

**Y633**  
**Feminist Theory and Methodology**  
**Summer 2016**  
**Six Weeks**

**Instructor Information**

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**Class Meets:** May 10 – June 16, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:20 – 12:35 in EDUC 2280

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 9 – 10am

**Course Basics**

The class engages with feminist theories and methodologies in a grassroots, communitarian way so that we not only learn about feminist methodologies, but we also experience and engage them. This is a course that works with qualitative methodological approaches.

The syllabus was collectively informed.

We will do a collaborative research project where we work together gathering and analyzing qualitative data. We will blur the lines between researchers and researched. We will ask ourselves questions about the difference between doing research *on* people and doing research *with* people.

There is not one feminist theory or approach, but there are values and challenges that people who identify as feminist share. We will explore these.

My own image of research is one of a conversation – a lively, inclusive, values-oriented, creative, respectful conversation. This is what we will strive for in this

class. I know that society is riddled with interactive and normative challenges that make equity seem out of reach, but in this class we will strive to hear one another; to recognize faithfully and with forgiveness when we behave in ways that increase oppression and limit opportunities and the spread of good will; and to open spaces for people to voice their own claims. We will seek consensus and will not use votes to make decisions as these can perpetually minimize minority perspectives. We want all perspectives in the conversation. This democratic style is easier to write about than it is to deliver. It depends not just on our good intentions, but on our willingness to be vulnerably accountable to one another in ways we cannot fully anticipate or control.

Why would one to engage in a more democratic style of doing inquiry? Well this is one of the questions I hope we are able to speak to by the end of the course.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Describe the values and characteristics associated with a feminist approach to qualitative inquiry
- Identify historical and theoretical strands in feminist scholarship
- Engage with feminist, democratic, and collaborative methodologies
- Locate their own work in relation to feminist theory and methodology

### **Required Texts and Readings:**

- McCann, C. and Kim, S-Y. (2013). *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. New York: Routledge. **ISBN-10:** 0415521025 **ISBN-13:** 978-0415521024 [Referred to in the schedule as MK]
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2013). *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer. Second Edition*. Sage Publications. **ISBN-10:** 1412994977 **ISBN-13:** 978-1412994972 [Referred to in the schedule as HB]

In addition, I will have readings posted in the resources file in canvas. So many amazing and wonderful readings it is challenging to put limits on this, but, alas, I know you cannot read it all in 6 weeks so please take up the opportunities that inspire you the most, that nourish you the most and spend as much time with those as you can. Then be sure to skim the rest.

### **For Reading Circles:**

For one week, you will read together in circles. You will choose one of the following books or propose one to the class and see if others are interested in joining you.

- Talpade Mohanty, Chandra (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press. ISBN: 0822330210
- Moraga, Cherrie and Anzaldúa, Gloria, Eds. (2015). *This bridge called my back. Writings by radical women of color*. Fourth edition. State University of New York Press. ISBN: 1438454384
- Cravens, Christa and Davis, Dana-Ain, Eds. (2013). *Feminist activist ethnography: Counterpoints to neoliberalism in North America*. Lexington Books. ISBN: 0739191306

### **Web Resources:**

- Feminist Bibliographies: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/index.html>
- Photovoice Organization: <http://www.photovoice.org/>

### **Course Organization:**

In this class we will have discussion on fundamental readings associated with feminism, gender, and equity. We will engage in a collaborative research project with one another that will involve some creative approaches, like photovoice. We will want to establish a focus for our research and our reading. We will blur the line between researcher and participant and we will engage in reflexivity.

I have three ideas of a possible study focus all emphasize intersectionality as important to feminist inquiry and thinking. We can select something else, but I wanted to give you a few ideas to begin thinking about the project. After class on Tuesday, I noted that:

- There was synergy in our conversation about being sure to address intersectionalities and gender.
- There was also strong interest in decolonizing narratives and critiques.
- There was strong interest in political and physical violence in its varied forms and with attention to intersectionalities and the discourse around "protecting women and children", "status quo", the status of science in the production of knowledge,
- There is an interest in drawing on our experiences.
- There was methodological and epistemological interest in stories, language, and metaphors/frames.

