Course Description

This course explores feminist epistemologies and research methods. We will focus on how feminist scholars challenge dominant theories of knowledge and the major methodologies employed in the social sciences and humanities. Through a combination of lectures and workshops, we will ask how gender theory and feminist politics shape the kinds of research questions we ask, the types of materials we use, and how we define our relationships with our subjects. To reflect on and engage with feminist methods, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, write memos reflecting on workshop topics, and draft a research proposal in stages over the course of the semester.

Course Rationale

This course is designed as a capstone course for junior and senior Women and Gender Studies majors. As such, it will differ from – but also build substantially upon – other courses in the Women and Gender Studies Program. Its main purpose is to synthesize what students have already learned in other Women and Gender Studies courses in order to enable them to theorize and engage in practical applications of this knowledge on projects related to their own interests in Women and Gender Studies. In this sense, it aims to encourage active reflection on the nature and shape of Women and Gender Studies as an academic discipline and/or field of interdisciplinary inquiry.

Course Requirements

This course seeks to achieve these aims through three sets of course assignments, which are intended to complement one another in helping students gain familiarity with basic concepts, debates, and applications in feminist research. Because the learning curve may be steep, grades will be weighted more heavily as the semester progresses. All students are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding any of these assignments, but are encouraged to do so well in advance of the due dates either in person or via email.

1) Class participation (25%) You will be expected to come to class prepared and to participate actively in all class discussions, whether lecture- or workshop-based. This grade will be based on both attendance and contributions to class discussions.

2) Short research memos (25%) Following each workshop, you will write a short 1-2 page memo. The goal of these memos is to help you brainstorm and develop various ideas for your research proposal. Specific memo assignments and their due dates are included in the syllabus. Lateness policy: If you are absent from a workshop, you are still responsible for handing in a memo on the day that it is due. Memos that are overdue will receive a grade of zero, unless a valid reason for the delay is provided. In order to receive an extension, you must contact me at least the day before the memo is due.

3) Research proposal (50%) You will draft a research proposal in stages over the course of the semester. I will distribute guidelines for the proposal on the first day of class. Throughout the semester, you should treat the research proposal as a ‘work in progress,’
to be revised and further developed as the course goes on. **Deadlines**; a research question on September 19, a first section on October 10, a second section on November 14, and the final paper on December 12. **Lateness policy:** Late papers will not be accepted, unless a valid reason for the delay is provided. In order to receive an extension, you must contact me at least the day before the paper is due.

**Course Policies**

This course seeks to promote active learning and foster a positive classroom environment. To help accomplish these goals, students should take note of the following course policies:

- **Attendance** is required. The readings serve as a background, not as a substitute, for the lectures and workshops. Missing or not participating in class discussions will result in a deduction in your class participation grade and will affect your ability to produce the best research proposal.
- **Late papers** and **email submissions** will not be accepted. Any requests for exceptions to these rules must be made in advance of the due date (i.e., at least the day before).
- The field of women and gender studies is fundamentally concerned with rethinking how and what we ‘know’ about the world. To benefit most from this course, it is therefore crucial that students actively seek to make connections between this and other courses in the Women and Gender Studies Program, as well as raise questions when these links may be hard to see.
- **Making appointments** to meet with me is strongly encouraged at all points in the semester, especially – but not exclusively – when students do not understand content covered in the course, or have questions about the assignments. The best way to reach me is via email or before or after each class session.

**Required Texts**

All of the readings will be available on ERes (password “feminist”), with the exception of two books that are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:


**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**August 29: Course Introduction**

No assigned reading – discussion of course aims and introduction to feminist epistemology and research methods.

**September 3: NO CLASS, LABOR DAY**

**September 5: NO CLASS**
September 10: The Enlightenment and the Scientific Method


FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

September 12: Feminist Approaches to Theories of Knowledge


September 17: Gender as an Analytic Category


September 19: Workshop on Researching ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’

*Research question due.


Memo due on September 24: How do you employ sex/gender as an analytic category in your research project?

September 24: Feminist Standpoint Theory


September 26: Workshop on Kitchen Stories

Memo due on October 1: What does Kitchen Stories share with feminist critiques of the ‘scientific method’?
October 1: Essentialism and Intersectionality


October 3: Workshop on Essentialism and Psychoanalytic Theory

Guest: Susan Stiritz, Women and Gender Studies Program


Memo due on October 8: How do you address issues of essentialism and intersectionality in your research project?

October 8: Postmodern Challenges to (Feminist) Epistemology


DOING FEMINIST RESEARCH

October 10: Workshop on Beginning a Feminist Research Project

*First section due.


Memo due on October 15: What is your approach – and general plan – for your research project?

October 15: Feminist Action Research


October 17: Workshop on Participatory Action Research

Guest: Shanti Parikh, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology

Readings to be announced.

Memo due on October 22: How and why might you apply – or not apply – action work in your research project?

October 22: Feminist Interviewing


October 24: Workshop on Conducting Interviews


Memo due on October 29: How and why might you apply – or not apply – interviews in your research project?

October 29: Feminist Ethnography


October 31: Workshop on Born into Brothels

Memo due November 5: In what ways is Born into Brothels a feminist ethnography – or not?
November 5: Feminist Archive and Internet Research


November 7: Workshop on Archival Research

Guest: Andrea Friedman, Department of History


Memo due on November 12: How and why might you employ – or not employ – archives in your research project?

November 12: Feminist Surveys and Statistical Analyses


November 14: Workshop on Quantitative Techniques

*Second section due.


Memo due on November 26: How and why might you employ – or not employ – quantitative methods in your research project?

November 19: Workshop on Kinsey

Memo due on November 26: What does Kinsey suggest about the use of surveys for analyzing human sexuality?

November 21: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK
November 26: Feminist Text and Content Analysis


November 28: Workshop on Textual Analysis and Literary Theory

Guest: Barbara Baumgartner, Women and Gender Studies Program


Memo due on December 3: How and why might you apply – or not apply – text analysis in your research project?

December 3: Original Feminist Research Methods


December 5: Workshop on (Original) Feminist Research Methods


FINAL PAPER DUE ON DECEMBER 12 BY 2 PM TO MY MAILBOX IN ELIOT 219.