

University of Toronto Mississauga
Women and Gender Studies
WGS202H5S: Fundamentals of Research in Women and Gender Studies
Spring 2015

Prerequisites: WGS101H5

Time: Mondays 3:00-5:00pm
Room: IB 335
Instructor: Dr. Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani
Office: Erindale Hall Residence (beside Deerfield Hall) Room 210C
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Please put WGS202 in the subject heading of all your email correspondence

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines feminist epistemologies and qualitative research methods. We will focus on the interdisciplinary vision and methods in women and gender studies to understand how to carry out feminist research. We will discuss research methodologies used by feminist scholars within and across a range of traditional disciplines.

The goal is to provide an introductory framework for thinking critically about how feminist scholars challenge dominant theories of knowledge and the major methodologies employed in the social sciences and humanities, including in-depth interview, literature review, ethnography, participatory action research, offline and online content analysis, focus groups, analysis of moving images, and feminist historiography.

The class will be run as a combination of lecture and workshop in which student contribution and participation is key.

Course Objectives:

- Think about methods of research from a feminist perspective
 - Critique and evaluate how researchers and research project address gender, sex and sexuality as well as other forms of social inequities
 - Engage with different feminist methodologies, qualitative research methods and their appropriate contexts.
 - Develop your own research project, from research questions through research proposal
 - Understand the relationship between feminist theory and feminist research practice
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REQUIRED READINGS

- No Required textbook for this course. Readings are either hyperlinked on the syllabus or posted on the course Blackboard.

MARKING SCHEME

1. Assignment 1: Interview Questionnaire	30%	February 9, 2015
2. Assignment 2: Designing a Research Project	35%	March 16, 2015
3. Final Exam	35%	During the exam period

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Part I: Feminist Research: Theoretical Context

Week 1: January 5, 2015

Course Introduction: Why Feminist Method?

In this lecture we explore the major tenets of feminist research methods and research ethics.

Focus Questions: What are the differences among epistemology, methodology and method. Can feminist methods exist?

Readings:

- Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), 1-25 **(On Blackboard)**

Week 2: January 12, 2015

What is feminist research (con't)? Are there feminist research methods?

Focus Questions: What distinguishes feminist research from other research methods, and in particular from the enlightenment and the scientific method? What are the main tenets of feminist research? What are the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods? What are their strengths and shortcomings?

Readings:

- Henwood, Karen, and Nick Pidgeon. "Remaking the Link: Qualitative Research and Feminist Standpoint Theory." *Feminism & Psychology* 5.1 (1995): 7-30.
Stable URL:
http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/09593535/v05i0001/7_rtlqrafst.xml
- Joey Sprague, "Seeing Through Science: Epistemologies" in *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), pp. 31-52. **(On Blackboard)**

Part II- Feminist Epistemologies

Week 3: January 19, 2015

Gender, Sex and Sexuality as Research Tools and Analytical Categories

**** First Workshop: How to Design a Research Project:**

Example Used: Measuring Gender Inequality Globally: Gender Indicators

Focus Questions: Gender indicators measure gender inequality; how accurately do these measures account for women's lived experiences? What are states and international organizations doing to improve the lives of women?

Readings:

- Katherine Johnson, "Transgender, Transsexualism, and the Queering of Gender Identities: Debates for Feminist Research" in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), pp. 606-627. **(on Blackboard)**
- World Economic Forum, *The Global gender gap report 2014*, Watch "Report Highlights" at:
<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

Week 4: January 26, 2015

Feminist Approaches to Theories of Knowledge: In this lecture we will examine how feminist epistemologies challenge essentialist assumptions in research. We will study Standpoint Theory, postmodern challenges to feminist epistemology as well as interdisciplinarity and intersectionality as feminist epistemic tools.

Focus Questions: In what ways knowledge production has been gendered? What are the critical connections between interdisciplinarity and intersectionality?

Readings:

- Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 2005), pp. 1771-1800.
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable>
- Sandra Harding, "Feminist Standpoints" in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), pp. 46-65. **(On Blackboard)**
- Caroline Ramazanoğlu with Janet Holland, "Escape from Epistemology? The Impact of Postmodern Thought on Feminist Methodology." In Ramazanoğlu, Caroline with Janet Holland, *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), pp. 83-104. **(On Blackboard)**

Part III: Doing Feminist Research: Data Collection Methods

Week 5: February 2, 2015

Feminist Interviewing: How to conduct an in-depth interview

**** Second Workshop: How to construct interview questions and questionnaire**

Step by step discussion of Assignment No.1

Focus Questions: How do we construct questionnaire on a topic related to women's issues? How do we test the validity of our questions? How can women's lived experiences be used to generate knowledge?

