

Capstone: Feminist Theory and Methods

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies 1910 (CRN 30175)
Wednesday 12:00-2:25 – 402 Cathedral of Learning

Dr. Frayda Cohen, 402-C CL
University of Pittsburgh
Email – frcst5@pitt.edu

OFFICE HOURS – Monday 1:00-2:30PM and Thurs. 1:00-4:00PM and by appt.

Class contact # 1 _____ **email** _____

Texts

Course Reading Packet. Available online through course web. (CW)

2014 Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Lina Leavy eds. Feminist Research Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (FRP)

2013 Craven, Christa and Dana-Ain Davis, ed. Feminist Activist Ethnography. New York: Lexington Books. (FAE) – Available online through Pittcat.

2010 Browne, Kath and Nash, Catherine, eds. Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theory and Social Science. (QMM) - Available online through Pittcat.

Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to research in which we explore methods utilized by researchers across the social sciences and humanities that are engaged in research in gender, sexuality, and women's studies (formal interviews, life histories, focus groups, surveys, archival research, participant observation, etc.). We will address such key questions as:

- "What makes research feminist?"
- How is feminist theory employed by the social sciences, humanities, and other disciplines?
- What role does a feminist researcher play?

This course will help students to both build a "toolkit" for conducting research, and also encourage students to move beyond the toolkit approach as they work to deconstruct and unsettle "what makes a method, methodology, or epistemology "feminist," "anti-racist," "decolonial," or "queer" (Brandzel, 1).

University and GSWS Program Policies and Statements

Disability resources and services:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/> .

Academic integrity and plagiarism:

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to: www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html.

Classroom recording policy:

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

E-mail policy:

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

Violation of the Academic Integrity Code requires the instructor to submit an Academic Integrity Violation Report to the Dean's Office.

Cell phone and laptop policy:

All cell phones and other electronic communication devices are to be turned to the off setting during class. Laptops are to be used for note-taking only.

Non-discrimination policy:

As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. For more information, visit <http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf>

Gender-Inclusive language guidelines:

Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, the University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program provides guidelines and resources regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language (gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432). Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh's Non-Discrimination Policy: <https://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html>.

Content warning and class climate:

Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

Sexual misconduct, required reporting, and Title IX:

The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
- SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>

Course Policies

Attendance: VERY IMPORTANT

You are paying for an opportunity to learn. Absences hurt your ability to learn and they hurt your grade. Signing up for this class indicates that you are committed to being here for the full class period each class meeting. For the purposes of this policy, you are either present for an entire class meeting or not. Late arrivals and early departures will count as absences — really.

You are allowed one unexcused absence over the course of the semester. Save them up for those awful sick days when you can't drag yourself to class without pain and embarrassing bouts of nausea. If you miss class, you are still responsible for whatever was covered in lecture and discussion that day.

Unexcused absences in excess of one will be excused only under exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. Requests for excused absences must be submitted in writing, with documentation, and immediately upon a student's return to class.

Students who enroll late are not exempt from this policy.

Assignments and Extensions

Assignments (except for quizzes, in-class work, and the like) will be announced well in advance of due dates. If you know in advance that you can't make a due date, please discuss it with me beforehand. In all other cases, late assignments will not be accepted.

Grades

I am eager to help you do well on assignments BEFORE they are due. Please visit me during office hours to ask me questions when you are working on an assignment or reviewing material. Grades are final. I grade assignments and quizzes on performance, not effort. Final grades will be based on the standard university percentage scale: Points. A+ (100 – 97); A (96.9 – 93); A- (92.9 – 90); B+ (89.9 – 87); B (86.9 – 83); B- (82.9 – 80); C+ (79.9 – 77); C (76.9 – 73); C- (72.9 – 70); D+ (69.9 – 67); D (66.9 – 63); D- (62.9 – 60); F (59.9 and less).

The professor reserves the right to adjust students' semester grades based upon her evaluation of their overall performance.

Course Requirements: Total 325 Points

I. CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (50 points):

It is very important that you attend all sessions to benefit fully from the readings, lectures, and class discussion. In order to participate actively in discussion, you should prepare the assigned readings before class begins.

Participation will be measured both in-class and online. The online participation grade will be determined by "talking point memos" which are brief outlines of the reading that emphasize key terms and quotes for discussion. They should be no longer than one page long and should be posted to your journal in CourseWeb under assignments. Talking points should be submitted for at least 6 weeks (your choice).

GSWS Event Blog:

Students are required to attend one GSWS Event (preferably a talk related to research and/or methods) and post a minimum of two blog posts on the event (one of their own, and one in response to someone else's post questions/comments). Posts may include links to class readings and/or other events, or they may introduce a new point for discussion.

For a full list of events see: <http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/events>

Participation will be graded on S/NC basis and should be submitted at least one hour before class.

