COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course charts debates in and the development of feminist approaches to scholarship in the social sciences. It is designed to familiarize graduate students with the methodologies that have been deployed in the process of researching questions of gender across the social science disciplines, as well as to understand the linkages between core theoretical movements (such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism) that have affected feminist thinking over the past two decades, and the challenges that they pose for the practice of feminist inquiry in the social sciences. We will thus be engaged with examining how feminists have responded to questions such as: How do we Know? Who are the (assumed) Knower and the Known in canonical constructions of the disciplines? What difference does it make when the Object and Subject of research are women? What is the object of feminist knowledge and how do feminist politics affect the production of knowledge? How does ‘experience’ work as ‘evidence’ in feminist epistemological frameworks? What happens when the Knower/Subject of knowledge is not assumed to be a universal ‘Woman’, but is geographically sited and historically located as a classed, raced, and sexualized subject from a specific nation? What happens to our notions of Objectivity, Truth, and Politics in feminist social science after postmodernism?

Course readings will thus examine feminist challenges to disciplinary systems and theories of knowledge (epistemologies), approaches to studying various problems (methodologies), and the research strategies (methods) that have been deployed by feminists in the various disciplines. We will examine views that encompass feminist empiricism, standpoint epistemology, postmodern feminism, and postcolonial methodologies. We will also address contentious issues that have animated feminist research in the last decade: for example, on the politics and ethics of feminist ethnography and of testimonials in feminist scholarship. A core concern of this course is the movements within and between feminist empiricism and standpoint epistemologies, and the ways in which postmodern and postcolonial criticism affect articulations of these epistemes. This is not a course in methods (i.e. a “how to” course). However, through a reading of the methodological and epistemological issues that have engaged feminists across the disciplines, you will develop a sense of the different research methods that are used, and their strengths and weaknesses. We will also spend at least three weeks on specific methods, such as narrative analysis, focus groups, and oral history. Furthermore, through individual projects that you will undertake during the semester, you will examine the feminist scholarship in your specific discipline and evaluate the methods that seem most suitable for the research project which you intend to undertake. The common readings for this seminar are thus those that inform all of our disciplines, while the book reviews and research papers that you write, and which will be shared in class presentations, will delve more deeply into methods appropriate to your disciplinary-based scholarship. Please consult the Coursetools website regularly for updates on readings and notices.

ASSIGNED READINGS:
The readings are on reserve at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library and one book will be available for sale at Shaman Drum Bookstore, 311-315 S. State St., phone: 662-7407. Required readings that are not in these texts are compiled in a Coursepack that will be available from Excel Copy (1117 S. University, 734.996.1500). Recommended (additional) readings have been indicated with an asterisk * on the syllabus and are not in the coursepack. These are useful additional readings on a topic, and will be on hard copy reserve in the library -- either as a binder of articles (coursepack supplement) or as books. Remaining readings are either available via Electronic Reserve (ER) are available for you to print from the Libarary Reserves website, or are available as PDF files online at our Coursetools website (CT).


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Critical Commentaries, Discussion Questions, and Responses:** We will have student-led discussions of each week’s readings that will be structured around in-class presentations of your responses to the readings. On designated days, students who have signed up as discussants will present a critical commentary on the readings to the class, which will summarize the main argument of the texts, and lead the discussion with questions that they have prepared. Discussants must circulate their individually prepared, written summaries and discussion questions to the entire class by posting these to the CourseTools website by Friday night. (Instructions on this process will be provided in class.) The short, 2 page, written critical commentaries will document your responses to and reflections on a given week’s readings and will include a set of questions that you wish to pose for class discussion. They may introduce a puzzle and hence be a prelude to a discussion question; they may present some interpretation or analysis; they may present a complex passage or concept from the text on which you seek further explication and class discussion; or they may juxtapose contrasting ideas from an author or from different authors, seeking integration and synthesis across readings. You may re-write these papers after the class discussion and they must be submitted in final version by the following Wednesday. Each student will submit three critical commentaries and will serve as discussant thrice during the semester. Everyone must read the critical commentaries that are posted on coursetools, and may respond to these online until Monday at noon. Please bring printouts of the online dialog to class. (30%)

**Book Review:** 4-5 page detailed review of a book that is in the specific area of your intended research (e.g. immigrant domestic workers in the US, or consumption/consumerism and the psychosocial construction of gender in post-war US, etc.). You must select a text that is self-identified as “feminist” and examine this claim based on the readings that we have done to date in the class. Your review should pay close attention to the methodological approach adopted by the author, and assess their claims for utilizing feminist methodologies in the research against the resulting analysis and representations of gender in the text. Due March 8 (20%)

**Final Paper:** This final paper will examine feminist methodologies that have been used in your discipline. You may either track a single methodological approach, such as Oral History or Focus Groups within your research area, or assess the methodological basis of research findings on gender in your area of interest. The paper should focus on the specific area of research that you intend to pursue for your graduate work. This paper is an opportunity to explore in detail an appropriate methodology for the research that you intend to undertake for your dissertation or Master’s thesis. For students who have advanced to candidacy, you may treat this as a first cut of a “Methodology” chapter of your thesis where you review methodological debates in the field, and build a case for the use of specific methods that you will use in your project. Students who have research projects already underway, and who may want to use this class as an opportunity to work further on such projects, or alternative ideas for papers, should feel free to consult with the instructor about pursuing these options. A brief paper prospectus is due in class on March 1st, and your final papers are due on April 12. (50%)

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

January 12. Course Overview and Introduction to Keywords

January 19. No class today, (MLK Day).
January 26. Method, Methodology, and Epistemology in Feminist Inquiry


February 2. Disciplinary Knowledges and the Feminist Challenge Across The Academy


February 9. Feminist Methodology and Its Discontents


February 16. Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies

** SPRING BREAK: February 21st through 29th **

March 1. Postmodernism, Situated Knowledges, and Partial Truths

March 8. Attend Film Screening: Global Feminisms Project
Program for March 8th, International Women’s Day: Video screening of the Global Feminisms Project’s oral history interview with Ms. Neera Desai, feminist activist and women’s studies scholar in India. 4:00-5:30pm, Lane Hall Seminar Room (2nd Floor)

READ transcript for Neera Desai interview prior to attending the screening. (The transcript is available on coursetools along with select articles by Desai, which are suggested readings.)
Transcript of interview of Dr. Neera Desai by C. S. Lakshmi for the project on ‘Global Feminisms: Comparative Case Studies Of Women’s Activism and Scholarship,’ University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, and the India
partner organisation SPARROW (Sound & Picture Archives For Research On Women), Mumbai, India, 2003.


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**Book Reviews Due on March 8th**

**March 15. Oral History**


**March 22. Postcolonial Methodologies, or “What to do With Difference/s When You're 'It'??”**


**March 29. Recovering Women’s Voices: Speaking As, Speaking For, Or Speaking Of?**

Spivak, Gayatri. 1988. "Can The Subaltern Speak?" Pp. 271-316 in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,

April 5. Testimonials: Speaking “Truth” to Power and the Politics of Truth in the (Post) Postmodern Academy
(Sections TBA.)

April 12. Narrative Analysis/Life Histories

Final Papers Due in class today

April 19. Feminist Methodologies: Qualitative [versus/and/or] Qualititative


Read one of the following:
