

**Lakehead University
Department of Women's Studies**

**WS 5101 YA - Theory and Method in Women's Studies
Fall 2017 (Methods)**

Mondays 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. RB 3047

Dr. P. Wakewich (pam.wakewich@lakeheadu.ca)

Office Hours: RB 2021, Mondays 11:30 – 12:30 or by appointment

Course Description:

This course will review feminist research methodologies from a variety of disciplinary traditions and theoretical perspectives. We will explore feminist perspectives on research as a process and a product, and the potential of feminist research for transformation and social change. Examples from the disciplinary range of our WS specialization will provide the foundation for our weekly discussions. The objectives this semester are to provide students with a foundational understanding of the principles guiding contemporary feminist methodology, and to enhance students' skills and confidence in conducting research through practical research exercises and reflective class presentations.

Required Course Materials:

Electronic journal articles can be downloaded from the LU library website. Chapter pdfs are available to download from the D2L website. Hard copies of the articles should be brought to class for discussion.

Evaluation - The fall term is worth 50% of your overall grade.

Research exercises (2x10%)	20%
Class participation	10%
Final project	20%

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1 - Sept. 11 - Introductions and Overview

Week 2 - Sept. 18 - How we 'do' research - a conversation across disciplinary boundaries

In preparation for this week's class, spend some time thinking about what constitutes 'method' in your home discipline. How would you decide upon or 'frame' a research question or project? What sources of material might you use, and why? How/where would you find research materials? What theoretical orientations are common in your home discipline and how do they link to other methodologies in your field? What methods or techniques of analysis would you typically use in your research? How would you choose among them for a particular project? Is feminist theory/methodology a core part of your discipline? How do you as an individual, or a team member, locate yourself in your research? How do you analyze your data? What counts as 'evidence' in your field (or how do you 'know' what you 'know')? How do you write up your research findings? Where and how do 'gender' and feminist theory/methodology fit into this? Where and how does 'intersectionality' as a framework and method fit in? How is research in your field similar to, or different from, other disciplines with which you are familiar?

Make notes (using specific examples) to share in the class discussion. Bring along an example of published feminist research from your home discipline to briefly talk about with the class. I will also bring examples from diverse inter- and cross-disciplinary feminist research projects for our group discussion.

Week 3 - Sept. 25 - Why "Process" Matters: Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research

Readings:

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy (2011) "Feminist Research. Exploring, Interrogating, and Transforming the Interconnections of Epistemology, Methodology, and Method." In S. Hesse-Biber, ed. *The Handbook of Feminist*

Research, 2nd edition. London Sage, pp. 2-26. [D2L pdf]

Griffin, Gabriele (2011) "Writing about Research Methods in the Arts and Humanities." In R. Buikema, G. Griffin and N. Lykke, eds., *Theories and Methods in Postgraduate Feminist Research. Researching Differently*. New York: Routledge, pp. 91-104. [D2L pdf]

Bring an example of feminist research in your own discipline to briefly discuss with the class. Come prepared to talk about how the author/s operationalize or practice feminist research. Which epistemology, methodology and method are they using?

Week 4- Oct. 2 – Social Location and Decolonizing Research

Readings:

Culler, Jonathan (1982) "Reading as a Woman." In *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 43-63. [D2L pdf]

Ramazanoglu, Caroline and Janet Holland (2003) "Researching 'Others'. Feminist Methodology and the Politics of Difference." In *Feminist Methodology. Challenges and Choices*. London: Sage, pp. 105-122. [D2L pdf]

Sky, L (2016) Searching for my palm tree: Epistemological journeying of a child welfare doctoral student. *Qualitative Social Work* 15(5-6):619-627. [Ejournal]

Optional Reading: Lundstrom, Catrin (2010) "'White Ethnography: (Un)comfortable Conveniences and Shared Privileges in Field-Work with Swedish Migrant Women.'" *NORA (Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research)* 18(2):70-87. [E-journal]

Bring an example of research in your own discipline where you think social location may have positively or negatively impacted the way the author/researcher conducted or interpreted their analysis. What can we learn from this for our own research and writing?

Week 5 – Oct. 9 – Fall break – no class

Week 6 – Oct. 16 - Ethics Workshop

In preparation for this week's class:

- 1) Read the "Guidelines and Policy for the Ethical Conduct of Research and Procedures for Investigating Misconduct" on the LU Research Office website: http://research.lakeheadu.ca/ethics_resources.html
- 2) Print and bring to class the "Researchers Agreement Form" from the same webpage for group discussion.

