

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH

WMST 410/610
Fall 2016
Innovation 139
Tuesday 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

Texts: Sprague, Joey. 2005. *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Boothe, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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 25%
Surveys 25%
Qualitative Project 25%

Final Presentation 15%
Participation 10%

Assignments GRADUATE

Experiments 25%
Surveys 25%
Qualitative Project 25%

Final Paper and Presentation: 25%

*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, undergraduate 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.

On the last day of class, graduate students will give a formal presentation 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 18: Survey paper due

November 15: Qualitative paper due

December 6: Experiment paper due

December 15: Final paper due graduate students ONLY

Schedule—Which is always subject to change!

Week One: Tuesday August 30, 2016: 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

Weeks Two: Tuesday September 6, 2016: Survey Design

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

Reading: Sprague Chapter 4; Red Lake, MN (BB), Hattery and Smith, Deep South paper, (BB) Survey write up (BB)

Week Three: Tuesday September 13, 2016: 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?

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

***FINALIZE survey**

Film: *Acres of Skin*

Week Four: Tuesday September 20, 2016: Fear 2 Freedom

Week Five: Tuesday September 27, 2016: Survey—data analysis

Week Six: Tuesday, October 4, 2016: Survey—data analysis continued; write up

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2016: NO CLASS, INDIGINOUS PEOPLE'S DAY

Week Seven: Tuesday, October 18, 2016: 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.

***Survey paper due!**

Week Eight: Tuesday, October 25, 2016: Qualitative Methods---ethnography, content analysis, interview

Discussion of qualitative techniques including ethnography, interviewing, and content analysis. Sampling and variable construction. Special focus on ethics of observation and ethnography.

Readings: Sprague Chapter 5, Amy Best (BB), Ethnography write up, Sprague Chapter 6; Hattery CSA paper (BB), Interview write up, Content Analysis write up

Week Nine: Tuesday, November 1, 2016: Qualitative data analysis

Week Ten: Tuesday, November 8, 2016: Qualitative data analysis write up

Week Eleven: Tuesday, November 15, 2016: 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

***Qualitative methods paper due**

Week Twelve: Tuesday November 22, 2016: Experiment Analysis and write up

Week Thirteen: Tuesday, November 29, 2016: Final papers, presentations, experiment write up last questions

Week Fourteen: Tuesday December 6, 2016: 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!!!!

LASTLY, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A SAFE LEARNING, LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT THAT EMBRACES ITS DIVERSITY AND IS FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION. THE UNIVERSITY'S ENVIRONMENT IS MEANT TO BE EXPERIENCED AS VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC, AND ONE THAT INCLUDES AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION OF SELF, IDENTITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

REMEMBER THAT THE DIVERSITY OF OUR STUDENT BODY CAN BE A VALUABLE ASSET TO CLASSROOM CONVERSATIONS AND STUDENT LEARNING. AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE SEMESTER, YOU MAY FIND IT USEFUL TO REVISIT MASON'S DIVERSITY STATEMENT ([HTTP://CTFE.GMU.EDU/PROFESSIONAL-DEVELOPMENT/MASON-DIVERSITY-STATEMENT/](http://CTFE.GMU.EDU/PROFESSIONAL-DEVELOPMENT/MASON-DIVERSITY-STATEMENT/)).

MASON IS ALSO COMMITTED TO A CAMPUS THAT IS FREE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND INCIDENTS OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND STUDENT SUCCESS. AS FACULTY MEMBERS, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT TO THE UNIVERSITY TITLE IX COORDINATOR (703-993-8730 AND/OR [HTTP://INTEGRITY.GMU.EDU/COMPLIANCE/TITLEIX.CFM](http://INTEGRITY.GMU.EDU/COMPLIANCE/TITLEIX.CFM)). WHEN YOU DO SO, YOU WILL BE MADE AWARE OF THE RANGE OF OPTIONS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND COLLABORATION:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted

be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.

