or 545-1922 (Women's Studies office)
Office Hours	Monday 2-3 pm and by appointment
Email	mkang@wost.umass.edu
Class Info	Spring 2005, Monday 3:30-6:05

Readings

Required Texts: All books are available at Food for Thought Books, 106 East Pleasant St. 413-253-5432 in Amherst Center and are also on reserve in the library. Additional readings will be distributed or are available on e-reserve.

- 1) Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Michelle Yaiser, eds. 2004. *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. Oxford. ISBN: 0195158113
- 2) Sandoval, Chela. 2000. *Methodology of the Oppressed*, University of Minnesota Press ISBN: 0816627371
- 3) Naples, Nancy A. 2003, *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse, and Activist Research*. Routledge; ISBN: 041594449X
- 4) St. Pierre, Elizabeth and Wanda S. 2000. *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*. Routledge, ISBN: 0415922763

Course Description

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized.

Audre Lorde, *Sister*, p. 36

If one begins inquiry with what appears problematic from the perspective of women's experiences, one is led to design research for women... That is, the goal of this inquiry is to provide for women explanations of social phenomena that they want and need, rather than providing for welfare departments, manufacturers, advertisers, psychiatrists, the medical establishment or the judicial system answers to questions that they have. The questions about women that men have wanted answered have all too often arisen from desires to pacify, control, exploit or manipulate women.

Sandra Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*, p. 8

This graduate course on *Issues in Feminist Research* examines feminist perspectives on theories and methodologies of conducting and interpreting research. Students will gain skills in ethnography, interviewing, survey construction, focus groups, oral history and the applications of feminist scholarship. They will use these methods to plan, prepare and present a research proposal that will further their work toward the dissertation and/or a publishable article. The course aims to build an interdisciplinary community of feminist faculty and graduate students to provide support and collaboration on individual and joint

research projects and their practical, ethical and political implications. This course is a 3 credit seminar for graduate students, primarily those who are students in the Women's Studies Graduate Certificate Program in Advanced Feminist Studies, and those interested in applying for the program. (Applications to the Program for next year, which will include retroactive credit for courses taken this year, are due in March in the WOST office: Call Nancy Patteson at 5-5332 for further information).

Goals

- 1) to provide a framework for thinking about methods of research from a feminist perspective and applying this framework to your own research projects.
- 2) to gain knowledge and skills in specific methods of feminist research, including participant observation, interviewing, oral history, surveys, discourse analysis and participatory action research
- 3) to engage actively with feminist concerns regarding ethics, representation and the politics of feminist inquiry.
- 4) to envision and work toward social institutions, policies, relations, ideologies and practices that foster respect, health, safety, equality, and rights for all women.
- 5) to create a supportive learning environment and intellectual community that empowers you to take action on the things you care about.

Requirements

This course follows a seminar format, which means that it is based mostly on class discussion and student presentations rather than lectures. This requires that you come prepared to think critically, articulate ideas coherently, listen attentively and respect the diversity of experiences and perspectives of your classmates. I have designed the assignments to facilitate deeper engagement with the readings and richer discussions as well as to allow you to make connections to your own research interests. I ask each of you to take responsibility for building a classroom environment based on trust, confidentiality and community while at the same time challenging each other in intellectually rigorous discussions.

- **Class participation and Discussion Board** Class participation will include regular attendance, informed contributions to discussion, and posting to the electronic discussion board on Web CT. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared with comments and questions. You are expected to attend every class session and to let me know the reason for absences, preferably ahead of time.
- **Class Discussant and Essay (3-4 pages)** You will sign up to be a class discussant for TWO class sessions over the course of the semester. This will involve writing a short essay summarizing, analyzing and critiquing the assigned readings, presenting your arguments briefly to the class (5-10 minutes), generating discussion questions and responding to other students' comments. You will work together with another student and present on the same readings. I encourage you to meet first with me to find engaging ways to collaborate other than simply splitting the readings (eg. One of you can address the strengths, the other focus on the weaknesses; one of you can agree, the other disagree with key debates). You will each, however, submit your own written memo, which you must post to Web CT by 8 pm of the day before you are to be a discussant. Please sign up for at least one Class Report by the second seminar.
- **Short Paper (4-6 pages)** Students will be expected to write a short paper on some problem or issue for feminist research ethics or procedure that is raised by discussion or the readings. Your paper should present your own critical position on this issue, critiquing other views and defending your own. These papers will be due Monday, March 21 with copies for all seminar participants.

- **Presentation and Term Paper (10-20 pages)** Students will be expected to give a research paper presentation, or a proposal for a research project. It is expected that this research will be related to an actual or possible project in their major discipline. Some part of this presentation should refer to one or more relevant issues in feminist research that we discuss during the semester and way(s) of handling such issues in this particular research. This research paper will be presented in the last sessions of the seminar--a 3-5 page abstract and outline due by April 21 with copies for the class. A complete term paper of 10-20 pages is due at the end of the semester. Please sign up for your presentation date by the third seminar. (Note: No e-mail attached papers will be accepted—hard copies only, please!!)

