

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH

WMST 410/610
Fall 2015
Innovation 330
Monday 4:30-7:10

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Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement

Women and Gender Studies seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Required Readings

Text: Sprague, Joey. 2005. *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*. New York: Altamira.

Blackboard: A small number of readings are available on the course BlackBoard site and are denoted as (BB) in the schedule. All of these readings are required.

Course Description

Provides an introduction to feminist approaches to social research. Students collect, analyze, and write-up research data as they examine many of the central methodological issues and questions raised by feminist scholars. These include feminist critiques of positivism, feminist standpoint theory, social action research models, and feminist engagements with ethical concerns in doing

research with human subjects. Emphasizes a learning-by-doing approach to prepare students to conduct research. * This course is designated as an inquiry level course and its development is being supported by OSCAR, Mason's Students as Scholars Program.

"Students will articulate a scholarly question; engage in the key elements of the scholarly process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results of scholarship within a broader context."

Why Methods?

Our approach to this class is informed by the notion that theory and practice are intimately connected. This is always true, but particularly so in fields like women and gender studies where theorists study, describe, and are often members of historically marginalized groups who seek to change the status quo. Methods courses are often thought to be dry and boring and simply one more requirement to check off one's list. In fact, methods courses, when designed well, give students the tools to dig beneath the rhetoric and test claims as well as test others' conclusions about the world. In fact, all everyday arguments are grounded in methods, some of them good and some of them not so good. Claims made on bumper stickers and in slogans, arguments made by protesters as well as casual acquaintances, and appeals to change laws, practices, terminology, and other areas of everyday life reflect data generated by applying methods to the social world, whether they are made explicit or simply implied and accepted as common sense.

As the starting point for this class, we offer our own argument for our investigation: rather than being a hindrance, methods is a necessary and important tool for making real and productive changes in our world. Let us test this claim throughout the semester and return to it as we move through our readings and assignments. In addition to exposing students to a variety of methods and epistemologies that feminist scholars embrace, we will engage many of these methods in order to become intimately familiar with them. These exercises will help develop critical thinking skills the application of methods allows us to not only test out claims about the world, but also allows us to test the utility of feminist theory and the claims others have made. Once you have learned more about methods you become not only a better researcher but a better consumer of research because you are able to evaluate the methods others have used to make these claims.

Learning Objectives

- To develop a familiarity with diverse methodologies and epistemologies employed by feminist scholars.
- To understand the relationship between theory and methods
- To practice methodological approaches to that one can assess the utility and suitability of employing various methods in order to answer different types of research questions
- To develop skills to assess the methodological approaches of other scholars and apply this to their conclusions
- To be able to write a research question and design appropriate methods with which to research it

Course Requirements

Assignments UNDERGRADUATE

Experiments 20%
Surveys 20%
Observations 20%

Interviews 20%
Final Presentation 10%
Participation 10%

Assignments GRADUATE

Experiments 20%
Surveys 20%
Observations 20%

Interviews 20%
Final Paper and Presentation: 20%

*Graduate students will be encouraged to conduct the in-class exercises around the topic you hope to explore in their thesis. This gives you a chance to explore the utility of different methods as appropriate for answering your research question. (We find this to be a big challenge for graduate students!) Graduate students will conduct *an additional* mini-project that is in line with your thesis proposal (secondary data analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis) and write a paper that analyzes this method and its utility for the research question they hope to answer. This project will be worth 20%.

Teams

Projects will be done in teams. Teams will remain fixed for the entire semester. Teams cannot include a mix of both graduate and undergraduate students. Students are encouraged to work on various topics in their teams so that each team member's interests are explored. Graduate students are encouraged to examine issues related to their research interests. Teams are generally 2-3 people.

Papers

For each of the primary methods we will spend one class period learning about the method, reading an example of a study that utilizes the method, and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the method. We will conclude the first class period brainstorming in teams ideas for research questions that would be appropriate for that method. In the subsequent class period(s) we will have workshops that teach students how to analyze data and write up the paper. For each method, students will be required to write a paper in which they report on the process of utilizing the method. Student will outline the method employed, discuss the actual implementation of the method, and analyze the "results" of using the method in terms of strengths and weaknesses as well as relevant technical features (internal and external validity, reliability, causality). Papers are due based on the dates noted in the syllabus.

Participation

Participation means more than coming to class, it means being *fully present* in class. It means coming to class ready to participate (having done the readings and being otherwise prepared). It means participating in class discussion and debates. It means asking questions. If you are not

sure what it means to actively participate in class, ask! On the first day of class we will establish some ground rules for participation and you will be expected to adhere to these.

Because this class relies on discussion it is very important that you come to class. Your attendance plays a major role in your participation grade. You can't participate if you don't attend!

