WMGS 208b.2.1.15
Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Research Seminar
Spring 2015

Mondays 5:00–7:50
Brandeis University

Professor Karen V. Hansen
Pearlman 209
khansen@brandeis.edu; x62651
Office Hours:

Professor Faith Smith
Mandel 217
fsmith@brandeis.edu; x62094
Office Hours:

Course Description

This course examines research theories, methods, and practices within the interdisciplinary field of women’s and gender studies. Our goals will be (a) to introduce students to diverse research modes and enable each student to select methods that best support particular research goals; (b) to help students learn to evaluate research in the field; and (c) to guide students in formulating a research topic, developing a proposal, identifying and using sources, undertaking stages of research, and organizing and writing a substantial research paper. We will explore qualitative, literary, historical, and some quantitative methods.

Students’ projects will be individual, diverse, and from a variety of fields, with the implication that we don’t have a shared background. The class will learn to interact productively across these differences to respond to each student’s work at successive stages. In addition, we welcome students’ bringing in additional readings and illustrative materials.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

• Understand how we come to know what we know and how knowledge and research relate to social structures.
• Be able to identify research methods that best support your particular research goals.
• Be able to organize and carry out a complex research project.
Books
The books are available at the bookstore. They are also on reserve in the library. There are also additional required articles available on LATTE (marked with an * below). Please complete the readings on or before the date listed in the syllabus.


Course Requirements
The final course grade will be based on three distinct types of work: a major research project, presentation on course readings, and ongoing class participation.

**Major research project (60% of final course grade)**

The research project for this class comprises a number of different assignments that will culminate in a polished final paper of at least 6,000 and no more than 8,000 words, including notes and bibliography. The due dates for separate assignments are noted on the syllabus. **Assignments are due on the date specified, even if you cannot come to class.** The discrete parts of the final paper and/or assignments include:

1. Preliminary Research Project description
2. Revised project description
3. Research paper proposal
4. Preliminary Bibliography
5. Research paper prospectus
6. Article Analysis
7. Rough draft of paper
8. Peer Review of two student papers
9. Oral Presentations
10. Polished final paper

**Presentation in class (10% of final course grade)**

Each student will present their project in a preliminary form on April 27. We will organize panels of students. Each presentation will be ten to fifteen minutes long, with additional time for questions and discussion after each panel. You will be graded on both the substance and the quality of your oral presentation.
Class Participation (30% of final course grade)

This is a significant portion of the grade and a crucial part of a successful seminar. Class participation includes:

- weekly attendance; please be on time out of respect for us and your fellow classmates
- completion of reading assignments by the date listed in the syllabus
- with partners, leading two class discussions (approximately 15 minutes) on the week’s readings
- meet with partners/small groups weekly to discuss research
- thoughtful contribution to seminar discussions both in class and in the form of LATTE postings
- active participation in workshops in which we provide constructive feedback on one another’s other’s work
- peer-review written feedback to two students in the class

We encourage you to attend WGS-sponsored or related events over the course of the semester, and to bring your reflections about them into the space of the classroom. Since the class meets only once per week, it is vital that you attend each class. If you must miss a class, please notify both of the instructors by email beforehand and plan to do a five-minute class presentation at a future session on a recommended reading or on another of your choosing, in consultation with at least one of the instructors.

LATTE Discussion Postings

For weeks two through seven, you will be required to post a response to the readings that is 200–250 words. This response must be posted on the LATTE site by 5pm on the evening before the relevant class discussion: please respect this deadline. Each posting should demonstrate that you have read and understood the readings for that week. You should synthesize the readings, noting what you might find helpful for your own research project and how you might apply the author’s insights to your work. Alternatively, what about the method or the questions being asked might not be suitable for your research project? If you wish, you may also comment on how these methods and questions could benefit a project that complements your own. You may wish to tie the readings of the week into readings from earlier weeks and class discussions. Everyone in the class is required to read all of these postings before coming to class each Monday. If you wish, you may post a second time in response to others.

Policy on Incompletes, Late Papers, and Class Absences

Planning ahead can mean that you are better able to cope with the crises that will arise during the semester. Please be aware that we do not normally grant incompletes. Only a very major emergency can result in an incomplete. Please also be aware that late papers will receive lower grades. These policies exist out of fairness to all of the students who, in the face of similar crises and overloads, nevertheless complete their work on time. If you know that an assignment will be
late or you will be absent from class, please inform us ahead of time.