- **Peer Feedback** Throughout the semester and particularly the last seminar, students will be expected to bring critical suggestions for development and revision of all the student papers which were presented in the seminar, to aid in students' revisions of their term paper submission.

- **Academic Honesty** Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University's academic honesty policy. <<http://www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html>
If an instructor finds that a student has violated the University's Academic Honesty Policy, the instructor has the right to lower the student's grade, or even to fail the student for the course. Students have the right to appeal such a grade penalty by an instructor. The University Academic Honesty Board, which must be notified by instructors of any grade penalty, reviews all student appeals. The Board may sustain or recommend modification of the penalty given by the faculty member, or may recommend sanctions exceeding those originally given, such as suspension or expulsion from the University.

Course Schedule

(I reserve the right to make changes in the schedules as I see appropriate.)

Week One

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| Jan 31
Monday | <p>Introduction to the Course: Feminist Paradigms, Epistemologies and Methodologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overview of course content, assignments and expectations. Self-introductions. ▪ Handouts: 1) Feminist Epistemological Research Paradigms ▪ 2) Distinction between Epistemologies, Methodologies and Methods (Harding) ▪ 3) Internal critique of paradigms and methodologies ▪ Readings: (e-mailed) Papers by M. Fonow and J. Cook, "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy" and ▪ (e-mailed) M. Kang, "2003. "The Managed Hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions in Korean Immigrant-Owned Nail Salons." <i>Gender and Society</i> 17: 820-839 ▪ (copies in the WOST office) M. Calas and L. Smircich "From 'The Woman's' Point of View: Feminist Approaches to Organizational Studies" |
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Week Two

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

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| Feb 7
Monday | <p>History and Debates Regarding Feminist Epistemology, Methodologies and Methods
 [in the Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text, Part I: 3-98]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S. Hesse-Biber, P. Leavy and M.Yaiser "Feminist Approaches to Research as a Process: Reconceptualizing Epistemology, Methodology and Method" ▪ D. Smith "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology" ▪ S. Harding "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Strong Objectivity?" ▪ K. Bhavnani "Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity" ▪ J. Sprague and D. Kobrynowicz "A Feminist Epistemology" <p>[in Naples, Feminism and Method] Part I: 3-33</p> |
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Week Three

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 14 Monday **Intersectional/Integrative Feminist Epistemology and Methodologies – Part I – Racing Research/Researching Race**

in *Working the Ruins*

- P. Hill Collins "What's Going? Black Feminist Thought and the Politics of Postmodernism" (*e-reserves*)
- Twine, France Winddance. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies." Chapter 1 in *Racing Research, Researching Race*.
- S. Harding "'... and Race'? Toward the Science Question in Global Feminism", ch. 8 of S. Harding *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*
- A. Hurtado "Sitios y Lenguas: Chicanas Theorize Feminisms", *Hypatia*, v. 13 #2 1998
- K. Crenshaw "Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence against Women of Color", in M. Lyndon Shanley and U. Narayan, eds. *Reconstructing Political Theory: Feminist Perspectives*
- b. hooks "Postmodern Blackness", from hooks *Yearning*
- G. Anzaldúa "Mestiza Consciousness" from *Borderlands/La Frontera*
- R. Frankenburg. *White Women, Race Matters: Intro and Chapter 2*

Week Four

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 21 Monday **Intersectional/Integrative Feminist Epistemology and Methodologies – Part II – Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality**

in *Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text* -

Feb 23 Wed

- S. Hesse-Biber and M. Yaiser "Difference Matters"
- L. Weber "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality"
- D. Reay "Rethinking Social Class"
- S. Harding "Can Men Be Subjects of Feminist Thought"
- K. Weston "Fieldwork in Lesbian and Gay Communities"
- (e-reserve) V. Namaste "Clinical Research or Community Health: Transsexual Perceptions of Gender Identity Clinics" in *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*

Week Five

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 28 Monday **Postcolonial, Poststructural, Comparative and Global Feminist Methodologies**

- Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (skip or skim Chapters 1, 4, and 6 - BUT make sure to read 108-114)
- (reserve and e-reserve) C. Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" and "Under Western Eyes Revisited" in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*.
- (e-reserve) C. Sato, "A self-reflexive analysis of power and positionality: toward a transnational feminist praxis"

Week Six

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

March 7 Monday **Ethics in Feminist Research**
(*e-reserves*)

