

**FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH**  
**You didn't come here for this to be easy....**

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WMST 410/610  
Fall 2016  
Robinson A247  
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.*

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**Required Readings**

Texts: Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University 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**

Ethnography 25%  
Experiments 25%  
Surveys 25%

Final Presentation 15%  
Participation 10%

## Assignments GRADUATE

Ethnography 25%

Experiments 25%

Surveys 25%

Final Project 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:**

**September 12: CITI Due**

**October 3: Ethnography paper due**

**November 7: Survey paper due**

**December 5: Experiment paper due**

**December 15: Final paper due graduate students ONLY**

**Schedule—Which is always subject to change!**

### **Week 1: Tuesday August 29, 2017: Getting Started**

Introductions, syllabus review, class climate discussion. What does it mean to do feminist research? What does it mean to do social science research (challenges when the subjects are living in the social world). How do researchers determine which method to use? Objectivity, generalizability, and repeatability, ecological fallacy

*Readings:* Text Chapter 1 “Salsa Dancing? In the Social Sciences?” Fuchs-Epstein (BB), Hill Collins (BB), Bonilla-Silva (BB),

**Week 2: September 5, 2017: Ethics & Ethnography**

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

*Readings:* Text: Chapter 2: “What’s it all about?” Chapter 8 “Field and (other) Methods”, Amy Best (BB), Ethnography write up, Hattery CSA paper (BB), Ethnography (BB)

Film: *Acres of Skin*

**Week 3: Tuesday September 12, 2017: Variety of Feminist Approaches,**

Panel of Feminist Scholars: During our class session 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:* Text Chapter 5 “Reviewing the Literature”, Fabio (BB), Mangala’s paper (BB)

Guest: Jen Stevens, Research Librarian

**CITI training DUE!**

**Week 4: Tuesday September 19, 2017: Fear 2 Freedom****Weeks 5: Tuesday September 26, 2017: Qualitative data analysis and write up  
Zine Workshop**

*Reading:* Text: Chapters 3 “An Ode to Canonical Social Science” and 4 “What is this a Case of Anyway?”

**Week 6: Tuesday October 3, 2017: 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:* Text Chapter 6: “Sampling, Operationalization and Generalization” Red Lake, MN (BB), Hattery and Smith, Deep South paper, (BB) Survey write up (BB)

**\*Ethnography Paper Due**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2017: NO CLASS, INDIGINOUS PEOPLE’S DAY****Week 7: Tuesday, October 17, 2017: Survey—data analysis**

*Reading:* Text “Chapter 10: Data Analysis and Reduction”

**Week 8: Tuesday October 24, 2017: Survey—data analysis continued; write up****Week 9: Tuesday October 31, 2017: Theory and Methods or catch up!****Week 10: Tuesday, November 7, 2017: 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:* Text: Chapter 7: “Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty” Goar (BB), Correll (BB), Women But Not Nearly Enough (BB), Experiment write up

**\*Survey paper due!**

**Week 11: Tuesday November 14, 2017: Creative Presentation Styles**

Workshop with Christopher

**Week Twelve: Tuesday November 21, 2017: Experiment Analysis and write up**

**Week Thirteen: Tuesday, November 28, 2017: Final papers, presentations, experiment write up last questions**

*Readings:* Text: Chapter 11: “Living Your Life as a Salsa-Dancing Social Scientist”

**Week Fourteen: Tuesday December 5, 2017: Last day of class, Presentations**

**\*Experiment paper due**

**December 15, 2017 – Graduate 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](http://lgbtq.gmu.edu)

### **Syllabus Language Offered by the Provost's Office**

*Updated 07/07/17*

## **Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. [University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct \(http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/\)](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

### **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](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 Fall 2017 Events****Welcome2Mason Pizza Party**

August 30th, 2017  
11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
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.

**Fear2Freedom**

September 19, 2017  
4:30 p.m. - 6:30p.m.  
Dewberry Hall

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 the Student Support and Advocacy Center will be hosting an event for students to create these kits.

**Faculty Brownbag: Rachel Jones and Rose Cherubin**

September 27, 2017  
12:00 p.m.  
JC Room D  
Rachel Jones and Rose Cherubin, Associate Professors of Philosophy will speak on their research interests. Come join us for light refreshments and excellent scholarship.

**Take Back the Night**

October 3, 2017  
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
North Plaza  
Rain Location: Patriot's 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.

**Fall for the Book: Susan Bordo**

October 11, 2017

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Johnson Center George's

Susan Bordo, professor of Women and Gender Studies at the University of Kentucky discusses her book *The Destruction of Hillary Clinton*, in which she outlines this destruction in three key areas: gendered stereotypes and double standards, political forces, and media influence. The Forward wrote that her book “offers a clear analysis of how a candidate who received the overwhelming majority of the popular vote, did not win the presidency.”

**Fall for The Book: Janet Mock**

October 12, 2017

2:00 p.m.

Harris Theater

Janet Mock, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Redefining Realness*, TV host, speaker, and trans advocate will speak on navigating her twenties without a roadmap. Her newest memoir *Surpassing Certainty: What My Twenties Taught Me* traces her journey of becoming an adult: moving out, falling in and out of love, and working her way up in the magazine industry. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Marie Claire*, *The New Yorker*, and *Allure*.

**Faculty Brown Bag: Earle Reybold and Erin Peters Burton**

October 18, 2017

12:00 p.m.

Thompson Hall Suite 2100, Dean's Boardroom (2004)

Earle Reybold, Professor of Qualitative Methods and Erin Peters Burton, Associate Professor of Science Education and Educational Psychology will speak on their current research projects. Come join us for light refreshments and excellent scholarship.

**Pride is Classy**

October 25, 2017

2:00 p.m. - 5:00 pm.

Pride is Classy in an event sponsored by LGBTQ Resources and Women & Gender Studies where students can meet professors that teach courses around gender/sexuality and what courses are available to take on those topics in the Spring semester and Summer sessions. This iteration of the event we are expanding the resources category to include those who do not actively teach classes but who may identify as or work closely with LGBTQ+ identities.

**Finals Study Break: Mean Girls & Pizza**

December 11, 2017

5 p.m.

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.

**Finals Extended Hours**

December 11, 12, 13, 18

Center open from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Johnson Center 240K

Join us as we keep the center open late to meet all your late night finals needs! The center will be open from 9 a.m. – 11 p.m.