Fall 2007

WOMS 820
FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES
THURSDAYS 7-9:55 PM, HUM 381

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Office hours: Tu/W 10-12 and by appointment
415-338-4506

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to feminist research methodologies, preparing students to critically analyze research studies, develop research skills, and initiate their master's projects. Throughout the class we will address the relationship between the knowledge being produced, the author producing it, and the methods used. We will discuss what counts as evidence in different disciplines and what constitutes feminist research methodologies. Some of the methodologies we will discuss in this class include: cultural studies, historiography, literary studies, ethnography, media studies, and oral history. By focusing on a number of methods used across a range of disciplines, this course will prepare students for a reflexive and dynamic encounter with their own research topics. In addition to short assignments due throughout the semester, each student will also select a research area, begin to systematically narrow their topic, review the literature in the field, develop a methodology for data collection and analysis, and begin to analyze their materials. Throughout the semester, we will connect our discussion of research methodologies with the larger issues of women and gender studies as an institutional setting, addressing the intersecting goals of teaching, research, writing, and activism.

REQUIRED TEXTS


There will also be articles available via electronic reserve (ER).
Course Requirements

- Attendance and Participation 10%
- Leading class discussion 20%
- Commentaries 20%
- Thesis prospectus 10%
- Final Paper 40%

Course Policies and Assignments:

Attendance and Participation
Students are expected to contribute significantly to discussion each week by reading the assigned texts before class and asking or responding to questions in ways that demonstrate you have grappled with the texts. Each week the discussion-leader will email questions to the group. There is a lot of reading in this class, and it is essential that each student comes to class having completed the week’s readings, and having reviewed and considered the discussion questions. (10%)

Leading Discussion
Each week a different student will lead class for the full session, emailing discussion questions to the group at least 72 hours in advance (questions should be posted by the Monday before class). During the class itself, discussion-leaders should not simply review or summarize the readings for the week - though a small amount of summary can be helpful - but lead us all in a rigorous and thoughtful discussion by doing most or all of the following:

1) clarifying key terms (e.g., history, knowledge, ideology);
2) raising questions about the readings, locating passages for discussion, offering critiques of the readings, and connecting the week’s readings to those from other weeks;
3) discussing the relationship between research questions, methods, and analysis as presented in the readings;
4) situating the text within the larger context of "feminist studies";
5) providing background on the disciplinary area of the week’s reading, outlining key texts, interventions, and debates within the field. Doing so will situate the implications of feminist methodological interventions.
6) bringing in outside materials that explain key works or key scholars in the field;
7) and providing a brief (1 page) handout with key terms, important texts, dates, and/or figures identified. This handout will contribute to your grade for leading class discussion. I encourage you to meet with me ahead of time to strategize your discussion questions, topics, and handouts. (20%)

Commentaries
A typed, double-spaced, 1-page response to the readings is due on selected weeks. These are short analytical essays that should link the readings together rather than attempt to summarize them. (20%)
**Thesis preparation**

There are a variety of assignments due over the course of the semester that will help you prepare to write your thesis. These are graded credit/no-credit and will help prepare you for your thesis prospectus.

**Thesis Prospectus**

A 3-page prospectus of your final paper is due in class on Thursday November 8. Your prospectus should clearly articulate the following: your proposed topic, methodology, projected argument, and annotated bibliography (or discussion of research materials). Your prospectus should include at least one page (double-spaced) of continuous prose that outlines the argumentative arc of your paper.

**NOTE:** there are two broad options for your final paper, which means there are two broad shapes that your prospectus might take. Before you begin your prospectus, I encourage you to re-read the section below on Final Research Papers, and to talk with me. (10%)

**Final Research Paper**

Each student will write a final research paper on her/his proposed topic, which is due in class on Thursday December 6. There are two broad options for this paper. (1) You may write a literature review of research in your field, assessing and evaluating the dominant themes and debates that have shaped your own encounter with your object of inquiry. In other words, this paper will evaluate the previous scholarship in your area, addressing both content/arguments and methods. Such a paper would likely be a working draft of your thesis introduction. (2) You may use your chosen methodology to analyze your own research topic, writing a paper that might potentially be the draft of a thesis chapter. In either case, you must rigorously analyze and evaluate your texts. Papers should be 10-12 double-spaced typed pages (not including footnotes and bibliography) in a standard font. Your footnotes and bibliography should be in a consistent style, preferably M.L.A. Late papers will be marked down by a third of a grade for each day that they are late (including weekends). (40%)

**Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgement, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an “F” grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Humanities will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

It is not ok to submit work for this class that has been submitted to another class for academic credit.