II. Discussion Leader (25 Points)

During the semester you will be responsible for leading discussion for one set of readings. You should have at least 5 open-ended questions and they should be emailed to me the night before for feedback. Class discussion should last 15-20 minutes and should be an open discussion rather than you presenting a chapter.

III. Research Journals (5 Assignments @ 25 points: Total 125 Points)

All returned papers should be saved and turned back in as a completed portfolio at the end of the semester. Please buy an expandable folder in which you put all your written work for the semester. In my evaluation, I will look for evidence of thoughtful responses to the readings, the development of your project and analytical writing and evidence of a serious and sustained commitment to making sense of the diversity of perspectives that make up feminist research. Email submissions will lose ½ grade.

- ✓ Assignment #1 – Field Site + Reflection (Mandatory)
- ✓ Choose 2 of the following 4 Self-Selecting assignments (posted under assignments):
 - Assignment #2 – Participant Observation + Reflection
 - Assignment #3 – Survey/Focus Group + Reflection
 - Assignment #4 – Oral/Life History + Reflection
 - Assignment #5 – Media Analysis + Reflection
- ✓ Assignment #6 – Annotated Bibliography (Mandatory)
- ✓ Assignment #7 – Full Proposal Draft + Reflection (Mandatory)

IV. Final Research Proposal (100 Points) & Presentation (25 points):

The ultimate goal of this course is to develop a research design and write a completed proposal. Each student should find an interesting topic early in the course that reflects an interest related to the study of gender, sexuality, and women's studies that also provides an opportunity for local fieldwork and research. Students will be expected to conduct preliminary research throughout the semester (Above Assignments #1-4). This will include archival research, interviews, and participant observations. These notes, in conjunction with a literature review and a synthesis of class themes will serve as the basis for a 12-15 page research proposal (**100 points**). The proposals will be presented (using Powerpoint) in class during the last two weeks.

Proposals are due (in the GSWS Program office) NO LATER than 4:30PM on April 26, 2016. Papers must also be submitted using TURNITIN.

Semester Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1

January 4

Discuss: Overview of Class

Film: "Kypseli: Women and Men a World Apart"
Youtube – MacArthur Grant – Braddock, PA

Week 2

January 11

What is Feminist Research?

Discuss: FRP – pages 1-52
FAE - *Introduction*

Week 3

January 18

Workshop: *Preliminary Research Proposal*

Library Visit (1:30-2:30)

Week 4
January 25

Library Visit – meet at Hillman

Due: Field Site + Reflection

Email submissions will be accepted with a 1/2 grade penalty.

Week 5
February 1

Feminism and Interpretation

Discuss: FRP – chapter 9

Belsey – “Textual Analysis as a Research Method” In
Research Methods for English Studies, ed. Griffin
On CW.

Week 6
February 8

Communities and Interviewing

Discuss: FRP – Chapters 6 and 7

Haywood – *Making Connections* (CW)

Week 7
February 15

Oral Histories

Discuss: Leavy – “The Practice of Feminist Oral History” (CW)

Summerfield - “Oral History as a Research Method” In
Research Methods for English Studies, ed. Griffin
On CW.

FAE – Chapter 7 (Lopez)

Due: Self-Selecting Assignment + Reflection **OR**

Annotated Bibliography

Email submissions will be accepted with a 1/2 grade penalty.

Week 8
February 22

Feminist Ethnography

Discuss: FRP -Chapter 5

FAE – Chapter 3 (Weis) + Reflection (Morgensen)

Week 9
March 1

NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Due: Self-Selecting Assignment + Reflection **OR**

Annotated Bibliography

Email submissions will be accepted with a 1/2 grade penalty.

Week 10
March 8

NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Week 11
March 15

Surveys and Praxis
Discuss: FRP – Chapters 10 and 11
FAE – Chapter 4 (Marzullo)

Week 12
March 22

Feminism, Science & Public Health
Discuss: Gould (CW)
Terry (CW)
FAE – Chapter 2 (Anglin)

Due: Self-Selecting Assignment + Reflection **OR**
Annotated Bibliography
Email submissions will be accepted with a ½ grade penalty.

Week 13
March 29

Feminist Ethics
Discuss: Constable (CW)
FRP- Chapter 4

DUE: Assignment – Proposal Draft + Portfolio
Email submissions will be accepted with a ½ grade penalty.

Week 14
April 5

Guest Lecturer: Chris Haywood

Discuss: TBA

Week 15
April 12

Due: PRESENTATIONS

Week 16
April 19

Due: PRESENTATIONS

Week 17
April 26

**Due: FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL and REFLECTION DUE in
GSWS Office by 4:30PM.**

Email submissions will be accepted with a ½ grade penalty.