Final presentation

On the last day of class, teams will give a presentation on the project that they feel they learned the most from, had the most surprises, and/or best illustrated feminist methods for them. Presentations can be made via powerpoint, posterboard or skit.

Graduate students will give a formal presentation on the last day of class in the style of a conference presentation.

*NOTE: All written assignments will be uploaded via blackboard. In case of BB failure, we will ask you to email your assignments as an attachment. Any change to this procedure will be noted in class.

Papers are not accepted late without prior approval. Papers that are approved for an extension will be assigned a penalty, typically 10% per day.

Grade Scale

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 95-100% A | 86-89% B+ | 76-79% C+ | 66-69% D+ |
| 90-94% A- | 83-85% B | 73-75% C | 63-65% D |
| | 80-82% B- | 70-72% C- | 60-62% D- |
| | | | Below 60% F |

DUE DATES:

October 19: Ethnography paper due

November 9: Survey paper due

November 23: Interview paper due

December 7: Experiment paper due

December 15: Final paper due graduate students ONLY

Schedule—Which is always subject to change!

Week One (Monday August 31, 2015): Getting Started

Introductions, syllabus review, class climate discussion. What does it mean to do feminist research?
Readings: Sprague Chapter 1; Fuchs-Epstein, Baca Zinn & Thorton Dill

Monday September 7, 2014: Labor Day, no class

Weeks Two (September 14): Variety of Feminist Approaches

During our class sessions each of these two weeks we will have Women & Gender Studies affiliated faculty come to class to give presentations about the ways in which they apply feminist research practices into the research in their disciplinary areas.

Readings: To be provided by the guests.

Week Three (September 21): Theory and Methods Intersect & Ethics

Theory-Methods wheel. How does feminist theor(ies) inform feminist approaches to research? What is intersectional theory and how does it shape methodological and epistemological approaches?

A discussion of ethics in research with special attention to marginalized populations (Tuskegee Experiments, Holmesburg Prison, Humphries)

Readings: Sprague Chapter 2 & 3; Bonilla-Silva (Chapter 1, BB)

Guest: Jen Stevens, Research Librarian

Film: *Acres of Skin*

Week Four: (September 28, 2014): Ethnography design

Discussion of observational techniques including participatory observation, non-participant observation and ethnography. Sampling and variable construction. Special focus on ethics of observation and ethnography.

Readings: Sprague Chapter 5, Amy Best (BB), Ethnography write up

Week Five: (October 5): Ethnography write-up

Week Six: (October 13) *note the day change: Survey Design

Discussion of survey methods, various type of closed and open ended questions, question writing, stems/responses, reliability, validity, sampling techniques

Reading: Sprague Chapter 4; BB, Survey write up

Week Seven: (October 19): Survey—data analysis

***Ethnography paper due!**

Week Eight: (October 26): Survey—data analysis continued; write up

Week Nine: (November 2): Interview Design

Discussion of interviewing. Question design, building rapport, sampling. How do surveys and interviews compliment each other?

Readings: Sprague Chapter 6; Hattery CSA paper (BB), Interview write up

Week Ten: (November 9): Interview write up

***Survey paper due!**

Week Eleven: (November 16): Experimental Design

Discussion of the experimental method, causation and correlation, spuriousness, internal and external validity, random assignment versus random sampling, analyzing experimental data. Special focus on ethics of experiments.

Readings: Sprague Chapter 7; Goar (BB), Correll (BB), Women But Not Nearly Enough (BB), Experiment write up

Week Twelve: (November 23): Experiment Analysis and write up

***Interview paper due**

Week Thirteen: (November 30): Final papers, presentations, experiment write up last questions

Week Fourteen: (December 7): Last day of class, Presentations

***Experiment paper due**

CAMPUS POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely.

What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS:

Students must use their Mason email accounts receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

YOU MUST CHECK YOUR EMAIL DAILY AS THIS WILL BE OUR PRIMARY MEANS OF

COMMUNICATION WITH YOU. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS OR DIRECTIONS DISSEMINATED ON EMAIL WILL BE TREATED THE SAME AS FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS IN THE SYLLABUS!!!!

CAMPUS RESOURCES

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see us and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications. It is best to make an appointment; walk-ins are accepted if there are openings at that time. Assistance is also offered online. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this free service!

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: "Ask a librarian" <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CENTER; JC 240K (703) 993-2986; <http://wmst.gmu.edu/center/>

The Women and Gender Studies Center sponsors programs and events that are relevant to this course. It has a library of material that may be checked out, as well as a course reserve with all of the books that are used in this and every other WMST course. Course reserves may not be checked out, but students are free to use the materials in the center. We also support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities.

We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. During the first week of classes you will be emailed instructions for registering for free printing.

