WMGS 208b: Women's and Gender Studies Research Seminar
Spring 2014

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 2:00–4:50, Rabb 203

Classroom Instructors: Professor Bernadette Brooten, Near Eastern & Judaic Studies
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Office Hours: Mon., 2:05–3:05; Thurs., 2:05–3:05; and by appointment

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Office Hours: Tues., 1:00-2:00; Wed. 9:30–10:30, and by appointment

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.
Readings

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.


Other required readings will be available on LATTE or through Brandeis Scholar.

Course Requirements

The final course grade will be based on three distinct types of work. 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, not 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:

- Preliminary description of research project
- Revised project description
- Research paper proposal
- Bibliography
- Research paper prospectus
- First draft of entire paper
- Polished final paper

The final paper is due, uploaded to LATTE, on Wednesday, April 30th by 5:00 PM.

Paper Format

* Upload papers to the LATTE course website by 5:00 PM on the day they are due. *

All written assignments should use the following formatting guidelines:

- Name, assignment, and date in the top left-hand corner
- Page numbers on every page
- Double-spaced
- One-inch margins on all sides
- Times or Arial font, 14pt
Presentation in class (10\% of final course grade)
Each student will present their project in a preliminary form on either April 2\textsuperscript{nd} or April 9\textsuperscript{th}. 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 one class discussion (approximately 15 minutes) on the week’s readings
- 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
- attendance at one WGS-sponsored event or an event in the area of WGS over the course of the semester and a one-page reflection paper on the event, to be posted on LATTE

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 Monday by 5:00 PM before the relevant class discussion. 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 Wednesday. 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:


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, undergraduates should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay, Director of Disabilities, Services and Support, in Academic Affairs at 6-3470, or brodgers@brandeis.edu, and 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.

Policy on Sexual and Racial Harassment

As a means of preventing sexual and racial harassment, we encourage students to comment on the following question in the final student evaluation form: “Has an instructor sexually or racially harassed you during the semester?” We do this to give students an anonymous means of reporting such behavior and to make public our commitment not to engage in it. Beyond this, we hope that you will feel free to tell us about any problems in the sexual or racial dynamics of the course so that we can address them—to the best of our ability.

Class Outline

Week 1  - January 15, 2014: 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
- Feminist Challenges to Literary Studies, History, and the Study of Religion: A Brief History of Developments over the Past Four Decades
- Discussion: What is feminist research and why do we need it?
- View and discuss together: Adrienne Davis, “Sexual Justice and Repair: at:
  http://www.brandeis.edu/projects/fse/conferences/disrupting-the-script/videos/davis.html
  and Anita F. Hill, “Addressing this Civil Rights/Human Rights and Health Crisis” at:

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• How to write the preliminary proposal

Assignment(s) Due: none

Week 2 - January 22nd, 2014: What are Feminist Epistemology and Theory?

Required Reading:
• Naples and Burr, “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 of topic-based groups
• How to work in a group
• Small-group work
• Morgen Sarpeshkar, IRB: The steps of moving through to IRB approval

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 1: Preliminary Project Description

Week 3 - January 29th, 2014: What are Feminist Epistemology and Theory? (cont.)

Required Reading:
• Frost and Elichaoiff, “Feminist Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Critical Theory,” in FRP, 42–72
• CR, chap. 4, “From Questions to a Problem,” 51–66
• Jon Lofland and Lyn Lofland. 2006. Analyzing Social Settings. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (c. 1 Starting Where You Are, c. 2 Evaluating Data Sites, c.3 Getting In)

Recommended reading:

**Activities:**
- Prof. Wendy Cadge, SOC & WGS: Ethnographic research methods in sociology
- Student-led discussion: Jen and Nikki
- Discussion: What are feminist epistemology and theory?
- How to write a literature review
- Small-group work on preliminary project description
- How to write the research paper proposal

**Assignment(s) Due:** Assignment 2: Revised Project Description

**Week 4 - February 5th, 2014: Snow Day**
- Individual conference calls to discuss research projects.
- **Assignment(s) Due:** Assignment 3: Research Paper Proposal

**Week 5 - February 12th, 2014: Exploring Qualitative Methodologies**

**Required Reading:**
- Hesse-Bieber, “Feminist Approaches to In-Depth Interviewing,” in *FRP*, 181–232
- *CR*, chaps. 5–6, “From Problems to Sources” and “Engaging Sources,” 68–100

**Readings for section on qualitative, human-subjects-based research methodologies:** interviewing, life story research, and ethnographic research involving participant observation (Sarah Lamb, ANTH):

**Interview based research:**
- Aimee Van Wagenen *et al*, “I’m Still Raring to Go’: Successful Aging among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Older Adults,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 27 (2013): pp. 1-14: Read only pp. 4-6 “Design and Methods” and as much of the “Results” section as you would like: pp. 6-10.

**Life story based research:**

**Ethnographic and participant-observation research:**
Recommended Reading:

Activities:
- Prof. Sarah Lamb, ANTH & WGS: Research methods in anthropology
- Student-led discussion: Stephanie and Renée
- Overview of Qualitative Research
- How to write the research paper prospectus
- Listening exercise (from Hesse-Biber)
- Review of Style Sheet; Style Sheet exercise

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 4: Preliminary Bibliography

February 19th, 2014: Spring Break: No Class

Week 6 - February 26th, 2014: *Is the Past Over? Is it Even Past? Textual and Historical Research*

Required Reading:
- Bernadette J. Brooten, “Sexual Surrogacy Enables Holy Celibacy: Euklia, Iphidama, and Maximilla in the *Passion of Andrew*” Unpublished manuscript (not for circulation beyond this class)

Activities:
- Discussion of “Feminist Criticism” with Prof. Sue Lanser (ENGL & WGS)
- Margarita Corral, LTS, introduction to Atlas.ti software for qualitative research
- Student-led discussion: Michael and Courtney
- Small group work on research paper proposal

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 5: Research Paper Prospectus
Week 7 - March 5th, 2014: More Than Numbers: Quantitative Research

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Activities:
- Discussion on the value of quantitative research in both social scientific and humanistic research

Assignment(s) Due: None

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Week 8 - March 12, 2014: Intersectionality

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

Recommended Reading:

Activities:
- Discussion of intersectionality with Prof. ChaeRan Freeze (NEJS & WGS)
- Student-led discussion: Malcolm and Leonie
- In-class peer review of research paper prospectus
- Citing sources properly and avoiding plagiarism
- Video of Kimberlé Crenshaw from Anita Hill Conference at Hunter College, October 15, 2011

Assignment(s) Due: None
Week 9 - March 19th, 2014: Text as Data

Required Reading:
- CR, Part 4, prologue and Ch. 12, “Planning Again” and “Planning and Drafting,” 171-202

Recommended Reading:

Activities:
- Workshop with Tess Wise: Text as Data (topic modeling; analysis of social media)
- Small group work:
  - Social science students: practice run-through of your interview questions with a partner
  - Humanities students: primary source analysis using an excerpt from your primary source(s)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 6: Article Analysis

Week 10 – March 26th, 2014: Building Arguments

Required Reading:

Activities:
- Humanities students: discussion of your progress and problems on your research project with Tom King (ENGL & WGS)
- Social science students: how to collect, download, and analyze data from your online survey; how to make graphs in Excel
- Discussion of article analysis
- Detecting and avoiding plagiarism: plagiarism exercise

Assignment(s) Due: None

Week 11 – April 2nd, 2014: Organizing and Presenting Your Material

Required Reading:
- CR, chap. 17 and V, “Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly” and “Some Last Considerations,” 249–282

Activities:
- Preparing for an oral presentation
• Anthropology students (optional for other social science students): discussion of your research project and interviewing techniques with Sarah Lamb (ANTH & WGS)
• Other students: small group work and individual meetings with Betsy

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 7: Rough Draft of Paper

Week 12 – April 9th, 2014: Research Presentations

Required Reading: none

Activities:
• Research presentations
• Discussion of peer reviews

Assignment(s) Due:
• Assignment 8: Oral Presentations (for those scheduled to present)
• Assignment 9: Peer Review

April 16th: Passover Break: No Class

Week 13 – April 23rd, 2014: Research Presentations and Wrap-Up

Activities:
• Research presentations
• Discussion of peer reviews
• Course wrap-up

Assignment(s) Due:
• Assignment 8: Oral Presentations (for those scheduled to present)

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Wednesday, April 30th by 5:00 PM