

Women's Studies 602
Methods of Inquiry in Women's Studies

Spring 2013
Tuesday, 4:00- 6:40
AL 318

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Office Hours: Wed 9:30-11:30 a.m.





This course will familiarize students with a variety of research methods for giving voice to women's experience and making visible the frequently invisible and undercounted aspects of women's lives. Students will become acquainted with current discussions of feminist epistemology, including feminist critiques of traditional research methods. We will focus on ways of incorporating and analyzing literary works, historical archives, film, ethnography, quantitative surveys, media discourse, and feminist participatory research. We will also discuss issues such as: How and by whom is knowledge produced and validated? Do distinctively feminist methods exist? What is the relationship of the researcher to the researched? How does the social location (race, class, sexual identity, etc.) of the researcher impact on research? What are the issues (ethical, political, epistemological, methodological) that arise in studying "others"? How is feminist theory related to research? How can research relate to efforts for social change?

The course will provide students with hands-on experience about some of the joys and dilemmas of doing research, and students will conceptualize and design their own research project and write a research proposal. The assignments are aimed at familiarizing students with a number of methods that they can apply to their own thesis project. The course ends with students completing their own thesis proposal, but the course is also applicable for students who have already proposed their thesis and are working on the thesis itself.

Several professors will visit the class with expertise on particular topics. Classes will also be interactive with open discussions on all readings, as well as discussion on the development of individual research proposals.

Readings

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Lina Leavy (2007). *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Articles on electronic reserve on Blackboard.sdsu.edu under Course Documents



Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the differences between feminist and traditional epistemologies and methodologies.
2. Use quantitative and qualitative research, archival research, participatory research, literary and film analysis, and discourse analysis in their own thesis.
3. Become careful and critical consumers of research presented in the media and in academic texts.
4. Complete the SDSU Institutional Review Board criteria for research.
5. Design research projects.
6. Use the internet and electronic databases for research.
7. Interpret and write up research results.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Class Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend class and participate actively in discussion each week. Come prepared and demonstrate that you have read and thought about the readings.

Students are expected to raise discussion questions in class as well as answer discussion questions raised by others. Good discussion questions:

1. are open-ended (that is, do not ask a question that can be answered yes or no)
2. refer to major themes of the reading (not minor or trivial points)
3. bring up critiques of the readings
4. relate the readings to other sources
5. result in class discussion and debate.



Weekly Research Assignments (5% each, for a total of 60%)

There is an assignment each week (11 assignments in all) that relates to the topic and readings of the prior week. The assignments have been constructed to provide hands-on experiences for students so they can apply various research methods and theoretical discussions directly to their proposed thesis. These assignments include:

1. Significance of topic
2. Position of researcher
3. Historical archives
4. Close reading of literature
5. Analyzing films
6. The IRB Tutorial
7. How to make a thesis proposal compelling
8. Media discourse
9. Literature review
10. Qualitative methods/ethnography
11. Quantitative surveys and meeting with a potential thesis/project/exam chair
12. Making sense of data

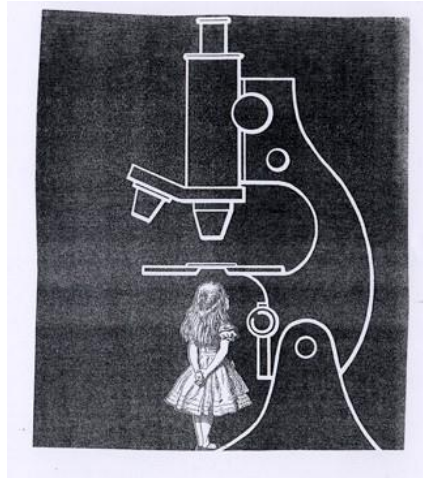
Weekly Research Assignments should be posted on Blackboard by noon on the day they are due. To do that:

- Get into the Blackboard site for this course—WMNST 602
- On the left, under Tools, click on Communication
- Click on Discussion Board
- I have created a “forum” for each assignment. Click on the relevant assignment.
- Click on Thread and then Add Thread to post your assignment

Research Proposal (30%)

Throughout the semester you will be writing a research proposal that will ideally serve as your thesis proposal. Several of the readings and assignments will help you to build toward the final proposal.

Due dates will be rigidly enforced—I will deduct HALF A GRADE FOR EACH DAY THAT AN ASSIGNMENT IS LATE.



Schedule

January 22

Introduction: What makes something “research”?

How do researchers select a research topic?

January 29

What is a feminist epistemology?

Readings from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 1: An Invitation to Feminist Research

Chapter 2: Feminist Empiricism: Challenging Gender Bias and “Setting the Record Straight”

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 1:

Get on scholar.google.com and research a possible thesis topic.

Write a two-page, double-spaced paper on why the topic is significant and how your approach is novel. Explain how your topic is feminist—what is its relationship to women’s studies? Be sure your paper has a title (this would be a tentative thesis title).

Due next week—February 5 at noon on Blackboard.

You can check out the list of all prior women’s studies master’s thesis titles/topics on <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~wsweb/masters.htm> and then click on “Recent M.A. Theses” (this list is also saved on Course Documents on Blackboard for this course).



February 5
Researching ourselves and others
Doing fieldwork

Readings from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 3: Feminist Standpoint Epistemology: Building Knowledge and Empowerment Through Women's Lived Experience
Chapter 7: The Feminist Practice of Ethnography

Electronic reading:

Kamala Visweswaran (1996) *Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts*. Chapter 3 in *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (pp. 40-59). Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Huma Ahmed-Ghosh

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 2:

Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper in which you situate yourself vis-a-vis your own thesis topic—how will it relate to your own lived experiences or not? Relate this to chapter 3 in the textbook. Due next week—February 12 at noon on Blackboard.



Tuesday, February 12

Using historical archives and writing feminist history

Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 6: The Practice of Feminist Oral History and Focus Group Interviews

GUEST SPEAKERS: Professor Laurel Bliss, Library and Information Access
Professor Susan Cayleff

Important: We will be meeting in Love Library Room 78 from 4-5 pm that day, and then coming back to our regular classroom.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 3:

Using two archives, look up primary sources (e.g., newspaper clippings, census data, advertisements in women's magazines, or other historical documents) about your thesis topic. Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper about how your topic has been covered in the past. Due next week—February 19 at noon on Blackboard.



February 19 Analyzing Literature

Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*
Chapter 4: Feminist Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

Electronic reading:

Paula Gunn Allen (1986). Kochinnenako in *Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Indian tale*. In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 222-244.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Anne Donadey

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 4: Select one genre of literature (e.g., poetry, science fiction, children's literature, romance novels, crime fiction, whatever—as long as it is fiction) and select two works that focus on the topic of your thesis. Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper in which you compare and contrast how these two works deal with your topic, being sure to focus on a close reading of the text. Due next week—February 26 at noon on Blackboard.

February 26 Analyzing Film and Visual Media

Electronic readings:

1. Anneke Smelik (1999). Feminist Film Theory. In P. Cook and M. Bernink (Eds.) *The Cinema Book* (2nd Ed.), pp. 353-365. London: British Film Institute.
2. Annette Kuhn (2007). Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration. *Visual Studies*, 22 (3), 283-292.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Anh Hua

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 5: Select two films, videos, or YouTube clips. Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper in which you compare and contrast how these two works deal with your topic. Due next week—March 5 at noon on Blackboard.



March 5

What is “science” and feminist critiques of science

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Sara Giordano

Electronic reading:

Angela Willey and Sara Giordano (2011). ‘Why Do Voles Fall in Love?’: Sexual Dimorphism and Monogamy Gene Research. Jill Fisher (ed.) *Gender and the Science of Difference: Cultural Politics of Contemporary Science and Medicine*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 6: All students in this course will be required to complete the IRB (Institutional Review Board) tutorial, whether or not they will be doing research with “human subjects” in their thesis. To complete the tutorial, get on <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gra/login.php>. You will need to create a username and password in order to access the tutorial. BE SURE TO SCHEDULE A FEW HOURS TO DO THIS. When you are done, you will get an IRB Tutorial confirmation certificate. Print this out; this certificate is due March 12 in class. (If you have already done this for a prior project or class, that’s fine—I just need to see proof of completion).

March 12

Research proposals

Electronic readings:

1. Nine sample thesis proposals are posted on Blackboard
2. Doreen Mattingly (2003). Call Centers, Gender, and Globalization: A Comparative Study. Sample sabbatical proposal.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 7: Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper in which you describe which two thesis proposals posted on Blackboard are most compelling and why (interesting, clearly written, easy to follow, persuasive). Due next week—March 19 at noon on Blackboard.



March 19

The Interpretive Turn: Discourse and Narrative Analysis

Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 8: The Feminist Practice of Content Analysis

Electronic readings:

1. Kimala Price (2010). The Quest for Purity: The Role of Policy Narratives in Determining Teen Girls' Access to Emergency Contraception in the USA. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7(1), 282-293.
2. Marian Meyers (2004). African American Women and Violence: Gender, Race and Class in the News. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(2), 95-118.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Kimala Price

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 9: Get on google.com to search popular media news items, blogs, and images about your thesis topic and write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper using narrative analysis. Due next week—March 26 at noon on Blackboard.



March 26

How theory grounds our research

Conducting a literature review

Doing an M.A. exam

Doing research in other countries via a Fulbright Grant

READINGS:

1. Look through 6-8 theses of former students in the GA office. Pay particular attention to how and where in the thesis they review the existing literature related to their topic.
2. Esther Rothblum (2008). An Overview of Same-Sex Couples in Relation Ships: A Research Area Still at Sea. Chapter 5 in D. A. Hope (Ed.) *Contemporary perspectives on lesbian, gay and bisexual identities* (pp. 113-140). Volume 54 of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation. NY: Springer.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Pat Huckle

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 8:

Get on the internet (e.g., scholar.google.com) and look at the literature for a possible thesis topic. Compile a bibliography of about 20 of the most relevant sources for your thesis topic. Then write a 5-page, double-spaced literature review of 7 of the most relevant sources. End with your own analysis of this literature, and what it implies for how you will approach your own thesis topic. Due in two weeks—April 9 at noon on Blackboard.

