

Problems in Feminist Research
Tuesdays 2:30-5
SCAF 201

Laura Briggs, Professor
ljbriggs@umass.edu
Office: SCAF 401W
Office hours: Thursday 10-12 or by appointment

Elise Swinford, Writing Advisor
eswinfor@umass.edu
Office: South College 414W
Drop-in hours: Tues 12-4, Weds 9:30-12, and by appt.

This is a graduate seminar in feminist research, and constitutes a core course for students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate Program in Advance Feminist Research. Feminism has long been interested in a foundational way in questions of epistemology (how we know what we know) and research methodology (how we go about developing original research), because in its most recent incarnations, post-1968, it emerged as an academic formation that asked basic questions about disciplines: how did they invent a world without women? How was systemic bias built into its knowledge systems such that they made women, people of color, working class people, people outside the US and Europe (“the West,” as it came to be called, through an Orientalist bit of geographic folly), peasants, slaves, indigenous people, colonized people, (most) queers, trans folk and a great many others invisible? Obviously, in this endeavor feminists had help from many other fields and activist movements, which worked together across disciplines and movements to transform knowledge. In many ways, they won—no discipline or field of study is unchanged or untouched by these inquiries, although some are obviously more resistant than others.

This course proceeds in the spirit of that ongoing revolution. We will make no assumptions about what “feminism” means or what “feminist research” is (much less “feminist methodology” or “feminist epistemology”), but let that emerge through a reading of recent scholarly work that calls itself feminist (or is written by people who work in WGSS departments, whether they use the “feminist” word or not). It presumes a fairly extensive background in feminist scholarship; this is a “current problems” not a “basic concepts” course. We will read the books in this course less for what they are saying (although of course it’s impossible not to be interested in that, so we will give that some attention), than for how their arguments are constructed. We will read footnotes, assess archives, discuss sources, and look at the epistemology through which the arguments are framed. We will use this work to consider how we are doing our own scholarly writing, and how we can use interdisciplinary feminist scholarship to shake the foundations of the world as it is.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Brittany Cooper, Susana Morris, and Robin Boylorn, eds., *The Crunk Feminist Collection* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, Jan. 10, 2017).

Sadiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2008)

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

Vivian May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. By New York: Routledge, 2015.

Karma Chavez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (University of Illinois Press, 2013).

Angela Willey, *Undoing Monogamy: The Politics of Science and the Possibilities of Biology* (Duke, 2016).

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke, 2016).

Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (Pluto Press, 2015).

Amy Brandzel, *Against Citizenship, The Violence of the Normative* (University of Illinois Press, 2015)

Jennifer Suchland, *Economies of Violence: Transnationalism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking* (Duke, 2015)

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

There are two grading options for this class, depending on how you are using it. You can either use it to develop a framework for thinking about feminist research problems (option 1) or use it to solve problems in your own scholarly writing (option 2).

Option 1: All paper should be emailed to me

class participation: 15%

papers: Four 2pp reading response 5% each

Two 5-7pp papers 20% each

Final paper: 25%

1. Write four 2 pp. reading response papers. These will be frontloaded in the beginning of the semester to help you get quick feedback and help on your reading and writing, and correspondingly less pressure to speak up in class. Due Jan. 31, Feb. 7, Feb. 14, Feb. 21.
2. Write two 5-7 pp reading-response papers bringing together at least two of the readings in the weeks prior to the paper. Due March 21, April 18.
3. Write a 10 pp. conference paper that includes original research on a subject of your choosing developing methodology related to the course material. Subject matter might include historical research (relying on an archive of published or unpublished sources), a reading of a novel or a play, a reading of public policy problem or feminist issue using fresh sources (that is, tell us something new that we did not already know, based on your own research). This list is meant to be suggestive rather than inclusive. DUE May 9

Option 2: Paper should be emailed to me

30% class participation

70% article-length (~25pp) final paper DUE May 9

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You're expected to come to class with the reading done. If you must miss a class, email the instructor. Two absences are a cause for concern. If you miss three or more classes, plan on meeting with me to discuss options related to making up the work, taking a grade reduction, or repeating the course.

WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE**Jan. 24. Week 1—What Problems are We Thinking About in Feminist Research?**

Bring an article to class that exemplifies feminist work you admire

Jan. 31-Week 2—From Pop Culture to Contemporary Politics

Brittany Cooper, Susana Morris, and Robin Boylorn, eds., *The Crunk Feminist Collection* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, Jan. 10, 2017).

Recommended

Liza Featherstone, *False Choices: The Faux Feminism of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (2016)

Andi Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrrl to Cover Girl, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement* (2016)

Angela Davis and Frank Barat, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundation of a Movement* (2016)

Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* (2015)

Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist: Essays* (2014)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* (2015)

Andrea Ritchie, Joey Mogul, and Kay Whitlock, *Queer (In)Justice* (2011).

Option 1—2pp paper due.**Feb. 7. Week 3—Race, memory, slavery**

Sadiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2008)

Recommended

María Elena Martínez, "Archives, Bodies, and Imagination: The Case of Juana Aguilar and Queer Approaches to History, Sexuality, and Politics" *Radical History Review* 120 (2014): 159-82.

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke, 2016)

Robyn Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016)

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic-Queer imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 14: 2-3 (2008): 191-215.

