

## ***Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies 691b: Issues in Feminist Research***

### **Course Information**

<b>Professor</b>	Miliann Kang Associate Professor, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, UMass Amherst
<b>Office Location &amp; Number</b>	Bartlett 73 (basement), 577-0710 or 545-1922 (WGSS office)
<b>Office Hours</b>	Thurs 2:30-3:30 pm and by appointment
<b>Email</b>	mkang@wost.umass.edu
<b>Class Info</b>	Spring 2013, Thurs 4-6:30, Bartlett 274

### **Readings**

**Required Text:** Available at Food for Thought Books, 106 East Pleasant St. 413-253-5432 in Amherst Center and are also on 3-hour/overnight reserve in the library.

Additional readings are available on Moodle.

Hemmings, Clare. 2011. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4916-7

Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar. 2006. *Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN-13: 978-0-8166-4770-5

### **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

This graduate course on *Issues in Feminist Research* examines theories, debates and practices regarding feminist epistemologies (how we know) and methodologies (how we produce what we know). Questions we will explore include: What is feminist research? What makes feminist research feminist? Why is feminist research important? How do we do feminist research? Who are the subjects of feminist research? What are the stakes and contexts which shape the production of feminist research? What are the different genealogies, current practices and future directions of feminist research? Is my own research feminist, do I want it to be, and what are the challenges and rewards of doing feminist research?

Central themes and issues that will guide our inquiry include: the politics of knowledge construction; power and authority in asserting knowledge claims; practices of writing, representation and interpretation; voice, subjectivity, reflexivity and authenticity; ethics, accountability and reciprocity in relations with research subjects and audiences; disciplinary and inter/disciplinary boundaries; and goals, contexts, applications and limitations of feminist research. Based on the areas of interest and specialization of the students, we may delve more deeply into different methods, such as ethnography, oral history, archival research, participatory action research, surveys, focus groups, deconstruction and discourse analysis.

The structure of the course is designed to support students' progress in their degree programs while also challenging them to critique, intervene in and move beyond their own disciplinary knowledge and practices. In particular, students are expected to engage with research issues related to the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality which analyze the co-construction of gender, sexuality, race, class, citizenship, nation, ability and other categories of difference.

Depending on where the student is in their own program and research, this can take different forms, from bringing feminist methodological debates into a literature review for comprehensive exams, or proposing specific feminist research practices and design in a dissertation or grant proposal, analyzing issues related to research in progress, or working through writing issues toward publishing a chapter or article. The course aims to build an interdisciplinary community of feminist scholars to provide support and engagement in carrying out feminist research projects and interrogating their theoretical, substantive, ethical and political implications. This course is a 3 credit seminar for graduate students who are currently accepted into the WGSS Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies. Other students will be admitted based on their background, interests and current research projects and their intention to apply to the certificate program.

## Learning Goals for Students

- 1) to gain knowledge of key issues and critical debates in feminist research
- 2) to make meaningful contributions and interventions into these issues and debates
- 3) to apply their knowledge of feminist research in furthering their own research projects
- 4) to create a supportive and rigorous learning environment and intellectual community
- 5) to participate in the larger projects of feminist scholarship and transformation

## Requirements

This course follows a seminar format, which means that it is based mostly on class discussion and student presentations. I see my role as instructor to facilitate and contextualize debates, rather than to summarize readings or dictate interpretations. This format requires that you come prepared to think critically, articulate ideas coherently, listen attentively and respect the diversity perspectives of your classmates.

I have designed the assignments to facilitate engagement with the course readings, to foster informed discussions and to encourage you to make connections to your own research projects. I ask each of you to contribute to building a classroom environment based on trust, confidentiality and community while at the same time challenging each other in intellectually rigorous and respectful discussions.