HOURS: Monday-Thursday: 9-7; Friday: 9-5

Women and Gender Studies

Calendar of Events / Academic Year 2015-2016

wmst.gmu.edu

Facebook: MasonWGST

Twitter: @MasonWGST

All events are open to all Mason students, faculty and staff unless indicated.

Welcome Week Pizza Party

Welcome Week Pizza Party with Women and Gender Studies & LGBTQ Resources

Wednesday, September 2, 2015 / 12:00pm-2:00pm

240K Johnson Center – Women and Gender Studies Center

Come meet or re-connect with students, staff and faculty members of Women and Gender Studies and LGBTQ Resources over pizza and soda.

Fear 2 Freedom

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

4:00PM-7:00PM/ Johnson Center Dewberry Hall

<http://fear2freedom.onmason.com>

Join us, as we assemble hundreds of “Fear 2 Freedom” (F2F) after-care kits which are an essential element to healing provided for those affected by sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, and sex trafficking. The F2F kits that we assemble at Mason, will be distributed to our very own Student Health Services, Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education Services, and local area hospitals in Fairfax and Prince William counties

About the Fear to Freedom Program at Mason

Fear 2 Freedom is a global non-profit dedicated to redeem and restore the lives of those affected by sexual assault, bringing them hope and healing. Our goal is to raise awareness of sexual abuse, bring change through vigilance and healing through compassion. We are in the business of “restoring joy” to those who have been sexually assaulted, encouraging them on their own journey from fear to freedom.

Cultures of Dispossession: Feminism, Migration, and Displacement Symposium

Pregnant on Arrival: Making the 'Illegal' Immigrant

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Eithne Luibheid, Ph.D

Professor of Gender and Women's Studies & Director of Undergraduate Studies

The University of Arizona

Thursday, September 17, 2015 / 12:00am-1:00pm / Johnson Center Meeting Room E, #334

1:00PM - Book sales and signing – 240K Johnson Center – Women & Gender Studies Center

Crossing Over Film Screening and Panel Discussion with Filmmakers

Thursday, September 17, 2015 / 4:00pm-8:00pm / Johnson Center Cinema

“Crossing Over” documents the sacrifices and triumphs of three transgender women who fled persecution in Mexico to seek asylum in the United States. The film highlights the challenges faced by people living in the shadows and shows that for transgender immigrants living at the intersection of being transgender and being undocumented, their fight for survival isn’t over when they cross the border.

Cultures of Dispossession: Feminism, Migration, and Displacement Symposium

Friday, September 18, 2015 / 12:30pm-7:30pm / Merten Hall 1201

A day of scholarly presentations and discussions on the intersections of feminism, migration and displacement.

Fall for the Book

Fall for the Book Well-Being Scholar: Dr. Beth Cabrera

Beyond Happy: Women, Work, and Well-Being

Tuesday, September 29, 2015 / Harris Theatre

4:00PM-5:30PM

Event includes light reception, book sales, and book signing.

Author: Holly Kearl

<http://hollykearl.com/>

Wednesday, September 30, 2015

1:30pm / Research Hall 163

Holly Kearl is an author who is best known for her book, *Stop Street Harassment*. She is a National Street Harassment Expert. Kearl oversees the Legal Advocacy Council. Holly is an expert on the topic of gender-based violence, including street harassment and sexual harassment in schools and on college campuses. She is the founder of the nonprofit organization Stop Street Harassment, a published author and a consultant for organizations like the United Nations, the Aspen Institute, and the US State Department.

Author: Leora Tanenbaum

<http://www.leoratanenbaum.com/>

Thursday, October 1, 2015

3:00pm / Research Hall 163

Leora Tanenbaum's newest book is *I Am Not a Slut: Slut-Shaming in the Age of the Internet*. This book offers a fresh perspective on the phenomenon of teenage girls and young women labeling each other "sluts" and "hos." It has been named one of 11 "groundbreaking books about women making history" by Bustle magazine, and it is a sequel to *Slut! Growing Up Female With a Bad Reputation*, in which Leora coined the term "slut-bashing." *Slut!* is a staple in sociology and gender/women's studies courses on college campuses around the United States. It was chosen by *Ecosalon* magazine as one of the 20 "must-read" books of all time for women.

Take Back the Night

Take Back the Night Info Session

Tuesday, September 8, 2015 / 12:00pm-2:00pm / Johnson Center Meeting Room F

Come and learn how you can get involved with this year's Take Back the Night on October 6, 2015.

Take Back the Night

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 / 7:00PM / JC North Plaza by the Clock Tower

Take Back the Night is an annual gathering held during Turn Off the Violence Week in support of the end of sexual and domestic violence and symbolizing a safe place for all. The event is an internationally held march to celebrate survivors of sexual assault domestic violence and understand the impact that rape, other sexual assaults, and dating/partner violence have on our own community and around the world.

