

## Feminist Research Methods SOC 6219H

Professor Judith Taylor  
Thursdays 12-2 Sociology 240  
Fall 2021  
Office hours Friday by appointment.

This class will take place on line fall term by zoom and may meet as determined by student consensus and interest.

### Course Intention

This is a class of unlearning, as it is learning. It stands with a genealogy of feminist social research that privileges a sense of urgency about the human project and its harms and possibilities. This class also works in opposition to the kinds of sociological training Peter Berger so eloquently mocked in his 1963 missive, *Invitation to Sociology*, against technocratic sociology and the petty insecurities and generations of banal gestures sociology fosters. [https://www.infoamerica.org/documentos\\_pdf/berger01.pdf](https://www.infoamerica.org/documentos_pdf/berger01.pdf)

Sociology plays a unique game of hide and seek. Folks usually come to it because they care about inequality or social change, but learn soon to deny such sentimentalities in favour of a stance that can be summed up as, “look what I found, though it interests me none.” The reasons each of us have chosen this life of inquiry and investigation can become quickly supplanted by socialization about what can be studied, how it can be studied, and how to convey the dispassionate ends of our hard work. Don’t get me wrong – I also teach these things. I also play at this hide and seek.

But this class resists such a paradigm, making it useful for students in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of their MA or the last year of their PhD or post doc, depending on when they need to separate from sociological socialization, greedy in its efforts to close autonomy and freedom of association (Coser 1974). Feminist sociology can resist the separation of mind and heart, political motivation and academic rigor, identity and the scholarly lens -- reintegrating what farcically is displaced in the quest for scientific contribution.

What is Feminist Studies? What are the traditions this course favours? Feminist Studies thinks about the democratization of knowledge production, the significance of research about what, and for whom? Feminist Studies use intersectionality as a heuristic to ensure deep reckoning with race, class, gender, sexuality, and other axes of identity, as they variously combine, looking for erasures and challenging mantras that stand in for caring. Practitioners of this interdisciplinary interrogate the structures of capitalism, empire, coloniality, war and nationalism for their effects on the conditions of life. We think expansively, using academic freedom to critique the modes and means of inequality and subjection the university, the nation-state, our families – are imbricated in and do not want us to mention.

The kind of feminist sociology introduced in this class does not encourage fiction, relativism, or rejection of the concept of truth (truthfully, all scholars imagine they are forwarding truth, and hope to be found truthful!). Rather, it encourages students to reintegrate their scholarly and personal selves, and reignite their passions, developing a maturity and groundedness about their academic priorities. The course also uses journaling, reading responses, and interviews to build an epistemological and useful toolkit of mentors, lenses, and practices.

This course can be thought of as a journey, and your writings a travelogue. Feminist Studies grants us passage into interdisciplinarity so that we might stay disciplinary approaches enough to incorporate alternative, complementary ways of representation and analysis that seem vital to us. Artists, film makers, poets, essayists, can help us think about the questions that preoccupy us, the relationship of our selves to our work, the academy, listening, writing, and interpretation in refreshingly new ways. We will take time to think about writing, about defending, and what it means to define the sociological project and the feminist project, for ourselves and others. We veer a lot from sociology, so that you will weave into sociology, an actually more rigorous and meaningful empiricism than it currently contains.

You will leave this class with a sharper capacity to explain why you study what you study, to understand the complexities of your interests, capacities and disciplinary adherences, to find scholarly community for what interests you, and to engage in more ethical community relations as a researcher. We can do more than report -- and reinscribe-- inequality.

### Coursework

There are no late penalties. We can't really plagiarize in this class, as the purpose is to practice in effect, writing one another's sentences, experimenting with voice and tone. Let's practice care with one another's interpretations and explorations. I have so much to learn from the pedagogies of generosity I see in younger scholars! -- looking forward, as always.

1. 5 reading briefs, 1-3 pages single-spaced. 10% each

How to write a reading response:

- A. Paragraphs 1-2 Succinctly paraphrase authors' intentions, approach, and contributions, ensuring you have encapsulated the work's meanings, import and implications.
- B. Paragraphs 3-4 Introduce what you admire and find problematic or wanting in their approach
- C. Paragraphs 5-6 Discuss why this work is useful to you, what it reminds you of, make connection to your research, contemporary problems or world happenings that interest you, relevant literatures and studies. Where possible, link to intellectual work that either is or should be taking something up.

## 2. Group Research: The Healing Project

Collaborative knowledge production is a key priority in feminist histories of inquiry. What kinds of rigor does collaboration make possible, and what kind of challenges to interpretation? When differently located folks come together with an array of research priorities, what kinds of reckoning and learning ensue? We can think of this project as lab or guild or think-space in which to better understand intention, craft, and interpretation.