- **Class participation (20%)** Class participation includes regular attendance and informed contributions to discussion. This does not mean dominating discussion, but also means asking questions, engaging with other students and allowing for silences and pauses for reflection. You are expected to print or download all readings and bring them to class with you, along with written or typed notes, questions and comments to inform your participation. You are also responsible for reading the comments on Moodle (see below) and bringing interesting threads into classroom discussion and building on them. You are expected to attend every class session and to let me know the reason for absences ahead of time. In order for an absence to count as excused, you need to post a reflection paper and comments for the week that you will miss according to the regular schedule below, or arrange an alternative if this is not possible. In addition, throughout the semester, students will be expected to provide informed peer feedback to other students' work.
- **Reflection Papers and Comments on Moodle (30% - 5 papers total, 2-3 single-spaced pages posted by Tues 10pm; comments to peer feedback groups members posted by Thurs 10am)**  
You will write five reflection papers on the readings (roughly every other week from weeks 2-10, although you can select the weeks that you will write them). While these need not be formal essays, they should be succinct, cogent and well-organized. Each paper should: 1) identify and critique key

concepts and debates in that week's assigned readings (you do not have to discuss all the readings equally but should address themes that emerge across readings); 2) draw connections to issues in your own research; and 3) pose questions for further reflection and discussion. If you post a reflection paper after the deadline of Tues 10p, it will not count. Every week that you have posted a reflection, you should read responses to your paper and be prepared to dialogue with students who have commented. Whether or not you post a reflection paper that week, you should read all the other reflection papers and come to class prepared to discuss them. You will be assigned to a peer feedback group (these will change over the semester) and you will post responses to your group member's papers whenever they post reflection papers. These comments should be clear, respectful and constructive and refer specifically to points in their papers. It is fine to agree or disagree with others' arguments, but these critiques must focus on intellectual debates and refrain from ad hominem attacks.

- **Research Portfolio (50%)**

**Book Review (3-5 double spaced pages 10%) due Tues, Feb 19, posted to Moodle by 10p, bring hard copy to class on Feb 21.** Students will write a book review of a recent and/or influential text in their area of research and critique it from the perspective of debates in feminist research. You will discuss at least three assigned readings to address issues of epistemologies, methodologies and methods in your chosen book. The goal of this assignment is to apply the knowledge you are developing in this class toward critiquing research in your field, as well as to produce a publishable book review that you could then submit to a journal. You will post your reviews on Moodle and read and give feedback for the next class session on your group's papers.

**Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography (10%) due Tues, March 12, posted to Moodle by 10p, bring hard copy to class on March 14** Your prospectus (4-6 double-spaced pages not including bibliography) should address the following four questions: 1) What is your topic and what do you hope to contribute to the conversation; 2) Why is it important for feminist research; 3) Who are the stakeholders and audience you hope to reach; and 4) How will you design and carry out your project? In addition, you will include a two-part annotated bibliography (3-5 sentence annotations explaining the importance of each text for your project). Part One will include 5-10 sources related to your research topic (these sources can provide substantive background and/or relevant theoretical frameworks). Part Two will include 5-10 sources on feminist research that address the epistemologies, methodologies or methods in your study. In your annotations, be specific about how each text informs your study. Some of these can be assigned texts but at least three in each part should be sources you have located on your own.

**Class Presentation (5%)** During the last few weeks of class, you will sign up for a date to present (either individually or in a group) on your final project. In addition to presenting on your own research, you will draw connections to important debates that we have addressed in the course.

**Final Paper (12-15 double-spaced pages, not including bibliography – 25%) due May 2, 3pm in my mailbox** (Note: No e-mail attached papers will be accepted—hard copies only) A stand-alone research paper or a proposal for a larger research project, this paper will analyze an actual or possible project, incorporating interdisciplinary feminist debates regarding epistemologies, methodologies and method. The paper should demonstrate understanding and critical thinking regarding relevant issues in feminist research that we have addressed throughout the semester, and examine ways that these issues relate to your particular research project.

- **Academic Honesty** Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University's academic honesty policies, especially proper citation practices, and adhering to them. Most incidences of dishonesty or plagiarism are unintentional, but ignorance is not an excuse. ([http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/#D](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/#D))
- **Accommodations.** If you need accommodations, I will work with you to support your learning and your ability to complete assignments. Please discuss your needs for accommodation with me directly and access services through Disability Services (<http://www.umass.edu/disability/current.html>).