Graduate Student and Alumni Happy Hour

Come and meet Mason graduate students and alumni.

All graduate students and alumni are welcome. Beer, wine, and snacks will be provided.

7:30PM – 9:00PM / 240K JC Women & Gender Studies Center

Monday, September 14, 2015

Monday, October 19, 2015

Monday, November 16, 2015

Monday, December 7, 2015

Graduate Students Writing Group

Are you working on your thesis? Dissertation? Articles? Creative Pieces?

Would you benefit from a writer's group from people across campus?

Or need a space to write for a couple hours a week?

Bring your writing to this group and we will work through the process together.

7:00PM-9:00PM / 240K JC / Women & Gender Studies Center

Tuesday, September 8, 2015

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 - NO MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Tuesday, November 3, 2015

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

Transnational Women and Gender Studies Reading Group

This reading group will focus on transnational women writers of the twentieth century and contemporary writers. We will read works from the following authors: Buchi Emecheta, Nadine Gordimer, Edwidge Danticat, Julia Alvarez, and others.

7:30pm-9:00pm / 240K JC-Women & Gender Studies Center

Thursday, September 10, 2015

Thursday September 24, 2015

Thursday, October 8, 2015

Thursday, October 22, 2015

Thursday, November 5, 2015

Thursday, November 19, 2015

Thursday December 3, 2015

Women and Gender Studies Co-Sponsored Events

Women and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies Dialogue

Thursday, September 10, 2015 / Time: TBA / Location: TBA

Turn Off the Violence Week - waves.gmu.edu

October 5-9, 2015

Each October since 1997, Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education and Services (formerly Sexual Assault Services) has sponsored a week dedicated to helping the Mason community work to end violence against women and honor its victims. The week brings awareness of sexual violence and dating/partner violence to campus. Turn Off the Violence (TOV) Week events include The Clothesline Project and Mason's annual Take Back the Night rally.

Back on Board: Greg Louganis – Film screening and discussion with Filmmaker: Cheryl Furjanic

Thursday, October 15, 2015 / 4:30PM / Johnson Center Cinema

Back on Board explores the captivating, compelling, and complicated life of an Olympic star whose athletic talent spurred a worldwide fascination with diving. Part biography, part social exploration, the film reveals Louganis' evolution from childhood diving prodigy to Olympic champion, and from pioneering openly gay athlete with HIV to almost forgotten sports icon.

The film won the award for Best Feature Documentary at the Annapolis Film Festival 2015, the Best Editing Award at the Salem Film Festival 2015, and both the Audience Award and the Best Documentary Feature Award at Outfest Los Angeles 2014.

The Goddess Diaries

Thursday, October 22, 2015 / 7:30pm / Theatre Space

The Goddess Diaries is a series of true-to-life monologues. The show stays current by drawing on new stories every year, focusing both on critical issues that women face as well as humor found in everyday life. Since its inception in 2010 the Diaries has raised funds and awareness for on-campus charities. The Goddess Diaries was voted "Best of the Fringe" at the Capital Fringe Festival three years in a row. Don't miss the best production yet!

(T)Error - Film Screening and discussion with filmmaker: Lyric R. Cabral

Wednesday, November 11, 2015 / 4:30PM / Johnson Center Cinema

(T)Error is the first documentary to place filmmakers on the ground during an active FBI counterterrorism sting operation. Through the perspective of Saeed "Shariff" Torres, a 63-year-old Black revolutionary turned informant, viewers get an unfettered glimpse of the government's counterterrorism tactics and the murky justifications behind them. Taut, stark, and controversial, (T)Error illuminates the fragile relationships between individual and surveillance state in modern America, and asks who is watching the watchers?

(T)Error won the Special Jury Prize for Break Out First Feature at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize at the 2015 Full Frame Documentary Festival.

Women & Gender Studies Holiday Potluck

Tuesday, December 1, 2015 / 12:00PM-3:00PM / 240K JC-Women & Gender Studies Center

Time to celebrate the holidays over food at the Women and Gender Studies annual potluck.

We will provide space, tables, eating utensils, napkins and drinks. You bring your favorite holiday dish!

Finals Week at Women and Gender Studies Center

December 14-17, 2015

240K JC-Women and Gender Studies Center

The center will be open until 11:00PM.

All Mason students, staff and faculty are welcome to come study for finals, write their papers, take breaks and naps.

Study Break Activities

Finals Study Break Pizza Party

Monday, December 14, 2015 / 5:00pm-8:00pm

Decorate Your Own Cookie Study Break

Tuesday, December 15, 2015 / 5:00pm-8:00pm

Make Your Own Holiday Card Study Break

Wednesday, December 16, 2015 / 5:00pm-8:00pm

Fun Coloring Study Break

Thursday, December 17, 2015 / 5:00pm-8:00pm