

FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Sociology 290: Advanced Topics in Sociological Analysis
Graduate Seminar, Spring Quarter 2019
University of California, Santa Cruz
Wednesdays 9-12pm, 301 Rachel Carson College

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Office hours signup sheet [online](#), link also accessible through my UCSC faculty website

Methodology: a system of ways of doing, teaching, or studying something.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What distinguishes *feminist* research methods from traditional or normative research methods? What are the theoretical and political implications of a feminist methodology for designing research questions, specifying the forms of evidence that will answer your questions, and choosing specific research practices (e.g. *how* you will know what you need to know)? What are the implications for the ways you analyze and write about your research notes (or “data”)? Is writing (and genre) also a methodological question? How do feminist modes of inquiry and research practice overlap and potentially differ from decolonial and queer research methodologies? How might we theorize and account for the overabundance of state-collected data and the absence (or absent present) of evidence from social groups that are historically un-accounted for and/or over-represented in de-humanizing ways? How do we theorize and account for (and act responsibly in light of) some of the power relations inherent to the fieldwork process,

especially the history of the ways social science research has tended to “collect stories of pain and humiliation in the lives of those being researched” (Tuck and Wang 2014)?

This advanced graduate seminar explores these and other questions through a reading list that includes key texts, concepts, and conversations in feminist, feminist science studies, decolonial, and queer methodologies. Through a wide-ranging survey of feminist and related research methodologies, this class aims to plant thought-seeds for future study, and to inform the research design and methodological-theoretical-political commitments of each student’s dissertation project.

GOALS

Explore and discuss some of the theories and politics that have informed feminist research methodologies, as developed within sociology and related disciplines.

Explore and discuss overlaps and differences between feminist research methods and decolonial and queer research methods.

Explore and discuss concepts and analytical frameworks that help reflect and theorize on one's positionality and responsibility as a researcher and writer.

Learn about specific feminist, decolonial, and queer research practices (with a focus on qualitative methods), including ethnographic fieldwork, interview and survey research, and archival research.

Engage in spirit of generosity and “an attitude of attentive receptivity” and “intellectual friendship” (which does not necessitate agreement) both with the texts and with each other (see David Scott's *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity*, 2017).

Develop and clarify your dissertation project's research methodology in relation to some of the course readings.

EXPECTATIONS

1. Attendance and active participation at weekly seminars. This includes coming prepared to contribute to class discussion, and to engage with other people's ideas in generous and thoughtful ways.

2. Eight 1-1½ page weekly responses, uploaded to Canvas. You can summarize, compare and contrast, agree/disagree (clearly stating why...). **Do include at least**

a few sentences thinking through the relevance (or irrelevance) of these readings to your own dissertation project. Please upload your reading responses to the week's Discussion Thread on Canvas by **Monday at 10pm.**

3. Brief but thoughtful comments on other student's reading responses. Before coming to seminar on Wednesday, please read through other reading responses and **comment** (via Canvas) **on at least two responses.**

4. (Potential) occasional group presentations on reading material (depending on whether and how we split up the reading for a particular week).

5. A final paper in which you explore the theoretical and political implications of several texts that are most important to you and your dissertation project, and in which you develop and clarify the foundations and rationale for your research methodology (or expected methodology). **The paper should be at least 6-8 pages and is due by Friday, June 14, 2019.**

READINGS

The following books are available for purchase at The Literary Guillotine (and at McHenry Library on 2-hr. reserve):

Sangin Writers and Richa Nagar. *Playing With Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism Through Seven Lives in India.* University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work.* University of California Press, 2015.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton University Press, 2011.

Meadow, Tey, and Kristen Schilt, eds. *Other, Please Specify: Queer methods in sociology.* University of California Press, 2018

Ahmed, Sara. *Living a feminist life.* Duke University Press, 2017.

All other readings (articles and selected book chapters) are available on Canvas. I've also suggested and uploaded optional readings for further study.