## Course Schedule

The syllabus is subject to change. I do my best not to make excessive or last minute changes, but you can expect some adjustments as I try to be responsive to students' interests and needs as they develop over the course of the semester.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

**Feb 19** Book Reviews posted on Moodle by 10 pm, bring hard copy to class on Feb 21

**March 12:** Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography posted on Moodle by 10p, hard copy due in class March 14

**April 11, 18 and 25:** Student Presentations, Discussion and Feedback

**May 2: FINAL PAPERS DUE by 3 pm (hardcopies in my mailbox in 208 Bartlett Hall)**

### Week One

- Jan 24 Introduction to the Course: What is Feminist Research?**
- Overview of course content, assignments and expectations. Self-introductions. Form peer feedback groups.

### Week Two

- Jan 31 What Makes Feminist Research Feminist?: Epistemologies, Methodologies, Methods**
- Sprague, "The Field of Vision" and "Seeing through Science"
  - Collins "Black Feminist Epistemology"
  - Harding "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology"
  - Narayan "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non-Western Feminist"

### Week Three

- Feb 7 Does Feminist Research Have To Be About Gender?: Intersectionality and De-Universalizing Gender**
- Butler and Weed "Introduction" in *A Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism*
  - McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality"
  - Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"
  - Dolmage and Lewieki-Wilson "Refiguring Rhetorica: Linking Feminist Rhetoric and Disability Studies"
  - Luibhéid, "Queer/Migration"

### Week Four

- Feb 14 Who Are the Subjects of Feminist Research?: Subjectivity, Reflexivity and Positionality (e-reserves)**
- Khan, "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age"
  - Hurtado "Relating to Privilege"
  - Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters, The Social Construction of Whiteness*, Chap1-2
  - Twine, France Winddance. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies"

### Week Five

- Feb 21 What are the Stakes of Feminist Research?: Political Transformation, Institutionalization and the Context of Neoliberalism**
- BOOK REVIEWS  
post to Moodle by Feb 20 at 10 pm
- Mohanty, "U.S. Empire and the Project of Women's Studies"
  - Ong, "Higher Learning in Global Spaces"
  - Rooney, "The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What it Reveals about Epistemology 'Proper'"
  - Fonow and Cook, "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy"

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### Week Six

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- Feb 28**      **What are the Ethics of Feminist Research?: Morality, Accountability and IRBs**  
**For this week's reflection papers, see this assignment**
- Look on-line for your discipline's statement of research ethics, print it out and post it, read and critique it from the perspective of feminist research ethics using the following readings
  - Brown, "Thinking in Time: An Epilogue on Ethics and Politics"
  - Preissle, "Feminist Research Ethics"
  - Jaggar "Globalizing Feminist Ethics"
  - Rollins Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers, Introduction
  - Halse and Honey, "Unraveling Ethics: Illuminating the Moral Dilemmas of Research Ethics"

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### Week Seven

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- March 7**      **What are the Boundaries of Feminist Research?: Disciplinarity and Inter/Disciplinarity**
- Kitch and Fonow, "Women's Studies Dissertations"
  - Lee, Rachel, "Notes From the (Non)field"
  - Donaldson, Laura et al. "Subversive Couplings"
  - Subramaniam, "Moored Metamorphoses: A Retrospective Essay on Feminist Science Studies"

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### Week Eight

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- March 14**      **Where Has Feminist Research Been and Where is it Going?:**  
**Tues March 12, 10pm post prospectus and biblio**      **Genealogies, Conflicts and Directions**
- C. Hemmings. *Why Stories Matter*. Part One.

**MARCH 21 - SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS**

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### Week Nine

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- March 28**      **Why Do Feminist Stories Matter?: Citational Practices and Affect**  
C. Hemmings. *Why Stories Matter*. Part Two.

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### Week Ten

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- April 4**      **How Do We Do Feminist Research?: Power, Politics and Participatory Action**
- Sangtin Writers, *Playing with Fire*
  - Eubanks, "Double Bound"
  - Russell, et al "Merge/Emerge: Collaboration in Graduate School"

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### Week Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen

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**April 11**      **Student Presentations and Feedback**

**April 18**      **Student Presentations and Feedback**

**April 25**      **Student Presentations and Feedback**

**May 2**      **FINAL PAPERS DUE by 3 pm (hardcopies in my mailbox in 208 Bartlett Hall or under my office door in Bartlett 73)**

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