Note: this collaborative project deals with sexual assault counselors and their reflections on healing as a practice and concept. This may not be the course for you if you don't feel prepared to engage with people who deal with the effects of violence as an occupational requirement. Violence is a primary concern of feminist sociology and a key concern of our undergraduates, many of whom go to work in health, education, law, and social work. It's important training for us to engage with practitioners so key to feminist consciousness, institution-building and intervention. For more on this sector, please see Patricia Yancey Martin. 2005. *Rape Work: Victims, Gender, and Emotions in Organization and Community Context*. NY: Routledge.

While they were an undergraduate, Ash Catonio, then a student at UBC, now in our MA program, undertook an RAship with me in response to a request I received from NGOs in the sexual assault NGO sector. Practitioners suggested that we conduct research about the different frontline people who do assault counselling to increase their visibility and to better explain the varied and overlapping conceptions of healing they have and employ. In essence, we interviewed practitioners asking, What is healing to you, and how does it work? We piloted the project that is now being extended to this class.

In the pilot, we introduced portraiture into the research, photographing those interviewed, and we also use interviewees real names to subvert the power that anonymization gives researchers. We will discuss these and other interventions you may want to consider.

Last year, I served as a fellow at the (Centre for Community Partnerships) CCP to think through how to graduate this project into pedagogy and group practice for a graduate methods course. The premise of such planning is that it is beneficial for doctoral students to work together, and in communication with community partners in knowledge production. This project is the fruition of this work and we can see where it takes us, to an empirical piece of writing, a methodological one, or separate meditations on group research.

You will work in groups of 2-3. These sections mirror the research process we know, but the focus is learning. This is an exploration, and you may not complete each of these tasks in the way you would normally. It is more ideal that you practice reading aloud your interview transcripts than finish with definitive answers to the questions that guides our work.

Weeks 1-3: Literature 10% Sept 30

Healing is one of those taken for granted concepts that we don't much understand. What do people mean when they say it? What are the varied and specific as well as overarching meanings? How does the literature compare to your own understandings and personal conceptions – what do you think is missing? What histories and practices are reflected in disparate meanings? What academic subfields have taken it up, and how might we most fruitfully add to this repertoire? In this section, students look at the current literature review and ask themselves what is missing. They may consult a practitioner or scholar, peer or family member, in the construction of ideas concerning a sociological understanding of healing, and add citations based on their framings and subfield expertise.

Weeks 4-6: Participants and partnerships 10% Oct 21

Using commitments to purposive sampling and sampling from the perspective of the grassroots, the affected, and the vulnerable, (rather than the middle class data-consuming narrator/ arbiter/ public/ subject, or policy making sector) groups should think together about their priorities for inclusion. Whose voices should be heard, and from what communities, occupations, social locations? What scholars do you think of as models when you consider who should be included? Select two participants, and interview them, using and augmenting the ethics protocol already approved for the project.

Weeks 7-9: Transcription and sense making 10% Nov 18

In this section, you will receive transcriptions back of your interviews and then read them aloud to one another, practicing coding as both listener and reader. Then you compare themes, codes and pattern identification collaboratively, to write a collaborative summary of your interviews.

Weeks 10-12 Culmination 20% Dec 16

We compile our interviews. You read through, writing your own research summary as well as noting others' interviews you admire, and why. When do we amalgamate and when do we situate and highlight difference, and in both instances, why? Ideally we will collectively generate a shared sense of the data's explanatory potential, and how it might be useful to the community members who asked that it be undertaken.

### Weekly Schedule

#### 1. Sept 9. The Imperative of Feminist Studies

- Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. 2014. Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 20: 811-818

- Dorothy Smith. 1999. “Contradictions for Feminist Social Scientists.” *Writing the Social. Critique, Theory and Investigations*. Toronto: UTP.
- Alexander, Jacqui. Pedagogies of Crossing. Introduction. Durham: Duke UP.
- Cep, Casey. 2018. Zora Neale Hurston’s Story of a Former Slave Finally Comes to Print. *The New Yorker*. May 14.
- Suggested reading: Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 2007. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Chapters 1-4

## 2. Sept 16. No Maps

- Roderick A Ferguson. 2012. Chapter 1. *The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*.
- Roxanne Gay. 2014. Typical First Year Professor. *Bad Feminist*. NY: Harper.
- Yiyun Li. 2017. To Speak is to Blunder. *The New Yorker*.
  - <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/02/to-speak-is-to-blunder>
- Adrienne Rich. 1973. *Diving into the Wreck*. Diving into the Wreck; Poems 1971-2. NY: Norton and Company.
  - <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/diving-wreck>
- Jill Lepore. 2018. The Right Way to Remember Rachel Carson. *The New Yorker*. March 26.

## 3. Sept. 23. How it Starts

- Howard Becker. Telling About Society. Chapter 1.
- Ruth Behar. 2015. Read More, Write Less.
  - <http://savageminds.org/2015/02/02/read-more-write-less/>
- Maynard, Robyn. 2018. *Policing Black Lives*. Ch. 1
- Anne Lamott. 1994. Introduction, Getting Started, Short Assignments, Shitty First Drafts, Perfectionism. *Bird by Bird*. Pp. 3-31. NY: Random House.