Readings:

- Marjorie L. DeVault and Glenda Gross, "Feminist Qualitative Interviewing; Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), pp. 206-237 **(On Blackboard)**
- Kirsch, Gesa E. 2005. "Friendship, Friendliness, and Feminist Fieldwork." *Signs* 30 (4): 2163-2172.
Stable URL:
<http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/10.1086/428415>

Week 6: February 9, 2015 **Assignment No. 1 - Interview Questionnaire – Due**

Review of Secondary Data - Literature Review:

**** Third Workshop: How to Conduct Literature Review.**

Readings:

- Sandra L. Kirby, Lorraine Greaves, and Colleen Reid, *Experience Research Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream*, Second Edition. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 108-117. **(on Blackboard)**
- The Literature Review: A Few Tips On Conducting It:
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review>

<i>Reading Week – No Class</i>

Week 7: February 23, 2015

Feminist Ethnography: Ethnographic research consists of trying to understand a culture from the insider's perspective; it is the study of real people interacting with one another.

Focus Questions: Can there be a feminist ethnography? What are the problems inherent in representing "other" women in ethnographic research? How do feminist ethnographers address this problem?

Readings:

- Wanda S. Pillow and Cris Mayo, "Feminist Ethnography: Histories, Challenges, and Possibilities," in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), pp. 187-206 **(On Blackboard)**
- Dana-Ain Davis, "Border Crossings: Intimacy and Feminist Activist Ethnography in the age of Neoliberalism." In Christa Craven, & Dana-Ain Davis (Eds.), *Feminist Activist Ethnography: Counterpoints to Neoliberalism in North America*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books), pp. 23-38. **(On Blackboard)**

Week 8: March 2, 2015

Participatory Action Research: participatory research involves a close collaboration between the researchers and the subjects of their study.

Focus Questions: How can we engage with the shifting power relations between different actors throughout a collaborative research process? In what ways PAR empowers and/or dis-empowers women's voices from the margin?

Readings:

- Bev Gatenby and Maria Humphries, "Feminist Participatory Action Research: Methodological and Ethical Issues." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 2000, 23 (1): 89-105.
Stable URL:
http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/02775395/v23i0001/89_fpar.xml
- Debra Langan and Mavis Morton. "Reflecting on Community/Academic 'Collaboration'." *Action Research* 7.2 (2009): 165-84.
Stable URL:
http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/14767503/v07i0002/165_roc.xml

Week 9: March 9, 2015

Feminist Textual and Content Analysis: Offline and Online

**** Fourth Workshop: How to Design a Research Project**

Step by step discussion of Assignment No.2

Readings:

- Leavy, Patricia Lina. 2007. "The Feminist Practice of Content Analysis." In Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Lina Leavy, eds. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007).

Online Resource:

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.4135/9781412984270>

- Morrow, Oona and Hawkins, Roberta and Kern, Leslie, "Feminist research in online spaces," in *Gender, Place & Culture*, ISSN 0966-369X, 10/2014, pp. 1-18
(On Blackboard)

Week 10: March 16, 2015 Assignment No. 2 – Designing a Research Project – Due
Feminist Analysis of Moving Images: Rhetoric in Motion

Focus Questions: How does feminist analysis of moving images avoid the mainstream visual representation of women, and how does it accommodate a female point of view?

Readings:

- Parameswaran, Radhika. "Feminist Media Ethnography in India: Exploring Power, Gender, and Culture in the Field." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7.1 (2001): 69-103.
Stable URL:
http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/10778004/v07i0001/69_fmeiegacitf.xml
- Rachel E. Dubrofsky, "The Bachelor: Whiteness in the Harem" in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 2006, pp. 39- 56.
Stable URL:
http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/15295036/v23i0001/39_tbwit.xml

IN-Class Viewing: [Dreamworlds 3 \[videorecording\] : desire, sex & power in music video / The Media Education Foundation presents ; written, narrated & edited by Sut Jhally](#)

Week 11: March 23, 2015

Feminist Oral History and Focus Group Interviews

Readings:

- Patricia Lina Leavy, [The Practice of Feminist Oral History and Focus Group Interviews](#) in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Lina Leavy, eds. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007)
Online Resource:
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.4135/9781412984270>
- Sue Wilkinson, "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method." In *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 271-295.

Week 12: March 30, 2015

Feminist Research on Memory:

Exam Review

Readings:

- Onyx, Jenny, and Jennie Small. "Memory-Work: The Method." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7.6 (2001): 773-86.

