

Soc 212F  
S'06

Spring 2006  
Tuesday 2-5  
2816 Ellison  
Office Hours: Thursday 2-5 & by appointment

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## **Sociology 212F: Feminist Research Methods**

### **Course Description:**

This course provides a methodological and epistemological overview of feminist approaches to sociological research. It will introduce students to the various methods for conducting empirical research used by feminist researchers, including ethnography, interviewing, oral history, case studies, participatory action research, survey research, textual and visual analysis, and multiple methods research. Students will gain experience using feminist research methods through conducting a mini-research project. We will focus our attention on how to design research projects that capture gender in relation to other social and cultural categories of difference; that account for the variation in gender regimes across time and culture; and that situate the study of gender in a transnational frame. Readings focus on feminist epistemologies, the ethical dilemmas and politics of feminist inquiry, and the strategies and methods involved in collecting and analyzing primary data.

### **Required Texts:**

Naples, Nancy A. 2003. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. New York: Routledge.

Course reader, available from Grafikart in Isla Vista, 968-3575.

### **Optional Text (recommended as a resource):**

Reinharz, Shulamit. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Course Requirements:**

Student evaluations will be based on the following work and assignments:

#### **1. Class Participation:**

There will be few formal lectures. Rather, the readings will be used as background for discussion, and students will share their work and discuss methodological issues raised by the field assignments. It will not be possible to earn an "A" without meaningful participation in classroom discussion.

#### **2. Short Paper Analyzing an Exemplar of Feminist Research:**

Select a journal article or book that uses feminist methods to conduct empirical research. Write a short (3-4 page) paper in which you identify and discuss whether and how feminist methods inform every aspect of the research, including the choice of the topic and method, ethical and political dilemmas of conducting the research and analyzing the data, and dilemmas related to the representation, dissemination, and uses of the research. **Due April 25.**

### 3. Student Mini-Projects:

Each student will complete a mini-research project using at least one of the major feminist research methods. You may choose any method or use more than one method where appropriate. I am happy to adjust this assignment, as well as the final paper assignment for students working on research for their Master's theses or doctoral dissertations.

The Mini-Project will involve several steps.

**Step 1:** Submit a one-paragraph statement of the topic and setting for your study. **Due May 2.**

**Step 2:** Do a very brief literature review to determine who else has studied this topic or something similar. Note especially the theoretical standpoints and conceptualizations used by others and any gaps or inconsistencies in existing knowledge about the topic. Emphasize especially how feminist research methods can be used to expand our understanding of the topic.

**Step 3:** Collect your data.

**Step 4:** Keep ongoing notes of your field experiences, reflections, impressions, questions, descriptions, observations, and personal reactions.

**Step 5:** Make a brief (15-minute) presentation to the class describing and evaluating progress on your mini-research project.

**Step 6:** Write up your paper. The final paper should summarize the procedures, problems, and successes of your research and should emphasize the research methodology. Substantive findings should be noted primarily to the extent that they are relevant to the discussion of methodology. Make certain to incorporate course readings in your analysis by framing your paper to address issues and debates in the literature on feminist research methods.

The first half of the paper should focus on describing the problem, situating the topic in the existing literature on the subject with an emphasis on how the use of feminist methods revises or expands our understanding, then describing the data and presenting and analyzing your preliminary findings. The second half of the paper should be a critical discussion of the methods used, any problems you encountered and how you managed them, and what you have learned about feminist research methods.

The paper will be evaluated on the basis of its clarity, organization, understanding of the readings and class discussion, and what you have learned from the experience. Reports of mistakes, errors in judgment, failures, etc. will NOT result in a poor evaluation. Where these occur, make certain to suggest what you might do differently the next time.

You are encouraged to discuss your work with other students, and you may choose to collaborate in collecting and analyzing data for this project. However, each student should complete the final paper individually. The paper to be handed in should not exceed 18-20 double-spaced pages and is due on **June 12**. Hand in two copies, one of which will be returned to you with comments.

**Criteria for Evaluation:**

Final grades will be based on the following:

Class participation	10
Review of qualitative research	10
Presentation on Mini-Projects	20
Paper on Mini-Projects	60
	100

Incompletes will be allowed only as a result of illnesses and emergencies.

**Course Outline:**

April 4: Introduction to the Course: Is there a Feminist Methodology?

April 11: Feminist Epistemology and Overview of Feminist Methodology

Harding, Sandra. 1987. "Is there a Feminist Method?" in *Feminism and Methodology*, Sandra Harding, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Pp. 1-14.

Fonow, Mary Margaret and Judith A. Cook. 2005. "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy," *Signs* pp 2211-2236.

Oleson, Virginia. 2005. "Early Millennial Feminist Qualitative Research: Challenges and Contours" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln, eds. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Pp 235-278.