April 2

NO CLASS--SPRING BREAK



April 9

Qualitative Methods/Ethnography

Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 5: The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Irene Lara

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 10:

1. Get on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) and create a basic account (which is free). Then develop a 3-item qualitative online survey (open-ended items) related to your thesis topic. Due **THIS FRIDAY** April 12. Then some time between Saturday April 13 and Tuesday April 16 at noon take (i.e., fill out) the surveys of everyone in the class. Complete these surveys by April 16 at noon.
2. Meet with a potential chair of your thesis/project/exam this week. Be sure to discuss your thesis topic and potential methods, and ask your chair for suggestions for your thesis or project committee (one additional faculty member from Women's Studies and one faculty member from another department or MA exam (two additional faculty members from Women's Studies).



April 16
Quantitative methods
Conducting research online

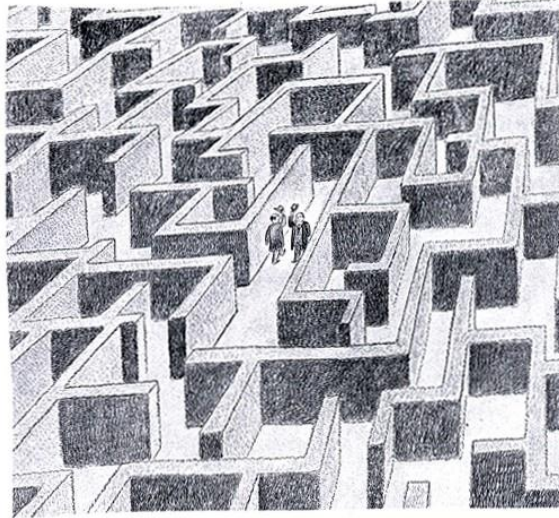
Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 9: Feminist Approaches to Mixed-Methods Research

Chapter 10: Feminist Survey Research

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 11:

1. On [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com), develop a 5-item quantitative online survey (true/false or multiple choice items) related to your thesis topic. Due **THIS FRIDAY**, April 19. Then some time between Saturday April 20 and Tuesday April 23 at noon take (i.e., fill out) the surveys of everyone in the class. Complete these surveys by noon on April 23.
2. Compile a list of 30 listservs or organizations where you would publicize a quantitative or qualitative study on your topic in order to find participants. Submit this list by noon on April 23.



April 23
Making sense of data

Reading from *Feminist Research Practice*

Chapter 11: Putting It All Together: Feminist Research Praxis

Electronic readings:

There are samples of undergraduate student (a) qualitative and (b) quantitative papers on Blackboard under Course Documents; all are about the same in-class survey. Read them to see which ones you think are most interesting, clear and persuasive and why.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 12: Write up the results of your quantitative and qualitative surveys that students completed online several weeks ago. Be sure to present all data in tables, graphs or pie charts and also to interpret them in the text. Due April 30 at noon on Blackboard.



April 30
Activism and feminist participatory research

Electronic readings:

1. Karen Kendrick (1998). Producing the Battered Woman: Shelter Politics and the Power of the Feminist Voice. In Nancy Naples (Ed.) *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (pp. 151-173). NY: Routledge.
2. Roberta Feldman, Susan Stall & Patricia Wright (2000). The Community Needs To Be Built By Us: Women Organizing in Chicago Public Housing. In Nancy Naples (Ed.) *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (pp. 257-264). NY: Routledge.

GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Pablo Ben, Department of History

Important: We will meet this week at my place for dinner at 5:30 pm: 4082 Albatross St., Apt. 4, in Hillcrest, and then drive to Lambda Historical Archives, 4545 Park Blvd., Suite 104, San Diego to meet Professor Ben at 7:15 pm for a tour of the archives.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: Final Research Proposal Due in class next week—May 7. Guidelines for thesis proposals are in the Graduate Student Handbook which is on Blackboard under Course Documents. Your thesis proposal should include: (a) an overview of your topic and its significance for women's studies and feminism, (b) why you chose this topic and your stance vis-à-vis this topic, (c) which theories influence your work on this topic, (d) a review of relevant literature, (e) your method(s) including participants/sources/measures/ archives and how you will interpret the data, (f) an outline of the chapters of your thesis, (g) your potential thesis/project chair and committee members, and (h) a proposed timeline.



May 7

Ethics in feminist research

Writing up research results in interesting ways

How to publish and determine authorship

Electronic readings:

1. Gesa Kirsch, Friendship, Friendliness, and Feminist Fieldwork. Special issue of *Signs: New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies* Vol. 30 no. 4, Summer 2005. Available online at <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu.libproxy.sdsu.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/428415>
2. Sabine Grenz, Intersections of Sex and Power in Research on Prostitution: A Female Researcher Interviewing Male Heterosexual Clients. Special issue of *Signs: New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies* Vol. 30 no. 4, Summer 2005. Available online at <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu.libproxy.sdsu.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/428418>
3. Corinne Glesne (1997). That Rare Feeling: Re-Presenting Research Through Poetic Transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(2), 202-220.