Description

Prerequisite: WMST400 or equivalent.
My aim in WMST 602 is to invite a conversation about the range methodological questions that arise in the construction of feminist knowledge. The way we set about “to know” (our methodological questions) is very much conditioned by what we value as knowledge (our epistemological premises). As we read, it is important for us to be cognizant of how these terrains inform each other. Such an engagement undergirds our work this semester.

This seminar is driven by multi- and interdisciplinary impulses. Throughout the semester I encourage you to use the texts as a point of departure for thinking about the range of methodological issues that you may encounter in your own research. While we will discuss the use of various methods in our readings, it is important to note that this is not a “methods” course, and as such we will not directly explore or assess the merits of any one method, nor will I require you to apply these methods in any direct, hands-on way. That said, I will ask you to pay particular attention to the range of methods deployed by the writer, how these methods have informed and structured the author’s claims, and the arguments that various writers offer in their work in support of their chosen method/s. Our primary goal is to think critically about the ways in which the authors engage the question of “how” in their research and argumentation. I will also ask that you focus on the disciplinary dilemmas, ethics and politics of feminist writing and research.

WMST 602 aims to achieve the following objectives:
• To examine the connections that feminist researchers have made between their theoretical questions and methodological engagements.
• To provide students with a forum to discuss the politics of feminist writing
• To examine the range of writing and research techniques and methods explored by feminist scholars (e.g. autobiography, ethnography, historiography, textual and discursive analysis, and case studies.)
• To explore the connections between a researcher’s methodological choices and the knowledge produced
• To examine the ethical and political dilemmas of feminist research

Throughout the semester our discussions will constantly interrogate the ways in which an author’s methodological choices enable her/him to challenge mainstream articulations of power. We will also look at the ways in which power structures are replicated in feminist research and explore the possibilities of reflexivity for mediating these structures of power within feminist scholarship. Among the questions for consideration are:
  - How do we navigate the politics of representation in research?
  - What do we make of research narratives, given the role of the feminist writer as author, possessing interpretive authority?
  - What are the ethical considerations when doing feminist research? Do these differ from non-feminist approaches?
  - Is reflexivity an adequate ethical location when navigating the power dynamics of the field or research site?

**Required Texts:**


**Religious Observances**
The University System of Maryland policy "Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance" provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs: students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. Please inform me in advance if you are going to be absent from class due to any religious observance.

**Accommodations for Students with Special Needs**
If you have any special needs related to your participation in this course, including identified visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, communication disorder, and/or specific learning disability that may influence your performance in this course, you should meet with us to arrange for reasonable provisions to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. At the discretion of the instructor, some accommodations may require prior approval by Disability Services. All communication will remain confidential.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

*Seminar Discussant:*
I expect you to come to class having carefully read the assigned materials and eager to participate in class discussions. Each student will be responsible for leading at least one seminar discussion. While preparing for your discussion section please:

- Craft succinct discussion questions
- Provide important background materials, e.g. does the text introduce a new method, concept, theory, text? Explore these elements and incorporate into your presentation.
- Remember to make clear connections between choice of method and knowledge production.

Therefore, in addition to your examination of the key points and arguments, think carefully about the method, the “field” and the research context of the research that have preceded the writing of the text. Use the broad arguments in the text to think deductively about method and methodology.
Perplexing Questions/Weekly Ruminations:
You will write FIVE (5) response papers of about two-three pages each during the course of the semester and post them on ELMS by 9:00 A.M. on the morning of the class. TWO of these I will ask you to co-author with at least two of your colleagues (WMST doctoral students should work together for one of these). Among the questions that you might wish to consider while writing your response papers are:

- How does the author challenge traditional ways of knowing?
- Is there a distinct “feminist method” at work? What are the connections that exist between the author’s method and the ways this method might be deployed by someone not writing from a feminist perspective?
- How are the intersections of knowledge and power challenged?
- Are we presented with alternative ways of pursuing and gathering data? How effective are these approaches?
- What do you think you now understand about the chosen methodological approach or method? What do you think you might still need to know?
- How might the text’s methodological approach(es) resonate with another you have read?

Additionally, I will ask you to post an engaged one page response to one or more of your colleagues, at least three times over the course of the semester. You may not do all three responses in a given week.

Final Paper:
There are multiple parts to the final paper for this course. The overall objective is to apply some of the methodological concerns raised throughout the semester to your own work.

Part One:
Identify the research topic that you will be working on by 9th February, 2011. Identify five research questions that will help you think more pointedly about this project and the steps you think you would need to take to answer these questions. Your final paper will require you to explore and apply one of the steps you have identified.

Part Two:
Drawing on no less than six secondary sources discuss:
- What do you understand as feminist research?
- What do you see as the relationship between feminist epistemology and methodology?
- How has feminist research changed the questions we ask in research, the sources that are seen as “legitimate” and the kinds of questions asked?
- Which methods do you see as most effective for your future research? Due 2nd March

Part Three:
Prepare a fifteen minute in class presentation of the research topic that synthesizes parts one and two for your colleagues. See syllabus for presentation date

Part Four:
In a twenty page paper synthesize parts one and two accounting, and adjusting for the ways in which your understanding of your research process has been influenced by the additional materials we’ve read. Additionally, this paper will present a discussion of what you learned as a result of pursuing the step that you identified earlier in the semester.

Please remember that this is not an opinion piece. Do draw on additional research material to support your arguments. A hard copy of your final paper is due in my box by 5:00 p.m. May 13th, 2011.
Wednesday 26th January
- Introduction to Course
- Assign discussant responsibilities.

February 2: Methodological Approaches: Feminist Method vs. Feminist Methodologies?

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene, and Patricia Lina Leavy. Chapters 1-4 and 11 Feminist Research Practice: A Primer.


February 9: Representing the Other and Narrative Interpretation


Paper Assignment One Due: Identification of Research Topic.

February 16: Feminist Research Field as Layered Fiction


February 23: Gesturing Toward Emotional Considerations Within Methodology


March 2nd: Gesturing Toward Emotional Considerations Within Methodology

Paper Assignment Two Due: Feminist Methodology

March 9th: Finding Women in Digital Cultures

March 16th: Historiography: Reading the Archives

SPRING BREAK March 21-25

March 30th Subjugated Knowledges and the Sociological Imagination

April 6:
Paper Assignment Three – Group One

April 13:
Paper Assignment Three – Group Two

April 20: Auto/biography as Method

April 27: Reviewing the Issues

May 4th: Ethics of the Field/Sexuality:

May 11th – Class Synthesis and Evaluation