Option 1—2pp paper due.

Feb. 14. Week 4—Neoliberalism and Political Economy

Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (Verso, 2013)

Recommended

Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (Zone, 2017)

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Zone, 2015).

Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (UC Press, 2004).

Option 1—2pp paper due.

Feb. 21. Week 5—Big Narratives: White Feminism? Imperial Feminism? Liberal Feminism?

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

Option 1—2pp paper due.

Feb. 28. Week 6— Intersectionality

Vivian May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. By New York: Routledge, 2015.

Jennifer Nash, "Re-thinking intersectionality." *Feminist review* 89, no. 1 (2008): 1-15.

Recommended

Angelique Nixon and Rosamond King, "Embodied Theories: Local Knowledge(s), Community Organizing, and Feminist Methodologies in Caribbean Sexuality Studies," *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* 7 (2013): 1-15. [Available here](#)

Anna Carastathis, *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016)

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality (Key Concepts)* (New York: Polity, 2016).

March 7. Week 7-- Latinidad

Karma Chavez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (University of Illinois Press, 2013)

We will attend her lecture from 4-6 in the ILC hub

Recommended

Rosamond King, *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (2016)

Theresa Delgadillo. *Latina Lives in Milwaukee*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: NYU Press, 2014)

Laura Gutiérrez, *Performing Mexicanidad: Vendidas y Cabaretaras on the Transnational Stage* (University of Texas Press, 2010)

Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Duke, 2011)

Spring Break

March 21. Week 8--Transgender Studies

Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah, "Introduction." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1.1-2 (2014): 1-18.

Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?" *Women Studies Quarterly* 36:3-4 (2008): 11-22.

Toby Beauchamp, "Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and U.S. State Surveillance after 9/11" in Susan Stryker, Aren Aizura, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (Routledge, 2013).

Kay Siebler, "Transgender Transitions: Sex/Gender Binaries in The Digital Age." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 16.1 (2012): 74-99.

Prosser, Jay. 1998, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex." Stryker, Susan, and Stephen Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Taylor & Francis, 2006. 257-280.

Irving, Dan. "Elusive Subjects: Notes on the Relationship between Critical Political Economy and Trans Studies." A. Finn Enke, ed. *Transfeminist Perspectives: In and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*. Temple UP, 2012, 153-169.

Option 1—5-7pp paper due

Recommended

Marcia Ochoa, *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela* (Duke, 2014)

A. Finn Enke, *Transfeminist Perspectives in and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies* (Temple University Press, 2012).

Susan Stryker, Aren Aizura, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (Routledge, 2013).

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008)

Julia Serrano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Feminism* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2007).

Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Harvard, 2004).

March 28. Week 9--Science

Angela Willey, *Undoing Monogamy: The Politics of Science and the Possibilities of Biology* (Duke, 2016).

Recommended

Banu Subramaniam, *Ghost Stories for Darwin* (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

Melinda E. Cooper, *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (University of Washington, 2008)

April 4. Week 10—Reproductive Politics and Sustainability

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke, 2016).

Recommended

Laura Briggs, "[Imperialism as a Way of Life](#): Thinking Sex and Gender in American Empire," *Radical History Review* Special Issue: Sexing Empire 123 (October 2015).

April 11. Week 11—Queer/Trans/Left Politics

Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (Pluto Press, 2015)

Recommended

Emily Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (UC Press, 2016)

Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Duke, 2013).

April 18—No class. Monday Schedule.**Option 1—5-7pp paper due****April 25. Week 11-- Settler Colonialism and the Problems of Citizenship**

Amy Brandzel, *Against Citizenship, The Violence of the Normative* (University of Illinois Press, 2015).

Recommended

Joanne Barker, ed. *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Duke, April 28, 2017)

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*

Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*

Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity*

J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty* (Duke, 2008)

Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (2015).

Scott Morgansen, *The Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (University of Minnesota, 2011).

May 2. Week 12-- Trafficking/Transnational Feminisms

Jennifer Suchland, *Economies of Violence: Transnationalism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking* (Duke, 2015)

Recommended

Vijayarasa, Ramona. *Sex, Slavery and the Trafficked Woman: Myths and Misconceptions about Trafficking and Its Victims*. Routledge, 2016.

Soderlund, Gretchen. "Running from the rescuers: New US crusades against sex trafficking and the rhetoric of abolition." *NWSA Journal* 17.3 (2005): 64-87.

Svati Shah, *Street Corner Secrets: Sex, Work, and Migration in the City of Mumbai* (Duke, 2014).

Fredrik De Boer, "Yes, Carceral Feminism is a Thing,"

<http://fredrikdeboer.com/2014/10/18/yes-carceral-feminism-is-a-thing/>

Victoria Law, "Against Carceral Feminism" *Jacobin*

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/against-carceral-feminism/>

Elizabeth Bernstein, "Militarized humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: the politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary antitrafficking campaigns," *Signs* 36:1 (2010): 45-72.

Carrie N. Baker, "An intersectional analysis of sex trafficking films." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 12, no. 1 (2014): 208-226.

Shih, Elena. 2016. "Not in My 'Backyard Abolitionism:' Vigilante Rescue against American Sex Trafficking." *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 59, number 1, pp. 66-90. [Online access here.](#)

May 9—Final Papers due