- G. Kirsch *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research* Chapter 5: Toward an Ethics of Research
 - J. Rollins *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers*, Introduction
 - A. Jaggar "Globalizing Feminist Ethics" *Hypatia*, v. 13 #3 (Spring 1998)
 - A. Ferguson "Resisting the Veil of Privilege: Building Bridge Identities as an Ethico-Politics of Global Feminism", *Hypatia*, v. 13 #4 (Summer 1998)
- In Ruins*
- L. Chaudry "Researching My People, Researching Myself" in *Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text* -
- S. Hesse-Biber and D. Leckenby "How Feminists Practice Social Research"
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March 14 **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**
Monday

Week Seven

March 21 Feminist Ethnography

- Monday** ▪ [in Naples, Feminism and Method] Part II: Standpoint Epistemologies, Reflective Practice and Feminist Ethnography
- SHORT PAPER DUE** From *Working the Ruins*
- St. Pierre and W. Pillow "Inquiry among the Ruins"
 - Britzman "The Question of Belief: Writing Poststructural Ethnography"
 - Villenas "This Ethnography Called My Back: Writings of the Exotic Gaze, "Othering" Latina, and Recuperating Xicanisma" 74-95
 - St. Pierre "Nomadic Inquiry in the Smooth Spaces of the Field" 258-283
 - Lather "Drawing the Line at Angels: Working the Ruins of Feminist Ethnography" 284-312
- (e-reserve)
- Wolf, D.L. (1996). "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork". In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, edited by Diane L. Wolf, 1-55. Colorado: Westview Press.

Week Eight

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

March 28 Discussion of Short Papers

Monday Read other students' papers, type out comments, and be prepared to discuss your reactions and your own views.

Theory Testing, Survey Research and Experiments

in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text -

- J.S. Chafetz "Some Thoughts by an Unrepentant 'Positivist' Who Considers Herself a Feminist Nonetheless"
- M. Thompson and V. Keith "The Blacker the Berry"
- S. Hill and J. Sprague "Parenting in Black and White Families"
- L. Madson "Inferences Regarding the Personality Traits and Sexual Orientation of Physically Androgynous People"

Week Nine

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 4 Discourse Analysis, Representation and Interpretation

- Monday** ▪ (e-reserves) L. Kang. "Generic Fixations: Reading the Writing Self" in *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women*
- [in Naples, Feminism and Method] Part III: Feminist Materialism, Discourse Analysis and Policy Studies 89-139 and Chapter 9: Survivor Discourse: Narrative, Empowerment and Resistance 163-185]
- in *Working the Ruins*
- B. Davies "Eclipsing the Constitutive Power of Discourse"
 - M. Leach "Feminist Figurations: Gossip as a Counter-discourse"
 - K. McCoy "White Noise"
 - Alvermann Researching Libraries, Literacies, and Lives: A Rhizoanalysis
 - Morgan, "Electronic Tools for Dismantling the Master's House"

Week Ten

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 11 **Interviewing, Focus Groups, and Oral History**

Monday

- *in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text*
- M. Devault "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis"
- S. Wilkinson "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method"
- A. Errante "But Sometimes You're Not Part of the Story"
- S. Geiger "What's So Feminist about Women's Oral History" [e-reserves from Hune and Nomura's *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women*]
- J. Yung "A Bowlful of Tears": Lee Puey You's Immigration Experience at Angel Island" and G. Nomura "Filipina American Journal Writing: Recovering Women's History"

Week Eleven

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 18 **NO CLASS**

Monday

April 21 **Participatory Action Research and Feminist Pedagogy**

Thursday

- [in Naples, Feminism and Method] Part IV: Activism, Narrative and Empowerment and Part V: Conclusion
- in *Ruins*
- W. Pillow "Exposed Methodology: The Body as a Deconstructive Practice"
- L. Richardson. "Skirting a Pleated Text: De-disciplining an Academic Life"
- E. McWilliam, "Laughing Within Reason: On Pleasure, Women and Academic Performance" [e-reserves]
- D. Henderson "Consciousness Raising in Participatory Research: Method and Methodology for Emancipatory Nursing Inquiry", *Adv. Nurs. Sci.*, 1995: 17 (3), 58-69
- J. Gore "What We Can Do for You! What Can We Do for "You"? Struggling over Empowerment in Critical and Feminist Pedagogy" from C. Luke and J. Gore, eds. *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*
- P. Lather "Critical Pedagogies: A Feminist Reading", *Ibid.*
- b. hooks *Teaching to Transgress* , chs. 3, 8, 12

Week Twelve

April 25 **Student Presentations**

Monday

Week Thirteen

May 2

Monday

Student Presentations

Week Fourteen

May 9

Monday

Discussion and Feedback for Student Presentations

May 16

Monday

FINAL PAPERS DUE (hardcopies in my mailbox in 208 Bartlett Hall)
