

Feminist Methods in Research and Scholarship

WST6004 Section 6004

Academic Term: Fall 2025

Class periods: Tuesday 7-9

Instructor:

Dr Maddy Coy

Email: m.coy@ufl.edu

Office: Ustler 303

Office Phone Number: 352-273-0391

Office Hours: Wednesday 10am-1pm and by appointment

Course Description

Much feminist research claims to name new topics, to examine the invisible, to study the unstudied, and to ask why it had been ignored... feminism supplies the perspective and the disciplines supply the method
(Shulamit Reinharz, 1992)

This course is an introduction to critical questions about knowledge production and conducting research through a feminist lens. It provides graduate training covering a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods for giving voice to the diversity of women's experiences and those of understudied and marginalized populations, making visible the invisible and undercounted aspects of people's lives and studying intersectionality. Sessions will include an overview of feminist critiques of science and epistemologies. The framework for the course is 'research practices'; you will engage with intellectual debates about what it means to position yourself as a knower by exploring feminist epistemologies and research ethics and applying these to your own projects. Designed primarily for M.A. students who are seeking to shape their research approach to a topic, it will be helpful to have some prior familiarity with feminist theory and/or women's and gender studies.

A major goal of the course is to explore issues and dilemmas with respect to giving voice to the diversity of people's experiences. In so doing, we will encourage questioning of knowledge claims and power dynamics e.g. What is the relationship of the researcher to the researched? How does the social location (gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, geography/nationality) of the researcher impact research? How have systems of domination been upheld and/or disrupted by research design and practice? How can research contribute to social change?

We will begin with examining feminist epistemologies and ethics, and move into the messy realities, tensions, challenges, and opportunities of research as a set of practices. This will involve reading empirical papers using a range of methods, reflecting on what these tell us about the *process* of research. A proportion of the course will be spent on developing your own research practices, carrying out small projects using feminist approaches to social science and humanities methods of inquiry.

WHAT TO EXPECT: We are in a new learning space together and you will bring to class your range of disciplinary 'conceptual baggage'. In the beginning of the course - and throughout - we will explore what this means for how we engage in dialogue with each other and with research participants. We will create time for discussion of any questions, doubts, or issues you are struggling with as you work through your research agenda.

All accommodations will be honored. My aim is to create a discussion space where we can engage with each other in as meaningful a way as possible remotely. This entails creating a learning space and community based on inclusion, dignity, respect, anti-racism, and freedom from discrimination.

You are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether you agree with classmates and/or the instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

Land acknowledgement

I acknowledge that for thousands of years the area now comprising the state of Florida has been and continues to be home to many Native Nations. I further recognize that the main campus of the University of Florida is in the heartland territory of two historically-known Native societies—those of the Potano and of the Alachua Seminole. As a part of our current stewardship, I acknowledge my obligation to honor the ancestral, present, and future Native residents of Florida (originally crafted by UF Libraries).

Course Pre-Requisites / Co-Requisites

None

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to critically engage with:

- how feminist methods in research and scholarship emerged and developed in the interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies.
- feminist perspectives on research that center intersecting inequalities of gender, race, class, sexuality, citizenship status, colonization, and other systems of power.
- the relationship between feminist research principles and their translation into practice.
- real life dilemmas that arise from the process of making knowledge claims, through designing research questions, collecting and analyzing data.

You will get the most out of the course if you read the assigned texts with enough time before we meet so that you can participate in discussions.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- draw on core conceptual frameworks in feminist theory to inform epistemology and knowledge production
- demonstrate knowledge of feminist analyses of research practice, including ethics
- recognize and use appropriate terms for different research approaches and techniques.
- develop a methodological approach for their proposed research.

These learning outcomes will be evidenced through assignments.

Materials and Supply Fees

None

Required Textbooks

All readings are in Canvas or Course Reserves. Readings are presented thematically, beginning with foundational texts. Subsequent readings have been selected to offer an overview of a particular approach and/or an example of a study that has used it. You might find some papers more relevant to your research interests and I encourage you to engage closely with these. Which readings we will discuss each week will be posted in Canvas. We may find new, exciting papers during the semester and decide to read these in addition to or instead of the texts below.

Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will also be made available through Canvas, so please check the site frequently.

Participation

This is a graduate seminar class, and I expect active participation in the class discussions. Each week I will give you all some starting points to think about for the readings, and we will begin with exploring these together. For most sessions, I will also have some material to present about the theme or method we are working on that week. The later section of the class will be an in-depth conversation based on questions and discussion points from the readings/materials. I recognize that not everyone is equally comfortable with public speaking or group discussions. There are no hard and fast rules about what number of contributions you will need to make to fulfil your participation. I prefer that you demonstrate commitment to the learning space by showing that you have completed the readings and thought about their content. For example, the classroom is a space to ask questions about anything that was unclear, and to identify possible connections between readings/materials and your research projects. Missing class, or being present without having completed the readings, will clearly affect your capacity to fully participate.

Course Schedule

As we develop the course so that it speaks to your research priorities, the schedule may change. In addition, there will be sessions featuring discussions with feminist scholars which will be based on their availability. This means that the outline below may be adapted as we move through the different topics. All changes in the syllabus will be posted in Canvas.