**Accessibility**

I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. You are invited to communicate with me at the outset of the course or at your discretion about any accommodations that will improve your experience of or access to the course. You can also contact the Disability Resource Center at 415-338-2472 (Voice/TDD).
### SCHEDULE OF READINGS

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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“Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research”  
| **Thurs September 6** | **What is Knowledge?**                      | Teresa Córdova, “Power and Knowledge: Colonialism in the Academy” (28pp.) *ER*  
Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (20pp.) *ER*  
Michel Foucault, “History of Systems of Thought” (5pp.) *ER*  
Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (60pp.) *ER* |
| **Thurs September 13** | **Who is the Author?**                      | Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author” (6pp.) *ER*  
Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” (19pp.) *ER*  
| **** | **Thesis project proposal due** | Identify your research questions(s), possible methods, and your project’s contribution to the field. (1-2 pages) |
| **Thurs September 20** | **What is Experience?**                     | Joan Scott, “The Evidence of Experience” (18pp.) *ER*  
Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (29pp.) *ER*  
Shari Stone-Mediatore, “Chandra Mohanty and the Revaluing of Experience” (17pp.) *ER* |

**Commentary due**

**Thurs September 13**

Jillian Sandell, Women Studies graduate studies coordinator, will come to class to discuss deadlines for completing an MA in Women Studies in Spring 2008.

Bring research topic to class.

**Thesis project proposal due**

Suzanne Holguin from The Committee for the Protection of Human and Animal Subjects will come to explain some of the protocols needed for interviews and surveys. Before class, each student should consult the following website:  
[http://www.sfsu.edu/~protocol/](http://www.sfsu.edu/~protocol/)

Please also try to attend my talk for WOMS lecture series: "Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History" Sept. 13, 11-12:15  HUM 383.
Commentary due.

Thurs September 27  History and Historiography


Commentary due.

Thurs October 4  Interviews, Oral Histories, and Life Narratives

Ruth Frankenberg, “White on White: The Interviewees and the Method” (20 pp.) ER
Naheed Islam, “Research as an Act of Betrayal: Researching Race in an Asian Community in Los Angeles” (46 pp.) ER
Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, “A Tool Kit: Twenty Strategies for Reading Life Narratives” (14 pp.) ER
John Howard, "Ones and Twos" (30 pp) ER

Commentary due

Thurs October 11  Ethnography, Anthropology, Art Activism

Coco Fusco, *English is Broken Here* 3-61. 89-144.
bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" (17pp.) ER

**Literature review plus initial bibliography due.** Outline the bodies of literature you will be using to frame your research project. Provide brief descriptions of key works, and identify key authors who have contributed to the field. (1-2 pages)

Thurs October 18  Cultural and Visual Representations


**Methods discussion due.** Connect your methods to your research question and discuss the rationale behind your method. (1-2 pages)

Thurs October 25  Ethnography

Instead of class, please attend one session at the Oral History Association meetings in Oakland, Oct 24-28, Marriott Oakland City Center. I prefer that you attend either
1) Transforming Community, Thurs 9/25, 3-4:45 pm
2) Presidential Reception and Black Panther Plenary, Thurs 9/25, 6:30-9 pm
For the conference schedule and locations visit:  
[http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/org_am_oakland.html](http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/org_am_oakland.html)

If you can not attend the conference OR if you would like to write an extra credit commentary (1-page), read Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* pp.1-177. The commentary on this text is due 9/25/07 via email attachment.

Thurs November 1  Visual Narrative and Ethnography
Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” (19pp.) ER
Ki Namaste “Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory’s Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity” (20pp.) ER
bell hooks “Is Paris Burning?” (4pp.) ER
Coco Fusco, English is Broken Here, 65-77.

Film screened in class: Paris is Burning, Jennie Livingston, dir., 1992 (76 min.)

Commentary due
Also due: 1-2 page summary of the OHA session you attended last week.

Thurs November 8       The Poetics and Politics of Exhibitions

This class will meet at the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, 657 Mission Street, #300 (at 3rd). Visit http://www.glbthistory.org/index.html prior to class.

Please visit an exhibition or museum prior to the next class meeting. For next week, each student will prepare comments about the representational practices used by the museum.

Thesis Prospectus due.

Thurs November 15       Film and Media Studies
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (12pp.) ER
Steve Neale, “Masculinity as Spectacle” (11pp.) ER
Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “Tropes of Empire” (40pp.) ER
Gillian Rose, Visual Methodologies pp.107-140.

Commentary on visual methodologies. Drawing from assigned readings, discuss the representational practices used by the museum visited (1-2 pages).

Thurs November 22       No class: holiday

Thurs November 29       Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies
Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, “Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity” (33pp.) ER
Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, “Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies: Beyond the Marxism/ Poststructuralism/Feminism Divides” (14pp.) ER
Ella Shohat, “Introduction” to Talking Visions (60pp.) ER

Commentary due.

Thurs December 6        Final Papers due in class.
Each student will prepare a short (5-10 minute) presentation of their final paper.
Full Citations for Articles


