

NB: This is a copy of last year's syllabus. Details and assignments subject to change.

The University of Western Ontario
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

GSWS 9464B: Feminist Methodologies

Details in this syllabus may change with sufficient notice to the class.

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Course Description

This course will review feminist research methodologies from a variety of disciplinary traditions and theoretical perspectives. Through readings and assignments, a primary objective of this course will be to examine and articulate distinctions and relationships between epistemology, methodology and methods. Through guided practices of critical reflection, students will be able to articulate the assumptions that underlie and inform various feminist research methodologies and understand their implications for research methodology. Emphasis will also be placed on specific methodological issues that span across this range, and will include, for example: ethical issues, researcher reflexivity and positionality, sampling, and the practices and politics of data collection, interpretation and reporting.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Explore and evaluate a range of feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and queer research methodologies
- Situate their own research interests and questions in relevant bodies of literature on methodology
- Articulate their own epistemological commitments and positionality and assess how these inform their approach to research, knowledge, and knowing
- Co-create a learning community as instructors and contributors through discussion facilitation
- Develop as independent scholars, including through writing, researching, and responding to feedback

Required Reading

Required readings will be posted to the course website. Most recommended readings will be on OWL as well – you can find the others through Weldon.

Student Evaluation

Participation	20%
Epistemological Commitments	10%
Critical Reflection Paper	20%
Discussion Facilitation	10%
Final Paper	40%

Participation (20%)

Students should come to class with all materials read and notes taken in order to be prepared to contribute to class discussion through questions, comments, and respectful attention. You are expected to engage thoughtfully and generously to discussion. In particular, you should come to each class prepared with a substantive reflection or observation about at least one of the readings.

Week 0 is optional and can be completed at any point in the course if you want a written exercise to supplement your participation grade due to absences or days with limited contributions.

Please arrive to class on time. I take engagement particularly seriously on days we have guest speakers.

Epistemological Commitments (10%, 3-4 pages, due by or before **Feb 9**)

Using assigned texts and additional research from outside the course, work to articulate your research paradigm or epistemological commitments (3-4 pages):

Drawing on course readings and other sources as necessary, articulate your epistemological commitments and explore how these commitments inform your research interests and relate to particular theories/concepts that resonate with you and that you are thinking of using in your graduate research. Consider how your epistemological commitments and theoretical influences shape the kinds of research questions you are interested in pursuing, the kinds of knowledge claims you are able to make, and your role/s and responsibilities as a knowledge producer.

Critical Reflection Paper (20%)

You will prepare a critical reflection paper (4-6 pages maximum) assessing the relationship between two readings (assigned in two different weeks). The purpose of the critical reflection paper is to help students cultivate their critical analysis skills through a close reading of the course texts. No outside reading is required.

Guidance in the form of critical thinking questions has been posted to OWL. These questions can be used to inform your reading, note taking, general participation, and the writing of your final paper in addition to the writing of your critical response paper.

Due date: no later than 1 week after class discussion on the later of the 2 weeks you select; before is also fine.

Discussion Facilitation (10% shared/group mark)

Students preparing facilitations for a given week will collaborate to identify the main themes/arguments/concerns raised in the readings and pose 3 to 5 questions to stimulate group discussion. The purpose of the discussion facilitation is not to show that you got the ideas “right”, but is rather to engage with the ideas in the readings and elaborate your understanding of the course material. Do not be afraid to let your thinking show. Communicating your readings and interpretations of the course material will help to further an understanding of the course material in the class by inspiring further thought, reflection and discussion. Strong discussion facilitations will identify and engage with the relevant themes in the reading and raise thoughtful, open-ended questions for discussion and deliberation. Additional advice for discussion facilitation will be posted to OWL. Please consider creativity, active learning, and a handout or similar resource.

Sign up in our first meeting for **Weeks (2), 3-5, 8-9, (6/10)**

Final Paper (40%, 13-15 pages, due **Apr 20/TBA**)

Two options; consult with me or your own supervisor to decide which would be most useful to you. Regardless of your selection, papers must integrate and/or be informed by one or more themes covered in the course. Students are expected to draw on both required course readings as necessary and to **conduct research beyond the course readings** in order to develop their analysis on their specific topics. **You must meet with the professor prior to proceeding with this assignment to outline your general plan and approach:** drop into my office hours or e-mail to set up an appointment.

Option 1: Discourse Analysis

Individually written academic analysis of social media data of the student’s choosing, beginning with a revised (and potentially expanded) version of the previously submitted paper on your research paradigm or epistemological commitments. This assignment is designed to give students experience in online/digital research methodologies: Instagram, facebook, twitter, app reviews, news media, or other social media sources and approaches as appropriate. Using our in-class activities on Week 8 as a guide, students will identify and collect a body of publicly accessible data, conduct a discourse analysis informed by relevant literature, and write up an analysis of their themes. Emphasis should be focused on methodological rigour and the demonstration of process. Students must conduct research beyond the texts assigned in Week 8 to inform their approach. More direction to come.

Option 2: Methodological Discussion

The final paper will begin with a revised (and potentially expanded) version of the previously submitted paper on your research paradigm or epistemological commitments (3-4 pages). Your grade, in part, will be based on how substantively you respond to feedback provided to you on that paper.

For the remainder of the paper, students are required to develop a critical analysis on a topic of their choice that is relevant to the ideas and concepts explored in course readings. Throughout, they should indicate how this analysis is informed by their epistemological commitments.

Students may focus and structure the final paper in a way that will advance their own learning about, and/or interests in, research methodology. For example, students may wish to: (i) focus on a particular methodological issue in their final paper (e.g., reflexivity, sampling, power in the research process, the politics of interpretation); (ii) explore in a reflective paper how their thinking about methodology has been informed, challenged, or otherwise transformed throughout the course (reflective papers must still be critically and theoretically engaged and include research and sources from both inside and outside of the course); or (iii) explore the methodological approach that they would like to take in their own (current or potential future) research projects, with the aim of articulating how this approach links to the student's chosen theoretical location and the assumptions that inform that location. This is not an exhaustive list; alternatives should be discussed with the course instructor.