WEEK	TOPIC
THEME 1: INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST RESEARCH APPROACHES	
Week 1 26 th August	Welcome, introductions and discussion of your proposed research projects/agendas.
Week 2 2 nd September	Feminisms and Epistemologies (1)
Week 3 9 th September	Feminisms and Epistemologies (2)
Week 4 16 th September	Making methodological decisions
Week 5 23 rd September	Ethics and ethical dilemmas
Week 6 30 th September	Reflection week: Ourselves as Knowers

THEME 2: INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE METHODS	
Week 7 7 th October	Interviews and Focus Groups
Week 8 14 th October	Oral History, Testimonio and Photovoice
THEME 3: FEMINIST APPROACHES TO TEXTS AND NUMBERS	
Week 9 21 st October	Media analysis
Week 10 28 th October	Surveys and experiments
Week 11 4 th November	Archival research
Week 12 11 th November	No class (holiday)
Week 13 18 th November	Analysis and interpretation
Week 14 26 th November	No class (fall break)
Week 15 2 nd December	Closing discussion

Assignment details

There are four assignments for this course. We will discuss the format and content of each in depth during classes. The assignments are intended to allow you to tailor your individual work to your own research agendas, while also sharing key aspects of the learning process with your class colleagues.

Submitting written work

All written work should be typed, double-spaced, with a 12-point font. Please use a reasonable margin (e.g., 1-1.25 inches). Submit everything via Canvas.

Epistemology analysis paper (20%)

You will write a short reflection paper on the readings about feminist epistemologies. During weeks 2-3 we will read texts on feminist epistemologies. For this assignment you will prepare a short summary of five of these readings (200-250 words) written in the style of an annotated bibliography, followed by a longer reflection (approximately 750 words) where you synthesize the main arguments and points of agreement and contestation. In other words, put these readings in conversation with each other. Where do you find consensus? Where does each reading build on and/or challenge the others? In what ways do their different perspectives help you understand core themes of feminist epistemologies? How can you identify key features of feminist approaches to knowing? This paper, combining your summaries and reflection, should be submitted in Canvas.

Research journal (25%)

During class there will be freewriting time, where you will make notes/drawings about your reflections from the readings, new insights, changed understandings about research and knowledge production. I will suggest prompts for responses. This can be on paper or electronic according to your preference. You

should engage thoughtfully with the assigned readings for that week and demonstrate understanding of the implications for feminist research. Try to find connections and themes between the texts to deepen your analysis. Your freewriting entries will be submitted by week 12 (when we have no class because of a holiday) as your research journal. There should be 10 entries of at least 300-400 words each. If you did not write 300-400 words during the freewriting class time, you should complete your journal entry as soon as possible after class. You do not need to edit these entries for submission, but you can, of course, choose to do so. If you do, please retain the spirit of your changing knowledge and awareness. Both versions of your reflective activity must also be submitted. This assignment will be discussed in depth during our first class.

Interview research project (20%)

This assignment offers you an opportunity to conduct a qualitative interview, testing out this method and building skills in relational approaches to knowledge production. You will decide what type of interview you would like to carry out, design an interview guide, information and consent forms, complete the interview, transcribe at least 3 single spaced pages, and write a paper about the process. This approach might not necessarily be the same as your planned research project. In that case, this assignment offers an opportunity to practice a research process from inception to completion, including documenting each step, and refining analysis skills. The assignment you submit should include references to appropriate course readings. If you would like to pursue a different research activity, please talk with me to see if we can make it possible within the course parameters and our combined resources.

Final paper on incorporating feminist research into your projects (35%)

You will prepare a final paper that sets out how feminist research approaches will inform (or not) your studies. This may vary according to your field and topic, and whether you have a distinct project in mind. For example, the paper will in some way how your research will illuminate the intersection of gender, race, class, and/or more axes of difference and power. All papers will include reflections on feminist epistemology, methodological decision-making, analysis and interpretation. Drawing on the course texts for these topics is essential. Your goals are to demonstrate thorough understanding of how feminist theory underpins feminist research, and how these have informed (or not) your graduate research project. More details about format and expectations will be discussed in class.

Evaluation of Grades

Assignment	Points	Percentage of Final Grade
Epistemology analysis paper	20	20%
Interview research project	20	20%
Research journal	25	25%
Final paper	30	35%
TOTAL		100%

FINAL GRADE

At the end of the semester, final grades will be determined by the following formula:

94 and more points = A	80-83 points = B-	67-69 points = D+
90-93 points = A-	77-79 points = C+	64-66 points = D
87-89 points = B+	74-76 points = C	60-63 points = D-
84-86 points = B	70-73 points = C-	59 and fewer points = E

In cases where the number of points falls in between letter grades, points will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

More information on UF grading policy may be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies>

CONSIDER ADDING A CERTIFICATE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES: If you are taking this course, you are likely only 9 credits away from earning a Certificate (12 credits total) that will appear on your transcript and can be listed on your CV. The *Certificate in Women's Studies* (WST) is designed for graduate students from any discipline who wish to become acquainted with various feminist (and other appropriate) theoretical approaches and methodologies for examining the roles and intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, sexualities and other sociocultural systems. All graduate students in an MA or PhD program from all colleges at UF are eligible to enroll in this program. You can also do a Certificate in *Gender and Development*. For more information see the Center webpage about Certificates and the 2024-2025 Graduate Handbook. Also feel free to contact Dr Broad, graduate coordinator, with any questions.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Specialist support on campus and in the community

Office of Victim Services

<https://police.ufl.edu/divisions/behavioral-services/office-of-victim-services/>. Located at 1515 Museum Road, (352) 392-5648 (Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) (352) 392-1111 (24 hour support).

Alachua County Victim Services & Rape Crisis Center

<https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/CSS/VictimServices/pages/victimservices.aspx> and 352-264-6760
24 hour helpline

Peaceful Paths Domestic Violence Agency, <https://www.peacefulpaths.org/> and 352-377-8255 (24 hour helpline)