Twine, France Winddance. 2000, "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies" in *Racing Research Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*, Twine and Warren, eds. New York; New York University Press. Pp 1-34.

Naples, Nancy. 2003, Part I and Part II in *Feminism and Method*, New York: Routledge, pp 13-33.

#### April 18: Doing Feminist Research: The Diversity of Feminist Methods

Sprague, Joey. 2005. "How Feminists Count: Critical Strategies for Quantitative Methods in *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*, ed. Joey Sprague, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. Pp. 81-117.

Presser, Lois. 2005. "Negotiating Power and Narrative in Research: Implications for Feminist Methodology." *Signs* 30: 2067-90.

Wilkinson, Sue. 2004. "Focus Groups: a Feminist Method" in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, Pp. 271-295.

Taylor, Verta and Leila J. Rupp. 1991. "We Make Our Own History. But Not Just as We Please" in *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Experience*, eds. Fonow and Cook. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Pp. 119-132.

Khan, Shahnaz. 2005. "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age." *Signs* 30: 2017-35.

#### April 25: Dilemmas of Feminist Research Practice: Ethical and Political Issues

Bhavnani, Kum-Kum. 1993. "Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity." *Women's Studies International Forum* 16: 95-104.

Taylor, Verta and Rupp, Leila J. 2005. "When the Girls are Men: Negotiating Gender and Sexual Dynamics in a Study of Drag Queens." *Signs* 30: 2115-2139.

Blee, Kathleen M. 1998. "White-Knuckle Research: Emotional Dynamics in Fieldwork with Racist Activists." *Qualitative Sociology* 21: 381-99.

Halse, Christine and Anne Honey. 2005. "Unraveling Ethics: Illuminating the Moral Dilemmas of Research Ethics." *Signs* 30: 2141-62

#### May 2: Feminist Ethnography

Stacey, Judith. 1991. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" in *Women's Words*. Eds. Sherna B. Gluck and Daphne Patai. New York: Routledge, Pp. 111-19.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. "Designing an Ontology for Institutional Ethnography" in *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, Pp. 49-73.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. "Work Knowledges" in *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, Pp. 145-164.

Gonzalez-Lopez, Gloria. 2005. "Introduction" and "Twice Forgotten." In *Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Pp. 1-37.

Rubenstein, Steven L. 2004. "Fieldwork and the Erotic Economy on the Colonial Frontier." *Signs* 29: 1041-71.

#### May 9: Feminist Interview Research

Oakley, Ann. 1981. "Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms" in *Doing Feminist Research*, ed. Helen Roberts. London: Routledge, Pp. 30-61.

Williams, Christine L. and E. Joel Heikes. 1993. "The Importance of Researcher's Gender in the In-Depth Interview: Evidence from Two Case Studies of Male Nurses." *Gender & Society* 7: 280-91.

Bleen, Kathleen M. and Verta Taylor. 2002. "Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research" in *Methods of Social Movement Research*, eds. Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Pp. 92-117.

Grenz, Sabine. 2005. "Intersections of Sex and Power in Research on Prostitution: A Female Researcher Interviewing male Heterosexual Clients." *Signs* 30: 2091-2113.

Hercus, Cheryl. 1999. "Identity, Emotion, and Feminist Collective Action." *Gender & Society* 13: 34-55.

#### May 16: Textual and Visual Analysis Feminist Multiple Methods Research

Smith, Dorothy E. 1990. "Femininity as Discourse" in *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 159-208.

Errante, Antoinette. 2004. "But Sometimes You're Not Part of the Story: Oral Histories and Ways of Remembering and Telling" in *Feminist Perspectives on*

*Social Research*, eds. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. New York: Oxford University Press, Pp. 411-34.

Taylor, Verta. 1998. "Feminist Methodology in Social Movements Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 21: 357-79.

Taylor, Verta and Leila J. Rupp. 2005. "Crossing Boundaries in Participatory Action Research: Performing Protest with Drag Queens" in *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 239-264.

Twine, France Winddance. 2006. "Visual Ethnography and Racial Theory: Analyzing Family Photographs Album as Archives of Interracial Intimacies." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 487-511.

#### May 23: Developing Analysis and Forms of Representation

Mies, Maria. 1983. "Towards a methodology for feminist research" in *Theories of Women's Studies*, eds. Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Pp. 117-39.

DeVault, Marjorie L. 2004. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis" in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, eds. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. New York: Oxford University Press, Pp. 227-50,

Naples, Nancy. 2003, Parts III, IV, and V in *Feminism and Method*, New York: Routledge, pp 13-33.

May 30: Student Presentations

June 6: Student Presentations

**June 12: Final papers due at 5 PM**