Readings:

Bell, Linda (2014) "Ethics and Feminist Research." In Hesse-Biber, ed. *Feminist Research Practice*, pp. 73-106. [D2L pdf]

Detamore, M (2010) "Queer(y)ing the ethics of research methods: Towards a politics of intimacy in researcher/researched relations. In K. Browne and C. Nash (eds). *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, pp. 167-182 (D2L pdf]

How and why do ethics matter in your field of research? What types of dialogue about ethics (reading/research/analysis) are common in your discipline? Bring an example for discussion.

Week 7 – Oct. 23 – Speech and Silence in Feminist Research

Readings:

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana Jack (1991) "'Learning to Listen': Interview Techniques and Analyses." In Berger Gluck, S. and D. Patai, eds. *Women's Words. The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. New York: Routledge, pp. 11-26. [D2L pdf]

Bazzul, Jesse and Heather Sykes (2011) The Secret Identity of a Biology Textbook: Straight and Naturally Sexed. *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 6:265-286. [E-journal]

Harries, B. (2016) What's Sex Got to Do with It? When a Woman Asks Questions. *Women's Studies International Forum* 59:48-57. [E-journal]

Optional:

Davis, Madeleine and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy (1986) "Oral History and the Study of Sexuality in the Lesbian Community." *Feminist Studies* 12(1):7-26. [E-journal]

Week 8 – Oct. 30 – Literary, Textual and Discourse Analyses

Readings:

Lazar, M. (2007). Feminist critical discourse analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis. *Critical Discourse Studies* 4(2):141-164. [E-journal]

Lukić, Jasmina and Adelina Sánchez Espinosa (2011) "Feminist Perspectives on Close Reading." Buikema et al., *Theories and Methodologies*, pp. 105-118. [D2L pdf]

Reid, Colleen and Allison Tom (2006) "Poor Women's Discourses of Legitimacy, Poverty, and Health." *Gender & Society* 20(3):402-421. [E-journal]

Optional:

Hillsburg, Heather (2013) "Towards a Methodology of Intersectionality: An Axiom-Based Approach." *Atlantis* 36(1):3-11. [E-journal]

Week 9 – Nov. 6 – Presentation of 1st research exercise

Mar. 11 – Participatory Action and Lessons from Research with Vulnerable Populations

Readings:

Ackerly B. and J. True (2010) Back to the Future: Feminist Theory, Activism and Doing Feminist Research in an Age of Globalization. *Women's Studies International Forum* 33:464-472. [E-journal]

McIntyre, Alice (2002) "Women Researching Their Lives: Exploring Violence and Identity in Belfast, the North of Ireland" *Qualitative Research* 2(3):387-409. [E-journal]

Bootinand, Jan for the Global Alliance against Traffic in women (2008) "Feminist Participatory Action Research in the Mekong Region." In Jaggar, *Just Methods*, pp. 445-456. [D2L pdf]

Optional Reading:

Gustafson, Diana L. (2000) "Best Laid Plans: Examining Contradictions between Intent and Outcome in a Feminist, Collaborative Research Project." *Qualitative Health Research* 10(6):717-733. [E-journal]

Week 10 - Nov. 13 -What we See and what we don't See - Feminist Ethnographic and Visual Analysis

Readings:

Buikema, Rosemarie and Marta Zarzyck (2011) "Visual Cultures: Feminist Perspectives." In Buikema et al., *Theories and Methodologies*, pp. 119-134. [D2L pdf]

Orchard, Treena Rae (2007) "Girl, Woman, Lover, Mother: Towards a New Understanding of Child Prostitution among Young Devadasis in Rural Karnataka, India," *Social Science and Medicine* 64:2379-2390. [E-journal]

Nicholas, Jane (2014) "'A Debt to the Dead? Ethics, Photography, History and the Study of Freakery,'" *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 47(93):139-155. [E-journal]

Week 11 - Nov. 20 - Practices and Politics of Archiving, Interpretation and Representation

Ashton, J. (2017) Feminist Archiving (a manifesto continued): Skilling for Activism and Organizing. *Australian Feminist Studies* 32:91-92:126-149 [D2L pdf]

Power, E. (2004) Toward Understanding in Postmodern Interview Analysis: Interpreting the Contradictory Remarks of a Research Participant. *Qualitative Health Research* 14(6):858-865. [E-journal]

Reale M. (2014) The Only Way I Can Say this: Representing African Refugees' Experience Through Poetic Inquiry. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43(6):770-773.