Intellectual Responsibility

Academic integrity is the ground of trust that sustains a scholarly community. Please honor the words and thoughts of others and credit them faithfully. Whether you are submitting written work or speaking in class, take care to acknowledge your sources not only for the words you cite but for the ideas you advance. Sources include not only print but also web materials, ideas you learned in other classes, and ideas gleaned from other students. Please read Section 4 on academic integrity of Rights and Responsibilities, which you can find at: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/index.html.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability you should contact us, and present your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, graduate students should contact Katharine Linehan, at GSAS, klinneha@brandeis.edu. Letters of accommodations should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Class Outline

Week 1—January 12: Introduction to the Course

Required Reading:

Activities:
- Introduction to the course and overview of syllabus
- Seminar participants’ introduction of themselves to the group
- Creation of discussion guidelines
- Discussion: What is feminist research and why do we need it?
- How to write the preliminary proposal

Week 2—January 19: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO CLASS

Week 3—January 26: CLASS CANCELLED due to Juno Blizzard

Assignment Due: Assignment 1: Preliminary Project Description
Week 4—February 2: *What are Feminist Epistemology and Theory?*

**Required Reading:**
- Naples and Gurr, “Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Approaches to Understanding the Social World,” in *FRP*, 14–41
- CR, chap. 3, “From Topics to Questions,” 35–50

**Recommended Reading:**

**Activities:**
- Gina Bastone, LTS: Bibliographical research (searching and information reliability: group activity using several students’ topics of interest)
- Discussion: What are feminist epistemology and theory?
- How to choose a meaningful research topic
- Developing generative and feasible research questions

**Assignment Due:** Assignment 2: Revised Project Description

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Week 5—February 9: *Fictions of Ethnography*

**Required Reading:**
- Buch and Staller, “What is Feminist Ethnography?,” in *FRP*, 107-145
- CR, chap. 4, “From Questions to a Problem,” 51–66

**Recommended reading:**
Jon Lofland and Lyn Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Ch. 1 Starting Where You Are; Ch. 2 Evaluating Data Sites; Ch.3 Getting In)
Activities:
- Assignment of topic-based groups
- How to work in a group
- Small-group work on preliminary project description
- How to write a literature review

Assignment Due: Assignment 3: Research Paper Proposal

**Week 6 (OPTIONAL MAKE-UP)—THURSDAY, FEB 12—Exploring Qualitative Methodologies: Interviews & Oral History**

Required Reading:
- Hesse-Bieber, “Feminist Approaches to In-Depth Interviewing,” in FRP, 182–232
- CR, chaps. 5–6, “From Problems to Sources” and “Engaging Sources,” 68–100

Recommended Reading:


Activities:
- Listening exercise (from Hesse-Biber)
- Review of Style Sheet
- Citing sources properly and avoiding plagiarism

**Week 6—February 16: WINTER BREAK—NO CLASS**

**Week 7—February 23: Textual Analysis: Historical & Visual Research**

Required Reading:
• *CR*, chap. 9, “Assembling Reasons and Evidence,” 130–138

**Activities:**
- Feminist Interpretations of Literature
- Small group work on research paper proposal

**Assignment(s) Due:** Assignment 4: Preliminary Bibliography

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**Week 8—March 2: Historical-Sociological Methods**

**Required Reading:**
- *CR*, chaps. 10–11, “Acknowledgments and Responses” and “Warrants,” 139–169

**Activities:**
- In-class discussion of research paper prospectus
- Discussion of the readings
- Small group work

**Assignment Due:** Assignment 5: Research Paper Prospectus

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**Week 9—March 9: More Than Numbers: Quantitative Research**

**Required Reading:**
- Miner and Jayaratne, “Feminist Survey Research,” *FRP*, 296-329

**Activities:**
- Mignon Duffy presentation on quantitative research (invited)
- Discussion on the value of quantitative research in social science and humanities
- Small group work
Week 10—March 16: Feminist Action Research

Required Reading:

Activities:
- Discussion of the readings
- Small group work

Assignment Due: Assignment 6: Article Analysis

Week 11—March 23: Intimacy: Race, Citizenship, and Everyday Life, Part I

Required Reading:
- Donette Francis, from Fictions of Feminine Citizenship

Activities:
- Discussion of the readings
- Small group work

Week 12—March 30: Intimacy: Race, Citizenship, and Everyday Life, Part II

Required Reading:
Activities:
- Discussion of the readings
- Small group work

Assignment Due: Assignment 7: Rough Draft of Paper

Week 13—April 6: SPRING BREAK— NO CLASS

Week 14—April 13: Peer Review

Required Reading:
- Papers of other students
- CR, ch. 17 and Part V, “Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly” and “Some Last Considerations,” 249–282

Activities:
- Small group discussion of peer feedback

Assignment Due: Assignment 8: Peer Review

Week 15—April 20: Intersectionality Revisited & Wrap Up

Required Reading:
- Hesse-Biber, “Conclusion: Putting Together your Research Project,” FRP, 890-413

Activities:
- Small group discussion
- How to prepare for the oral presentation

Week 16—April 27: Research Presentations

Activities:
- Research presentations
- Course wrap-up

Assignment Due: Assignment 9: Oral Presentations

FINAL PAPERS DUE: May 5 by 5:00 PM