Stable URL:

http://resolver.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/10778004/v07i0006/773_mtm.xml

Assignments and Grading

Assignment 1: Constructing Interview Questionnaire – worth 30%

**** Detailed instructions for the assignment will be posted on Blackboard and reviewed in lecture.**

For assignment one, you will develop a questionnaire on a topic related to women's issues with a maximum of 10 questions. The topic must be chosen from the themes offered in the course outline. You will then prepare a 5-7 page paper (typed, 12 point font size and double-spaced) in which you discuss:

1. Your Topic
2. Why you chose your topic and its relevance to the course
3. Your preliminary findings
4. Any limitations and/or challenges that you encountered
5. What you would need to do if you were to develop this into a full-scale study.

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to start thinking about research, to develop your research ideas and for you to collect and reflect on research data. You will be marked on presentation of ideas, clarity of expression and your analytical skills.

Students must include at least 1 outside scholarly source for this assignment.

The marking scheme will be as follows:

Research Topic- 10 marks

- Appropriateness of topic, justification/rationale for topic, statement of your topic (No. 1 & 2 above)

Questionnaire- 10 marks

- Relevance of questions to research topic, wording of questions, presentation

Discussion-5 marks

- Analysis of findings, discussion of limitations and changes you would make to your research instrument (No. 2-3&4 above).

References & Bibliography – 5 marks

- ✓ Consistent use of either APA or MLA style of referencing

Assignment 2: Designing a Research Project- worth 35%

****Detailed instructions for the assignment will be posted on Blackboard and reviewed in lecture.**

For this assignment you will develop a **research project** that describes a topic that you would like to study. You may build on the theme/topic used in your previous assignment

but **MUST** include the original marked assignment when you submit the work. For this assignment, you must include:

- a. A statement of the problem
- b. Discussion of literature review
- c. Discussion of methodology

The purpose of this assignment is for you to build upon what you have read and discussed in this course, to develop skills in writing a research proposal, and to design a research project. You will have to demonstrate that you have carefully thought through the project and that you have considered various steps involved in conducting research.

Students must include 2 to 3 outside scholarly sources for this assignment. These and other course materials must be used for literature review section.

This assignment should be 8-10 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. It should be organized as follows:

1. Statement of the Problem (5 marks)

- Scope of the Problem, i.e. what is the current situation and why is it a problem (include background statistics/data on the topic)
- Justification for the study, i.e., why is it important to be studied
- Overall aim/goal of your study (students are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in terms of their goal. However, they must also remember that the success of a research project is partly due to its doability. So, be realistic!)

2. Review of related literature (10 marks)

- What do other researchers have to say about the topic? What are some of the issues raised in studies on this topic? What is missing or excluded in previous researches that you intend to address in your study?

3. Research Design-Methodology (15 marks)

- Develop 2 or 3 broad questions that your study will attempt to answer and that they will guide your research
- Discussion/justification of data collection method(s) – you may choose more than one methodology
- Limitations that you foresee with study and how you'll minimize these

4. References, Bibliography and other Appendices (5 marks)

- Include your reference and bibliography
- Include your previous assignment if your research project has built on that assignment
- Include timeline: what is the projected time for carrying out the study

Final Exam- 35% Held during final examination period

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Blackboard: Pay close attention to Blackboard announcements. Detailed information about the assignments and other relevant course information will be posted on the U of T Blackboard.

Accessibility:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible. AccessAbility staff (located in Rm 2047, South Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. For more info, please see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/access/>.

All UTM students are eligible to use the resources of the Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, writing workshops, and peer facilitated study groups, see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>.

ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE : All UTM students are eligible to use the resources of the Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, writing workshops, and peer facilitated study groups, see <http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/~w3asc/Students/index.htm>.

WRITING RESOURCES: Advice on Academic Writing

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>

Academic Standards: It is expected that students abide by the university's policies on academic honesty. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the following documents on plagiarism: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Turnitin.com

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Religious Observance: The University has a policy for consideration of religious observance: "It is important that no University member be seriously disadvantaged because of her or his religious observation....students have an obligation to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences. Every effort will be made avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times."

Late Policy:

1. Work is expected to be completed by the due date and submitted electronically via blackboard.
2. Students who need an extension must discuss their circumstances with me before the due date.
3. Requests for extension must be made prior to the due date.
4. All requests for extensions and/or accommodations should be made by email.
5. Late assignments should be submitted electronically via blackboard
6. Extensions will only be granted with an official UTM medical note or documentation relating to other emergencies such as death of a family member.
7. Late penalty is 2% per day off the final grade up to ten days past the due date (including weekends) after which work will not be accepted.
8. If your paper is late, it will likely be returned to you *after* the papers submitted on time are returned.
9. You must also declare your absence or illness on ROSI

Email Policy: Responses to emails will be made within two days, excluding weekends. Grades will not be discussed over email and assignments will not be accepted over email. Please write the course number, WGS202, in the subject line.