My way of pulling this together looks like this:

*We would be interested in decolonizing political and physical gender violence in ways that draw on intersectional, international and personal stories, experiences, myths, and underlying assumptions. To do this we could orient through strands and interminglings. For example, I think of strands such as the following:*

- *decolonizing and examining the intersection of race and gender*
- *decolonizing and examining the intersection of religion and gender*
- *decolonizing the subject and the body through critical materialism*
- *decoupling and decolonizing the intersections of gender and sexuality*

*I see the interminglings as happening through the data and analysis.*

*Starting ideas I have for methodological approaches include:*

- *photovoice,*
- *storytelling/gathering,*
- *examining blogs,*
- *skype dialogues with feminist theorists/methodologists,*
- *autoethnography*

*involving collaborative analyses and thinking with theory.*

*Potential products:*

- *Creation of our own blog space*
- *Digital journal*
- *Storytelling event*
- *Creation of an online reading space*

My proposal is that we organize into strands that should trouble and co-inform one another.

One focus across intersectional strands could involve “What modes and material of political violence (which can include physical violence)/political liberation and empowerment are evidenced at the various intersections of interest?”

- Race, gender, and sexuality for Black women
- Religion, gender, and sexuality

A second focus would involve decolonizing and critical materialist approaches to the same intersections:

- Race, gender, and sexuality
- Religion, gender, and sexuality

- We could focus on Black feminist/womanist thought and study Ph.d. women of color, perhaps starting with The Great 8 (<https://goodblacknews.org/2016/04/14/eight-black-women-to-make-history-receiving-phds-together-at-indiana-university/>). We could focus on the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender in Ph.D. studies and experiences. We would read writers like Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Angela Davis and others, including critical race scholars and Lat Crit. Check this out: <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/modern/Defining-Black-Feminist-Thought.html>
- We could look at the intersections of sexuality and gender – perhaps studying transgender experiences and spaces. We could play with the fluidity of our own gender and its intersection with our sexuality. We would read Audre Lourde, queer theorists, and others. We could also, work with transgender identifying people.
- Another possibility is studying feminist intersectional reactions to the candidacy of Donald Trump. In this trajectory we would read Feminists like Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser and examine reactions and ways of enacting gender in the milieu of this political misogyny.
- We could look at the intersection of gender and poverty in internal contexts and a push for getting girls through schooling. We will ask questions like “Can the subaltern speak” – We will think about the intersections of nationality, development and the hyphen that has been talked about and explored.

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>DISCUSSION/ READINGS TIME</b>	<b>WORKSHOP</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
May 10	Introduction to feminist theory and methodology: Is there are distinctive feminist methodology?	Locating ourselves in relation to the word “feminist”	
May 12	Introduction to Theatre of the oppressed		
May 17	Feminist standpoint epistemology:	Working the hyphenated	HB 2 MK 35

	Explorations of Feminist Inquiry	intersections through poetry	Fine 1994
May 19	Intersectionalities	Creating storied collages Imagining a blogspace	MK 18, 29 and choose at least one of the following 30, 33, 34
May 24	Decolonization and decolonizing methodologies	Charting an approach to methodological work. Research <i>with</i> . Selecting readings for reading circles.	Spivak "Can the subaltern speak?" St. Villanueva, Decolonizing with elders Choose at least one of the following MK 22, 36, 45, 48
May 26	Feminist Methodological Ethics	Data collecting and maneuvering	HB 4 Dennis (unpublished)
May 31	Feminist approaches to Interviewing and other ways to get to stories in dialogue	Deep listening and deep questioning – being with people	HB 7 and any other chapters in HB relevant to the work your group is doing.
June 2	Analysis and thinking through theory		St. Pierre
June 7	Reading Circles: co-mingling readings of data with readings of scholars		
June 9	Reading Circles: co-mingling readings of data with readings of scholars		
June 14	Moving forward: Creating blogspaces, planning storytelling event, preparing ideas for book.		
June 16			
END COURSE			

### Grades and Assignments

We will work in groups to develop a theoretical approach to inform data collection and analysis. Attendance and participation in group activities is paramount to earning an A in the class. Significant engagement with the course activities, preparing for class, and working outside of class will mark your work as A.