

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	Wed 2:00-3:30 pm and by appointment
Email	mkang@wost.umass.edu
Ereserves password	691bsp09
Class Info	Spring 2008, Wed 4-6:30, Bartlett 456

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 – password is wost691b08.

- 1) Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Michelle Yaiser, eds. 2004. *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. Oxford. ISBN: 0195158113
- 2) (Recommended) Jaggar, Allison. 2007. *Just Methods*. Paradigm Publishers. ISBN-10: 1594512043 ISBN-13: 978-1594512049

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 methodologies of conducting and interpreting research. The first half of the course addresses theories and debates regarding feminist research methodologies. The second half focuses on specific research methods, such as ethnography, interviewing, survey construction, focus groups, oral history and the applications of feminist scholarship. We will also have certain open topics that the class can collectively plan based on the areas of interest and specialization of the students. Students will apply the course materials to further their own research at whatever stage they are in their programs. For example, you can prepare and present a research proposal related to your dissertation, or you can develop work toward a publishable article. The

course aims to build an interdisciplinary community of feminist faculty and graduate students to provide support and engagement in feminist research projects and their its theoretical, substantive, ethical and political implications. This course is a 3 credit seminar for graduate students who are currently accepted into the Women's Studies Graduate Certificate Program.

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 and discipline.
- 2) to gain knowledge and skills in specific methods of conducting feminist research, including participant observation, interviewing, oral history, surveys, etc.
- 3) to engage actively with feminist concerns regarding ethics, representation and the politics of feminist inquiry.
- 4) to envision and work toward policies, relations, ideologies and practices that support feminist scholarship and its applications
- 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 Peer Feedback (30%)** Class participation will include regular attendance and informed contributions to discussion, both in class and on-line. 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. In addition, you are expected to provide informed and constructive peer feedback on each other's essays and final projects. Throughout the semester, students will be expected to bring critical suggestions for development and revision of other student papers which were presented in the seminar, especially in response to abstracts and presentations, to aid in students' revisions of their final term papers.
- **THREE Class Discussant and Essay assignments (3-4 pages each – 10% each, 30% total)** 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. In some cases, you will work together with another student and present on the same readings. (In this case, I encourage you to meet first with each other to find engaging ways to collaborate rather 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 SPARK by noon of the day before you are to be a discussant.
- **Class Presentation and Final Paper (10-15 pages – 40%)** 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, while also incorporating interdisciplinary feminist debates regarding epistemologies, methodologies and methods. Some part of

this presentation should refer to one or more relevant issues in feminist research that we discuss during the semester, and examine way(s) that these issues relate to your particular research project. This research paper will be presented in the last sessions of the seminar--a 3-5 page ungraded abstract and outline due by April 9 and posted on SPARK. A complete term paper of 10-15 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!!)

- **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 appropriate – expect some additional readings to be incorporated as students research interests and questions develop .)

IMPORTANT DATES:

- April 1:** 3-4 page ungraded abstract and outline, due in class and posted on SPARK
April 29 and May 6: Student Presentations, Discussion and Feedback
May 14: **FINAL PAPERS DUE by 3 pm (hardcopies in my mailbox in 208 Bartlett Hall)**
Three class sessions will be in conjunction with the Feminist Foundations series that WOST sponsors, Feb 11, March 25, and April 15 – see below for details

Week One

- Jan 28 Introduction to the Course: Feminist Paradigms, Epistemologies and Methodologies**
- Overview of course content, assignments and expectations. Self-introductions.
 - In-Class Handouts: 1) Feminist Epistemological Research Paradigms
 - 2) Distinction between Epistemologies, Methodologies and Methods
 - Readings: (e-reserves) M. Fonow and J. Cook, "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30 (2005), pages 2211–2236

Week Two

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

- Feb 4 History and Debates Regarding Feminist Epistemology, Methodologies and Methods**
 [in the Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text, Part I: 3-98]
- S. Hesse-Biber, P. Leavy and M. Yaser "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. Bhavani "Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity"
 - J. Sprague and D. Kobryniewicz "A Feminist Epistemology"

Week Three

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 11 Challenges of Feminist Research: Bridging Theory and Method

Panelists: *Marta Calas (Isenberg School of Management, UMass), Laura Doyle (English, UMass), Ann Ferguson (Women's Studies/Philosophy) Nancy Folbre (Economics, UMass), Rani Varghese (School of Education and Women's Studies, UMass)*

- L. McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality" 2005. *Signs*: 30: 3: 1771-1799. (ereserves)
- M. Calas, Marta and L. Smircich, "Feminist Perspectives on Gender in Organizational Research: What Is and Is Yet to Be" (ereserves)
- L. Doyle, *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture*, Preface, Chap 1, pp. 206-210 (ereserves)
- Dankoski, Mary, "What Makes Research Feminist?" (ereserves)
- N. Folbre, Introduction (SPIRE)

Week Four

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 18 Intersectional/Integrative Feminist Epistemology and Methodologies – Part I – Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality

- *in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text -*
- 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"

Week Five

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

Feb 25 Intersectional/Integrative Feminist Epistemology and Methodologies – Part II –Racing Research/Researching Race

(all on e-reserves)