As in many classes, some assignments are designed to be completed by a team. With collaborative work, names of all the contributors should appear on the work. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others; however, it is not appropriate to give your work to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see us.

RELEVANT CAMPUS AND ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Counseling and Psychology Services

Student Union 1 (SUB 1), Rm. 3129; 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Resources

Student Union 1 (SUB i), Rm 2200; 993-2702 lgbtq.gmu.edu

Office of Disability Services

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Suite 2500; 993-2474; <http://www.gmu.edu/depts/unilife/ods/>) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk with us to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education

SUB 1, Suite 2400; 993-2700; <http://odime.gmu.edu/>

Wellness, Alcohol, and Violence Education Services (WAVES)

Fairfax Campus: SUB I, Suite 3200; 993-9999; 24-hour number 703-380-1434
<http://www.gmu.edu/depts/unilife/sexual/>

Star-Multimedia Computer Lab

Johnson Center, 229; 993-8990;
http://doit.gmu.edu/studentSection.asp?page=multimedia_lab

Women and Gender Studies Center

Johnson Center 240K; 993-2896; <http://wmst.gmu.edu/center>

Writing Center

Multiple locations on Fairfax, Prince William, and Arlington campuses (see website for more information about locations and numbers); <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

Women and Gender Studies Calendar of Events Fall 2016

wgst.gmu.edu Facebook: MasonWGST Twitter: @MasonWGST

Wednesday, August 31st: Welcome Week Pizza Party

Time: 12:00pm-2:00pm

**Location: Women and Gender Studies Center, Johnson Center
240K**

The Welcome2Mason Pizza Party is Women and Gender Studies and LGBTQ Resources contribution to welcome week. We will kick off our programming for the year with this social. All students, faculty, staff, and administrators are welcome to attend.

Tuesday, September 20th: Fear 2 Freedom

Time: 4:30pm-6:00pm

Location: Dewberry Hall, Johnson Center

Fear2Freedom is an internationally recognized organization that creates kits for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. The organization partners with local hospitals and universities to create and pass out the events. This year Women and Gender Studies in collaboration with LEAD and Disability Services will be hosting an event for students to create these kits for INOVA hospital.

Tuesday, September 26th: Fall for the Book-Earl Smith & Tim McGettigan

Book: A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy

Time: 1:30pm

Location: Research Hall 163

In their new book, *A Formula for Eradicating Racism* Professors TimMcGettigan and Earl Smith spell out a practical plan to end racism. The authors demonstrate that racism is a type of undemocratic social architecture that Americans can construct and dismantle by choice. McGettigan and Smith argue that, early in its history, the US intentionally dehumanized people of color so that white invaders could plunder the western hemisphere without moral qualms. Technically speaking, a crime is not a crime if it's committed against people who are defined as sub-humans. The most glaring example of democratic dehumanization is the 3/5 Compromise which, even to this day, fractionates the perceived merit of African Americans. In addition, the US denaturalized Indigenous Peoples, Hispanics, Asians and every other person of color via the Naturalization Act of 1790 -- which established that only free whites could be US citizens. Subsequently, the US has treated people of color like wartime enemies. The US still enthusiastically celebrates continent-wide genocide under the sacred banner of Manifest Destiny. Though it will never be possible to right such monumental wrongs, McGettigan and Smith maintain that the US can still dismantle America's architecture of racism. The US can re-humanize all those it has callously dehumanized by erasing the 3/5 Compromise and rescinding every other law, policy, superstition and practice which "suggests" that people of color are anything but 100% bona fide human beings. This event is free and open to the public.

Tuesday, September 27th: Fall for the Book-Patricia Hill Collins

Time: 1:30pm

Book: Intersectionality

Location: Research Hall 163

Patricia Hill Collins is a renowned sociologist at University of Maryland who focuses on the intersections of race, class, and gender. She is considered to be one of the key figures in scholarship on intersecting identities and systems of oppression. Her most famous work is *Black Feminist Thought*. She will be coming to campus to present on her newest book *Intersectionality* with her co author Sirma Bilge. This event is free and open to the public.

