

WGS 356: INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODS



(still from Cheryl Duny 's *Watermelon Woman*)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

A feminist research project acknowledges that the collection, analysis, and representation of data is skewed by historically uneven relationships of power based on gender and sexual difference. Feminist researchers respond to these biases by evaluating the ethics of collecting and interpreting data, and imagining and deploying alternative ways of processing and disseminating information.

In this class, participants will discuss scholars, activists, thinkers, and artists working at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, disability, and class to conceptualize your own feminist research projects. Throughout the quarter, we will pause to think through three broad topics of research (Beauty & Body Cultures, Kinship & Reproduction, Desire & Pleasure) in order to ask how different methodologies elicit different kinds of research products, or even how similar data can be analyzed and rendered differently by different researchers.

Other than helping you imagine and map your own feminist, queer, trans research project, this class is intended to help you read (and summarize) other's research more critically. This is a skill that will benefit you across the academy and beyond.

Class sessions will include seminar-style discussions, in-class presentations by students, brief lectures by the instructor, and interactive research workshops.

EVALUATION

- 40% - Participation and attendance
- 5% - Initial project proposal [Preliminary rationale, reference list] – Oct. 15
- 20% - 3 reflection assignments [Following three topic units] – Oct 2, Nov 6, Dec 2.
- 25% - Research project [Project rationale, literature review, method write-up] – Dec 12.
- 10% - Article review [In-class presentation + handout on assigned reading]

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation and attendance

This class will function primarily as a discussion seminar; as such, a large percent of your final grade is determined by the level of engagement with the class materials and with your peers that you demonstrate in class. The classroom is meant to be a challenging space that will encourage new insights, require you to think on your feet, and think through dialogue instead of working through ideas alone.

Come to class prepared to discuss the texts assigned each day. Bring a print copy, have a copy available on a tablet, or bring notes on the work that you have taken prior to class. Come to class with questions, and ask them not only to the instructor but to your peers as well.

Attendance will be taken at each class. *Unexcused* absences will drop your final Participation & Attendance grade by 5 percent. Notifying me via email of sudden illness or emergencies (I don't need all the details) that prevents your attendance prior to class is sufficient notice, i.e., don't miss class and pretend it's not a big deal... just let me know that you won't be in on any given day!

Reflection assignments

Following each unit, I will send you a prompt that will help you synthesize the questions raised by the materials we have read. You will submit 3-4 page reflections on the readings responding to the prompt and putting into conversation the material we have covered in the unit. This exercise is meant to help you compile your thoughts throughout the semester and to allow you to formulate your own opinions about others' scholarly work.

Article review & handout

Each student will be required to present on one of the readings in the 4 special topics units. We will allocate ten minutes per presenter. This review should describe: a) the research question, b) the social/cultural/political stakes, c) the object(s) of analysis, d) the method of research, e) the process of analysis and theories applied, f) the author's conclusions, g) a review of the author's bibliography (if available) and h) further questions or lines of inquiry. Your 1-page printed handout (double sided is fine) should detail the above information, and include between 3-5 useful quotes. This exercise is meant to help you improve critical reading skills.

Initial project proposal

Following our workshop with a research librarian and our in-class discussion of your research project, you are required to submit a 2-page proposal (double spaced, 12 pt TNR, 1 inch margins, w/ name in the header and page numbers in the footer). The first page should feature a title for your project, and one to two paragraphs describing the project and its importance. The second page should offer a bibliography of up to ten secondary sources that you have located that might be useful to consult for your literature review. At least 4 should be books, 4 should be articles, and the other 2 can be books, articles, or non-academic sources. This exercise is meant to give you a head start on your final project, and to help you apply your database research skills. You can consult www.lib.utexas.edu/refsites/style_manuals.html for proper bibliographic formats.

Final project

Your final project for this class will describe your research project (1-2 pages), offer a literature review of relevant works on the same topic (4 - 5 pages), and a methods write up of how you intend to complete the project and the ethical challenges of doing so (2 - 3 pages). Your *research description* should describe the objects of analysis, and explain the social, cultural, historical, political stakes of this project. This research description should make clear why the project is a feminist one, and should also gesture to the nature of the final research product (academic essay, performance, community project, etc.). The *literature review* should cover 10 sources (either the ones you acquired for your bibliography in the initial project proposal or new ones you have found). The literature review should demonstrate your skills at describing other people's research, putting them into dialogue with each other, and describing their similarity, difference, or relevance to your own project. The *methods section* should refer to texts we have read in class to explain the usefulness, dilemmas, and ethical debates surrounding the approach. You should tell us how you will gather your data, and what you will do with the data.

OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES

Accommodation

If you need accommodation for any facet of this course, make an appointment with me during the first two weeks of class. I will require accommodation letter from the Services for Students with Disabilities, www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/. If you already know you will miss class for UT business, religious holidays, or other reasons, notify me with appropriate documentation within the first two weeks of class.

Academic Integrity

Your writing should consist of *your* own ideas, words, and information you have collated. When you are quoting or referencing a resource other than your own work, please make this evident using the citation style guides listed above. You can refer to the university's policy on academic integrity at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Classroom Environment

The classroom is a place for dialogue across intellectual and identitarian difference; I am committed to making sure that all students can pursue their interests and engage with materials in an environment that is supportive and healthy. I ask us to respect each other's identities and also grant each other grace to make mistakes. We must own and acknowledge our privileges, and be humble enough to apologize when our language offends. We will make space for under-represented voices, introverts, and non-verbal thinkers.

UT "prohibits unlawful discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, including sexual harassment, age, disability, citizenship, and veteran status. [...] This policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression." (UT Nondiscrimination Policy, 4.B.1). You can read more about this policy and its implications at <https://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/nondiscrimination-policy>

SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: What is feminist research?

Thursday Aug 27: Introduction to Feminist research

Tuesday Sep 1: Barabara Christian: "The Race for Theory"; Audre Lorde: "The Master's Tools

Thursday Sep 3: Susan Stryker: "(De)Subjugated Knowledges"

Tuesday Sep 8: Patricia Hill Collins: "Learning from the Outsider Within"

UNIT 2.1: Objects and subjects: literary, discourse, film, theatre, music, and dance analysis

Thursday Sep 10: Laura Mulvey: Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (Sec III onwards [p 4-10]); Jill Dolan: "The Dynamics of Desire"

Tuesday Sep 15: Susan Manning: "The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze"; Michelle Lazar: "Discover the power of femininity"

UNIT 2.2: Beauty and Body Cultures

Thursday Sep 17: Susan Bordo: "Material Girl" from *Unbearable Weight*; autostraddle.com: "Nikky Minaj's Feminism..."

Tuesday Sep 22: Vanita Reddy: "Beauty and the Limits of Belonging"

Thursday Sep 24: E. Patrick Johnson: "Scatter the Pigeons"; Joe Jimenez: "El Abeulo"

UNIT 3: Getting your project started

Tuesday Sep 29: Gregory Booth: excerpts from *The Craft of Research* [bring in final paper topic ideas]

Thursday Oct 1: Workshop with research librarian Carolyn Cunningham: PCL Learning Lab 3

Tuesday Oct 6: Mid-semester check-in

UNIT 4.1: The body as research instrument: oral history, interview, ethnography, practice-based research

Thursday Oct 8: Kirin Narayan: How Native is a Native Anthropologist?

Tuesday Oct 13: David Valentine: Introduction to *Imagining Transgender*

Thursday Oct 15: Kamala Visweswaran: "Betrayal in Three Acts"; excerpts from Ruth Behar: *Translated Woman*

UNIT 4.2: Kinship and Reproduction

Tuesday Oct 20: Kath Weston: "Forever is a Long Time" in *Long Slow Burn*

Thursday Oct 22: Workshop on family stories w/ Sam Blake and Briana Bower

Tuesday Oct 27: Jennie Livingston: *Paris is Burning* (movie); bell hooks: "Is Paris Burning?"; Tavia Nyong'o: "After The Ball"

Thursday Oct 29: Laura Mamo: "Going High Tech" in *Queering Reproduction*

UNIT 5.1: Herstory, whose story? Memoir, archives, & digital research

Tuesday Nov 3: Workshop in the Gloria Anzaldua archives

Thursday Nov 5: Matt Richardson: "Women's History in the New Millennium"

Tuesday Nov 10: Dean Spade: "Mutilating Gender"; Robert Reid Pharr: "Living as a Lesbian"

Thursday Nov 17: Nayan Shah: Sexuality, identity, and the uses of history; Susan Stryker: *Screaming Queens* (movie)

UNIT 5.2: Desire and pleasure

Tuesday Nov 17: Cheryl Dunyé: *Watermelon Woman* (movie)

Thursday Nov 19: Andil Gosine: "Brown to Blonde at gay.com"

Tuesday Nov 24: Gary Fisher & Eve Sedgwick: excerpts from *Gary in Your Pocket*

Thursday Nov 26: Settler-colonial break

Tuesday Dec 1: Workshop projects in class

Thursday Dec 3: Workshop projects in class

Friday Dec 11: Final project due via email to kareem.khubchandani@utexas.edu



(still from Victor Silverman and Susan Stryker's *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*)