- P. Hill Collins "What's Going? Black Feminist Thought and the Politics of Postmodernism" in *Working the Ruins*
- A. Hurtado "Relating to Privilege"
- Frankenberg, Ruth. *White Women, Race Matters, The Social Construction of Whiteness*, University of Minnesota Press (1993) Chapters 1 and 2. pp. 1-42.
- Twine, France Winddance. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies," in *Racing Research, Researching Race*. New York University Press (2000) pp.1-34
- C. Harnois Different Paths to Different Feminisms? Bridging Multiracial Feminist Theory and Quantitative Sociological Gender Research, *Gender & Society*(2005)19: 6: 809-828

Week Six

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

- March 4 Postcolonial, Poststructural, Comparative and Global Feminist Methodologies**
- (all readings on e-reserves)
 - S. Khan, "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age," *Signs*: 2005, 30: 4: 2017-2035
 - C. Mohanty, " "Under Western Eyes Revisited" in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*.
 - C. Sato, "A self-reflexive analysis of power and positionality: toward a transnational feminist praxis"
- R. W. Connell, "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena," *Signs* [2005] 30: 3

Week Seven

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

- March 11 Ethics in Feminist Research**
- look on-line for your discipline's statement of research ethics, read and critique it from the perspective of feminist research ethics using the following assigned readings
 - J. Preissle, "Feminist Research Ethics," in *Handbook of Feminist Research*, Chap 26. http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/12548_Chapter26.pdf (e-reserves)
 - J. Rollins *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers*, Introduction
 - G. Kirsch *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research* Chapter 5: Toward an Ethics of Research
 - A. Jaggar "Globalizing Feminist Ethics" *Hypatia*, v. 13 #3 (Spring 1998)
- in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser* S. Hesse-Biber and D. Leckenby "How Feminists Practice Social Research"

MARCH 19 - SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week Eight

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

- March 25 Reading Nature, Reading Culture: Language and Interpretation in Feminist Research**
- Panelists:** *Karen Cardozo (Commonwealth College, UMass), Lisa Henderson (Communications, UMass), Jennifer Hamilton (Legal Studies, Hampshire College), Allia Matta (Afro American Studies, UMass), Banu Subramaniam (Women's Studies, UMass)* (e-reserves – other readings TBA)
- B. Davies "Eclipsing the Constitutive Power of Discourse" in *Working the Ruins*
 - K. McCoy "White Noise" in *Working the Ruins*
 - J. Taylor "The Problem of Women's Sociality in Contemporary North American Feminist Memoir" *Gender & Society*, Dec 2008 22: 705 - 727.
 - L. Kang. "Generic Fixations: Reading the Writing Self" in *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women*

Week Nine

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

- April 1 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"
- ereserves*
- Beneria, Lourdes. "Paid and Unpaid Labor" in *Just Methods*
 - Terry, Jennifer. "Lesbians Under the Medical Gaze" in *Just Methods*

Week Ten

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 8 Feminist Ethnography

(e-reserves)

- Villenas "This Ethnography Called My Back: Writings of the Exotic Gaze, "Othering" Latina, and Recuperating Xicanisma" 74-95
- Freeman and Murdock, "Enduring traditions and new directions in feminist ethnography in the Caribbean and Latin America," *Feminist Studies* (27:2) [2001] , 423-458.
- Wolf, D.L. (1996). "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork". In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, edited by Diane L. Wolf, 1-55. Colorado: Westview Press.
- A. Lareau *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Chap 1 and Appendix 1-13, 259-274
- in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser text - Naples, "The Outsider Phenomenon"

Week Eleven

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 15 Feminist Approaches to Methodology and Indigeneity. (co-sponsored and in collaboration with the Five College Women's Research Center)

Panelists: *Marta Carlson (Anthropology, UMass), Joel Martin (History, UMass), Alice Nash (History, UMass), Manuela Picq (Women and Gender Studies, Amherst College), Daniel Rivers (Program for the Study of Women and Gender, Smith College)*

Interviewing, Focus Groups and Oral History

[e-reserve]

- Allen, Paula Gunn. "Kochinnenako in Academe" in *Just Methods*.
 - 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 in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women*
- 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"

Week Twelve

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

April 22

Feminist Reflexivity, Interdisciplinarity and Pedagogy

(e-reserves)

- Lee, Rachel. Notes From the (Non)field. Pp 82-104. from *Women's Studies on It's Own*.
- Donaldson, Laura et al. Subversive Couplings. pp. 438-456. from *Women's Studies on It's Own*.
- D. Henderson "Consciousness Raising in Participatory Research: Method and Methodology for Emancipatory Nursing Inquiry", *Adv. Nurs. Sci.*, 1995: 17 (3), 58-69
- P. Lather "Critical Pedagogies: A Feminist Reading", from C. Luke and J. Gore, eds. *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*
- b. hooks *Teaching to Transgress* , chs. 3, and 12
- M. Devault. "From the Seminar Room: Practical Advice for Researchers," *Liberating Methods: Feminism and Social Research*, 195-237

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen

April 29 Student Presentations, Discussion and Feedback

May 6 Student Presentations, Discussion and Feedback

May 13 FINAL PAPERS DUE by 3 pm (hardcopies in my mailbox in 208 Bartlett Hall)
