

Feminist Research Practice
WMST 411/611
Course Syllabus - Spring 2019

INSTRUCTOR	Leah M. Adams, Ph.D. <u>Office:</u> 3057 David King Hall <u>E-mail:</u> ladamse@gmu.edu (don't forget the e!) <u>Phone:</u> (703) 993-4118
MEETINGS	Thurs 4:30pm – 7:10 pm (Robinson A349)
OFFICE HOURS	Thurs 1:30pm – 3:00pm (or by appointment)
DEADLINES	January 29 is the last day to add/drop this class with no tuition penalty February 12 is the last day to drop this class with no tuition refund

* Official Communications via GMU E-mail: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an introduction to feminist approaches to social research. Students will collect, analyze, and write up research data as you 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. I emphasize a learn-by-doing approach to prepare students to conduct and critically examine research.

This course is designated as an RS level course and its development is being supported by OSCAR, Mason's Students as Scholars Program (Oscar.gmu.edu). This means that you will not only be learning about feminist approaches to social research, but you will be doing **original feminist research**. Therefore, you must design and conduct your own research project to answer your own research question, and you will share the results of your research at a scholarly venue. For undergraduates, when you submit your project to the undergraduate education office, you will receive an additional line on your transcript that highlights the name of your project in a manner that is similar to how a master's thesis is notated.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will:

- Create an original scholarly project
- Articulate and refine a research question
- Gather evidence *appropriate to* your research question
- Successfully navigate the key elements of the scholarly research process
- Communicate knowledge from an original scholarly project
- Situate the concepts, practices, or results of your scholarship within a broader feminist context

COURSE FORMAT

The format of this class is mixed, and includes lecture, small-group discussion, in-class exercises, media, and presentations.

REQUIRED TEXT

There is no required textbook, but there are readings! Required readings can be found on Blackboard in the Course Content tab.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Attendance & Participation: Your involvement is key to the success of this class! Although I won't be taking formal attendance, you should realize that failure to attend class usually results in poor performance.

Information and announcements communicated in class will not necessarily be repeated over e-mail or over Blackboard. This course requires you to spend a good deal of time outside of class – use your time wisely to come to class prepared to discuss your project, along with any obstacles you are facing. Conducting research is more like a marathon than a sprint, so be sure to keep up throughout the semester.

Assigned reading: In lecture and in class discussions, I will assume that you have completed your assigned reading. All assigned reading can be found on Blackboard in the Course Content tab.

Cell phones & Laptops: The use of cell phones, including text messaging, is unacceptable during class time. If there is an emergency that may require you to be contacted, please let me know at the beginning of class. The use of laptops is limited to note taking.

Exam & Homework Policy: There are **no** makeup assignments in this course without arrangements made beforehand with me (e.g., missing class for a religious holiday). There will be no extensions or makeups without penalty except in instances such as the following:

- Hospitalization or illness that has been documented and judged by me as preventing you from a) preparing adequately for an exam, b) attending class, or c) completing an assignment
- Death or serious illness in your family
- Court appearances

Documentation must be provided by health officials (e.g., a physician or member of the student health center staff) in the case of illness; an immediate family member in the case of death or serious illness in the family; and official paperwork in the case of court dates. Decisions regarding extensions and makeups under these circumstances will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Cancellation Policy: If class is cancelled, you will be notified via your GMU email. I will provide details regarding coursework and/or assignments.

Honor Code: All students in this course are to become familiar with and follow the University’s honor code, which does not tolerate any form of cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Exams and assignments are expected to be individual efforts unless otherwise noted. Violations of the GMU Honor Code can result in failure of an assignment or exam, depending on the severity of violation. **All** violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. I reserve the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation, but c’mon, let’s not let it come to that. For more information on the Honor Code please visit: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>

Commitment to Diversity: In this course, and across the University, we seek 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 from their own.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
93 – 100%	90 – 92%	87 – 89%	83 – 86%	80 – 82%	77 – 79%	73 – 76%	70 – 72%	60 – 69%	< 60%

Participation (15%): As I mentioned above, your participation is key to the success of this course! Together, we will strive to create an atmosphere in which open dialogue and communication are encouraged and respectful, even in instances of disagreement. Please ask questions, offer observations, and suggest alternative perspectives during class time with the aim of advancing discourse about *ideas* rather than attacking *individuals*.

All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard.