Week 12 – Nov. 27 – Presentation of 2nd research exercise

Week 13 – Dec. 4 – Course wrap up

Evaluation

1) Research Exercises (2 x 10% each – total 20 marks)

There are 3 parts to this exercise:

- Two sample methodological exercises with a focus on gender and its intersections (topic of your choice in consultation with instructor)
- brief class presentation (10-12 minutes)
- 3 page summary report

Research exercise presentations will take place in the Nov. 6 and Nov. 27 classes – please note: ALL students will present on the same day to facilitate collective group reflection and discussion. No exceptions will be made.

- Design, carry out and reflect on *two* small research exercises from the list below. Choose a *different methodology* for each exercise. You may choose the same subject or a different subject for each of the exercises, but in keeping with the orientation of the course, be sure that ‘gender’ and its intersections are central to your inquiry. You must also demonstrate links to course readings and discussion for your reflection and analysis.

The research methods you may choose from include: close reading/literary analysis, ethnography, content analysis, documentary analysis, autobiography, personal narrative, memoir, oral history, structured or open-ended interviews, focus group interviews, survey research, participatory action research, photovoice research, collective memory research, archival research, and narrative analysis or discourse analysis.

If you are choosing a methodology that involves research with human subjects you will need to prepare an ethics proposal well in

advance for approval by the LU REB. We will discuss details of ethics in research and the Tricouncil and LU REB guidelines in class early in the semester to facilitate this option. *To allow time for REB approval (minimum 2-3 weeks after submission) it is advisable to make this your second research exercise.*

- Summarize your reflections on each research exercise in a *brief paper* (3 double-spaced pages, per exercise) to be handed in at the time of your presentation.
- Using your summary paper as a basis, give a focused 10-12 minute class presentation reflecting primarily on the learning process of the research exercise. What questions/concerns did you encounter in designing, carrying out, analyzing and summarizing the research? What strengths and limitations do you see to this research approach? How might you draw on these experiences in formulating and carrying out another research project, or your own thesis/project research?

2) *Class participation – 10% [Required]*

Class participation will be based on your full attendance and preparedness for weekly classes, the quality (not volume) of your contributions, and your demonstration of both active listening and active engagement with the course material. It is expected that students will have read all of the assigned readings prior to class and come prepared with discussion points and questions to contribute. Class absences or lates will require official documentation or marks will be deducted.

3) *Final Project – 20% [Choose ONE of the following options]*

- *Comparative Case Study Review* - Critically evaluate two monographs/case studies/research reports from your home discipline in terms of the methodological approach of the authors and their attention to feminist theory and methodology giving consideration to the following issues:
 - What topic/issue/theme/literature was the author addressing?

- What were the arguments for the choice of this particular method of study?
 - How were interpretations/analyses derived from the data?
 - To what extent did the authors take a *reflexive* approach in choosing/ designing, analyzing and presenting their research?
 - Did the author/ do you consider the work informed by feminist theory and methodology? Why or why not?
 - How might you draw on the authors' experiences in formulating your own research?
- *Reflective Methods Paper* - Write a paper describing the methodology chosen (or evolving methodology) for your research paper/ thesis/creative project detailing your decision trail in choosing this approach. How is your methodology informed by feminist theory and methodology? How have you located yourself in this research? What are the strengths and limitations of your approach in relation to the themes discussed in this course? What challenges to you foresee with your research and how do you anticipate addressing them?
 - *Research Paper* - Write a research paper discussing a particular feminist methodology which interests you, or exploring a particular debate or tension within feminist methodology. Use examples from specific case studies either within one field, or across several different fields to illustrate and draw links to course materials as relevant.
 - *Annotated Bibliography of Feminist Research in your Home Discipline* - Compile a bibliography of feminist research in your home discipline. Write a discussion paper reviewing the methodologies employed and methodological concerns identified by feminist researchers in the field. In what ways have feminist research methods challenged/contributed to conventional research in your field? Which topics and areas within the discipline is it most frequently used to study? In what other areas might it be used effectively?

Format:

The body of the paper should 10-12 double-spaced typed pages. Be sure to make clear links to course readings and materials and carefully cite all sources used. You may use your home unit format (MLA, ASA, APA) for referencing, citations and the bibliography. Students are expected to be familiar with the Lakehead University regulations regarding Academic Dishonesty and plagiarism. These will be strictly followed. **The final paper is due on December 14. Late papers will be penalized 5% per day.**