READING SCHEDULE

If a (*) appears next to the text (see below), you can find it on Canvas.

If you haven't already read the following texts, please read before Week 2:

*Haraway, Donna. "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective." *Feminist studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-599.

*Collins, Patricia Hill. "Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought." *Social problems* 33, no. 6 (1986): s14-s32.

Week 1—April 3—An Invitation to Feminist Research

The following readings are only suggested, as a way to begin learning thinking about (and asking questions about) feminist research methodologies before the first day of class:

*DeVault, Marjorie L. "Talking back to sociology: Distinctive contributions of feminist methodology." *Annual review of sociology* 22, no. 1 (1996): 29-50.

*Brooke and Hesse-Biber. "An Invitation to Feminist Research" in *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, (Sage, 2007), pp. 1-24).

Read especially for an overview of positivism and feminist critiques of positivism.

*Wolf, Diane. "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork" in *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork* (Routledge, 1996), pp. 1-38. *I recommend the section on feminist epistemology (p. 4); feminist standpoints (p. 13); and postfieldwork conundrums (p. 32).*

Further reading

*Durkheim, Emile. "Rules for the Observation of Social Facts," in *The Rules of Sociological Method*.

Week 2—April 10—Readings in Feminist Epistemologies

*Harding, Sandra. "Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is 'strong objectivity?'" *The Centennial Review* 36, no. 3 (1992): 437-470.

*Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses." *Feminist review* 30 (1988): 61-88.

*Scott, Joan W. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773-797.

Read either (or both!)

*Zavella, Patricia. "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with Chicana Informants." In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, pp. 138-159. Routledge, 2018.

*Rofel, Lisa. "Where Feminism Lies: Field Encounters in China." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 13, no. 3 (1993): 33-52.

Further reading

*"The Combahee River Collective Statement" and "Introduction" in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, edited and introduced by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Chicago: Haymarket Books), pp. 1-27.

*Harding, Sandra. 2014. "Feminist Standpoints." In *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (Hesse-Biber, ed). *Skim especially the beginning of this chapter for an overview of feminist standpoint epistemology.*

*Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Introduction: Cartographies of struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism." *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (1991): 1-47. *Attend to how Mohanty works with Dorothy Smith's notion of "relations of ruling.*

*Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "'Under western eyes' revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles." *Signs: Journal of Women in culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 499-535 (**recommended** to complement her 1988 article).

Poovey, Mary. *A history of the modern fact: Problems of knowledge in the sciences of wealth and society*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

*Rich, Adrienne. "Notes towards a politics of location." *Feminist postcolonial theory: A reader* (1984): 29-42.

*Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

*Sprague, Joey, and Diane Kobryniewicz. "A feminist epistemology." In *Handbook of the sociology of gender*, pp. 25-43. Springer, Boston, MA, 2006 (**recommended for a good overview of feminist methods in sociology**).

*Stone-Mediatore, Shari. "Chandra Mohanty and the revaluing of 'experience'." *Hypatia* 13, no. 2 (1998): 116-133.

Week 3—April 17—Collaborative Knowledge Production and Situated Solidarities

Sangin Writers and Richa Nagar. *Playing With Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism Through Seven Lives in India* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Read either (or both!):

***Rose, Gillian.** "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and other Tactics." *Progress in Human Geography* 21, no. 3 (1997): 305-320.

***Nagar, Richa.** "Reflexivity, Positionality, and Languages of Collaboration" in *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring feminisms across scholarship and activism* (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

Further reading

*Nagar, Richa, and Roozbeh Shirazi. "Radical Vulnerability." *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50* (2019): 236-242.

Week 4—April 24—Researching Sex Work in a Global Political Economy

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. University of California Press, 2015.

***Agustin, Laura.** "The (Crying Need) for Different Kinds of Research." *Research for Sex Work* 5, 30-32 (June 2002). Accessed at <https://www.lauraagustin.com/the-crying-need-for-different-kinds-of-research>

Further reading

Agustín, Laura María. *Sex at the margins: Migration, labour markets and the rescue industry*. Zed books, 2007.