Goals statement & timeline (10%): This assignment forms the preliminary basis for your semester. The goal statement and timeline should include the following:

- Statement of your goal for the semester. What would you like to achieve this semester (e.g., learn a new method, gather pilot data for your thesis/dissertation, complete a thesis proposal)?
- A timeline for the steps that you will need to complete including deadlines (e.g., data collection, literature review, data analysis). Please note that our class schedule includes deadlines for particular components of your project
- Identify the following, along with *why* you chose each:
 - A chapter in the text that you will commit to reading for your project
 - A methods-focused text or chapter (from a different source) that you commit to reading that will serve as a resource guide for the methods that you will rely on
 - An empirical research piece (article or book) that you commit to reading that will serve as a guiding piece of literature review or an inspiration for your project
- Due: January 31

Literature Review (10%): The literature review is a 5 – 8 page overview of the literature that contextualizes your research, including a discussion of the relevant theoretical paradigms that frame your question. Note – a literature review for an empirical article does not have to cover Every. Single. Thing. Ever. Written. about your topic. Instead, the reader should get a sense of what is known with regard to this issue and should have a good understanding of where your project will take us/what we will learn.

- Due: February 21 (February 14 *strongly* encouraged)

Methodological Design (10%): The methodological design is meant to provide a detailed and precise discussion of the method that you will employ, including your sampling technique and instrumentation. Please also (briefly) discuss the pros and cons of using this approach relative to others to answer your question. Note that your completion of CITI training and IRB submission are rolled into this grade.

- Due: March 7

Data collection reflection (5%): This reflection is meant to offer an opportunity to critically examine how your research process is unfolding. What obstacles have you faced? What plans do you have to overcome them? What have you learned about the research process?

- Due: March 28

Results (5%): In this section of your paper, you will present your key findings, including preliminary data tables/narratives and/or figures/graphs (as appropriate). Results should be organized in a clear and compelling manner.

- Due: April 11

Discussion/Conclusions (10%): In this section of your paper, you must answer the big “so what?” question Interpret your results, how does your project add to our understanding of this phenomenon? Your conclusions section will also identify and discuss key limitations of your work, along with possibilities for future research in this area.

- Due: April 18

Presentation (10%): Students must present their research projects to the class, and must submit their projects to an additional research venue (e.g., GMU Gender Conference, Undergraduate research symposium, professional organization)

- Due: May 2

Mason IMPACT submission (5%): This course is designated as a Mason Impact course, and undergraduates’ research projects will be included on their transcripts. In order to complete this process, undergraduate students must thoughtfully answer two questions about their research experience. Graduate students will also answer these questions, but will only submit them via Blackboard for course credit.

- Due: May 9

Final Paper (20%): The final paper includes all of the elements of a standard journal article: introduction and literature review, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, and references. By the time that you arrive at your final

paper, I will have provided feedback on each of its sections – please be sure that you have incorporated this feedback (or that you have at least addressed it) into your final product!

- Due: **TUESDAY** May 14

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Support Services: If you have symptoms that are causing you significant distress or impairment in your life, please note that George Mason University does offer services to support students' academic and emotional development (even for graduate students!). Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), located in SUB I room 3129 (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), offers workshops in academic skills, stress management training, and individual and group counseling for students who would like some help with social, emotional, or educational concerns. Consider taking advantage of these resources if you need them.

Sexual Misconduct & Interpersonal Violence: In this course, we may discuss sexual assault and interpersonal violence in reference to course material. As such, I'd like to make it clear that 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/>) 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.

Accommodation of Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Services (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. **All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.** Note that this provision includes the range of disabilities, including physical, psychiatric, and learning disabilities.

Class Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	WHAT'S DUE...
Week 1: 1/24	Introductions & Getting started... What is feminist research?	
Week 2: 1/31	Refining research statements and goals, IRB considerations & Ethics	Goal statement & timeline due
Week 3: 2/7	No class!	CITI training documentation & IRB drafts
Week 4: 2/14	Answering your question(s): Methods	
Week 5: 2/21	Data collection workshop	Literature review
Week 6: 2/28	<i>One on ones</i> : Consultation with professor	
Week 7: 3/7	Troubleshooting the process & Group consultation	Methodological design
Week 8: 3/14	No class! Spring Break ☺	
Week 9: 3/21	Data cleaning & analysis	
Week 10: 3/28	<i>One on ones</i> : Consultation with professor	Data collection reflection
Week 11: 4/4	Analyzing data	
Week 12: 4/11	Analyzing data (maybe one on one consultation too)	Results
Week 13: 4/18	Presenting data workshop	Discussion/conclusions
Week 14: 4/25	<i>One on ones</i> : Consultation with professor	
Week 15: 5/2	Final student presentations	Undergrads: Mason Impact submission Grads: Blackboard Mason Impact submission
FINAL: Tuesday, 5/14 at 7:10pm via Blackboard		The whole enchilada: Final paper