Wednesday, September 28th: Fall for the Book: Angela Hattery & Earl Smith

Book: Gender, Power and Violence

Time: 1:30pm

Location: Research Hall 163

Sociologists Angela Hattery and Earl Smith are a dynamic researching duo. Together they have written a number of books, including their most recent title, *Gender, Power and Violence*. Hattery is the Director of the Women and Gender Studies Program at George Mason University. Her research focuses on social stratification, gender, family, and race. Smith is Professor Emeritus of Sociology and the Rubin Distinguished Professor of American Ethnic Studies at Wake Forest University. Some of their other influential books are *The Social Dynamics of Family Violence*, and *African American Families Today: Myths and Realities*. Sponsored by George Mason's Women and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies.

Thursday, September 29th: Fall for the Book- Barbara Amaya

Time: 3:00pm

Book: Nobody's Girl: A Memoir of Lost Innocence, Modern Day Slavery and Transformation

Location: Research Hall 163

Barbara Amaya is an award-winning author, advocate and survivor. At age 12 she was trafficked first in Washington, D.C. and then on the streets of New York for over a decade. A sought-after speaker and advocate for trafficking victims and survivors of trauma everywhere, Amaya has shared her story on television and college campuses as well as with multiple civic, legal, faith and women's organizations. In 2014 she was awarded the James B. Hunter Human Rights Award and was a featured speaker at the TEDx Mid Atlantic talks in 2015. Her book Nobody's Girl won best autobiography at the Taz Author Awards in 2015. Sponsored by Women & Gender Studies.

Tuesday, October 6th: Take Back the Night

Time: 7:00pm-10:00pm

North Plaza Johnson Center – Clock Tower

Rain Location: SUBI Patriots Lounge

Take Back the Night is a nationally recognized march against domestic violence and sexual assault. It is one of the only events that the center has put on annually since its inception which makes it one of our signature events. This event gives students the opportunity to share their narratives as well as participate in the march. Pizza will be served.

Wednesday, October 12th : Deconstructing Masculinities and Violence

Time: 4:00pm-7:00pm

Location: JC Cinema

Join us for the screening of The Mask You Live In and a workshop on masculinity including a panel discussion on masculinity & Violence as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Friday, November 4th: The Goddess Diaries

Time: 6:00pm

Location: Johnson Center Cinema

The *Diaries* consists of short personal narratives about key milestones in the lives of girls and women; storytellers range in age from 11 to 65. From a first visit to the gynecologist, to surviving bridal registries, bad husbands, and personal violence, the monologues tell compelling stories, and, for a good cause. Similar to Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*, the *Diaries* are a non-profit production created by local playwright and WGST graduate student Carol Campbell. Interspersed between each woman's speech are music and dance performances which create a rich tapestry of words, sound and movement as expressions of the female journey. All proceeds go to the Women and Gender Studies Program.

November TBD: Faculty Who Study Race Meet and Greet

For the first time, Women and Gender Studies, African and African American Studies, Latin American Studies, Native American Studies, and Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) will partner to create a meet and greet event for students to meet faculty who study race and teach classes at Mason. This event will give students opportunity to talk with faculty with whom they have similar interests. Stay tuned. There is more details to come.

Finals Week Study Break Pizza Party: *Mean Girls* Screening and Pizza

Time: 5:00pm-8:00pm

Location: Women and Gender Studies Center, Johnson Center 240K

Each semester, Women and Gender Studies hosts its semiannual Finals Week study break. We will provide pizza, soda, and coffee. Each semester we also screen *Mean Girls* which has become tradition in the center. Please stop by and take a break from your finals schedule with Women and Gender Studies.

Final Week Extended Hours in Women and Gender Studies

Time: Open until 11:00pm

**Location: Women and Gender Studies Center, Johnson Center
240K**

Dates:

- Tuesday and Wednesday Dec 6 – 7, 2016
- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Dec 12 – 14, 2016