*Rubin, Gayle. "The traffic in women: Notes on the " political economy" of sex." (1975).

Week 5—May 1—The Subject of Feminism

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

Further reading

*Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist theory, embodiment, and the docile agent: Some reflections on the Egyptian Islamic revival." *Cultural anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 202-236.

*Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the subaltern speak?." *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea* (1988): 21-78.

Week 6—May 8—Decolonializing Methodologies

- *Smith, Linda Tuihivai, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Zed Books 2013, 2nd edition), pp. 1-97.
- *Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "R-words: Refusing research." *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (Sage, 2014), pp. 223-248.
- *Lowe, Lisa. "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 191-208.

Further reading

- *Simpson, Audra. "On ethnographic refusal: indigeneity, 'voice' and colonial citizenship." *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9 (2007).
- Decolonizing Science Reading List. Medium. <https://medium.com/@chanda/decolonising-science-reading-list-339fb773d51f>
- *Kukutai, Tahu and John Taylor. *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward and Agenda* (Australian National University Press, 2016). Available at: <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n2140/pdf/book.pdf?referer=2140>
 - *Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Unbecoming claims: Pedagogies of refusal in qualitative research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, no. 6 (2014): 811-818.

Week 7—May 15—Queer Methodologies

- Meadow, Tey, and Kristen Schilt, eds. *Other, Please Specify: Queer methods in sociology*. University of California Press, 2018 (selections)
- ***We will read part of the book together, and divide up other parts of the book to present back to the group during seminar.
- Agard-Jones, Vanessa. "What the Sands Remember." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18, no. 2-3 (2012): 325-346.

Further reading

- *Ahmed, Sara. *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Duke University Press, 2006.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An archive of feelings: Trauma, sexuality, and lesbian public cultures*. (Duke University Press, 2003)

Week 8—May 22—Readings in Feminist Science Studies

- *Martin, Emily. "The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16, no. 3 (1991): 485-501.
- *Terry, Jennifer. "Unnatural Acts" in Nature: The Scientific Fascination with Queer Animals." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no. 2 (2000): 151-193

- *Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter." *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801-831.
- *Wilson, Elizabeth A. "Gut Feminism." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3 (2004): 66-94.

Further reading

- *Barad, Karen. "Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come." *Derrida today* 3, no. 2 (2010): 240-268.
- *Haraway, Donna. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OnceMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (Routledge, 1996) (esp the chapter "Modest Witness).

Week 9—May 29—Suspending Damage

- *Kelley, Robin D. G. "Looking for the 'Real' Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto", In *Yo'mama's disfunkcional!: Fighting the culture wars in urban America*. Beacon Press, 1997, pp. 15-42.
- *Tuck, Eve. "Suspending damage: A letter to communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409-428.
- *TallBear, Kim. "Standing with and speaking as faith: a feminist-indigenous approach to inquiry." *Journal of Research Practice* 10, no. 2 (2014): 17.
- Sadiya Hartman. "An Unnamed Girl, A Speculative History" *The New Yorker* (February 19, 2019). <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/an-unnamed-girl-a-speculative-history>

Week 10—June 5—Endings

- Ahmed, Sara. *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- *Mott, Carrie, and Daniel Cockayne. "Citation matters: mobilizing the politics of citation toward a practice of 'conscientious engagement'." *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017): 1-20.
- "Citation is a Gift: 'Punking' Accounting in #hautalk" *Footnotes Blog*. <https://footnotesblog.com/2018/07/07/guest-post-citation-is-a-gift-punking-accounting-in-hautalk/>

Further reading

- *Liboiron, Max, Justine Ammendolia, Katharine Winsor, Alex Zahara, Hillary Bradshaw, Jessica Melvin, Charles Mather et al. "Equity in Author Order: A Feminist Laboratory's Approach." *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 3, no. 2 (2017).