## 4. Sept 30. Theoretical Complexity and Curiosity

- Maggie Nelson. 2015. The Argonauts. 1-49
- Mukherjee, Siddhartha. 2018. The Texture of Suffering. On Medicine. *The New York Times Magazine*. 12-15.
- Rebecca Solnit. 2014. On the Dirtiness of Laundry, and the Strength of Sisters Or, Mysteries of Henry David Thoreau, Unsolved. *The Encyclopaedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*. Trinity University Press.

## 5. Oct 7. Listening

- Back, Les. 2007. *The Art of Listening*. Introduction. Sociology as a Listener's Art. London: Bloomsbury.
- <http://condor.depaul.edu/mwilson/multicult/patparker.htm>
- Anna Devere Smith. Four American Characters, Ted Talk
  - [https://www.ted.com/talks/anna\\_devere\\_smith\\_s\\_american\\_character](https://www.ted.com/talks/anna_devere_smith_s_american_character)
- Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mouthner. 2008. What can be Known, and How? Narrated Subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research*. 2008. 8: 399-409.
- Pamela Sugiman. 2009. Life is Sweet: Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadians. *Journal of Canadian Studies*. 43: 186-218.

#### 6. Oct 14. Rendering Visible and Staring

- France Winddance Twine. 2016. Visual Sociology in a Discipline of Words. Racial Literacy, Visual Literacy, and Qualitative Research Methods. *Sociology*. 50: 967-974.
- Too Poor to Retire, Too Young to Die. *L.A. Times*.  
<http://graphics.latimes.com/retirement-nomads/>
- <http://the-editorialmagazine.com/a-conversation-with-jeff-bierk/>
- Daniella Rossell.
  - [http://www.slate.com/blogs/ behold/2012/12/11/daniela\\_rossell\\_documenting\\_the\\_rich\\_and\\_famous\\_mexican\\_youth\\_photos.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/ behold/2012/12/11/daniela_rossell_documenting_the_rich_and_famous_mexican_youth_photos.html)
- Catherine Opie.
  - <http://www.npr.org/2016/02/03/464882995/i-do-like-to-stare-catherine-opie-on-her-portraits-of-modern-america>;
  - <http://www.regenprojects.com/artists/catherine-opie/selected-works?view=multiple-sliders#12>

#### 7. Oct 21. Ethics

- Grappling with “The Feminist Ethnographer’s Dilemma” special issue, *JCE*.
- Ethics Beyond the IRB. 2011. Special issue of *Qualitative Sociology*. 2011.
- Mingwei Huang. 2016. Vulnerable Observers: Notes on Fieldwork and Rape. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
  - <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Vulnerable-Observers-Notes-on/238042>
- Morrow, Hawkins and Kern. 2014. Feminist Research in on line spaces. Gender, Place and Culture. *A Journal of Feminist Geography*. 22: 1-18

#### 8. Oct 28

Scheper-Hughes. 1989. *Death without Weeping*. Berkeley: UC Press.  
Ochoa. 2014. *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela*. Duke UP.

9. Nov 4.

Wool. 2015. *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed*. Duke UP  
Dean. 2015. *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance*. UofT Press.

10. Nov 18. Gender, Interviewing, Anti-Feminist, Masculine Sociologies

- Swidler. Talk of Love. Part one and Methodological Appendix
- Lamont and Swidler. Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing. *Qualitative Sociology* 37, 2: 173-188.
- Alison Pugh. 2013. What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? Demystifying Interpretive Analysis. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. 1: 42-68.

11. Nov 25. Collaboration

- Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India. Intro, 123 postscript
- <http://beyondbullyingproject.com>
  - Fields, Jessica, Laura Mamo, Jen Gilbert and Nancy Lesko. 2014. "Beyond Bullying?" *Contexts* 13(4):80-83.
  - Lageson, Sarah. 2014. "Beyond Bullying: An Interview with Jessica Fields and Laura Mamo." *Contexts Podcast*, Episode 21. November 21. Available online at <http://contexts.org/episodes/beyond-bullying/>
- Feminist Consumerism and Fat Activists: A Comparative Study of Grassroots Activism and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign. Josée Johnston and Judith Taylor *Signs* Vol. 33, No. 4 (Summer 2008), pp. 941-966
- Taylor, Johnston, Whitehead. 2014. A Corporation in Feminist Clothing?

12. Dec 2. Traitorous Research

- Mabs Segrest. *Memoir of a Race Traitor*.
  - [http://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Segrest\\_On\\_Being\\_White\\_and\\_Other\\_Lies.pdf](http://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Segrest_On_Being_White_and_Other_Lies.pdf)
- Naheed Islam. Racing Research, Researching Race.
- Judith Stacey. 2001. How Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter? *ASR*.

The department has asked that I add these three statements to the syllabus:

### **Academic Integrity**

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere." By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

(<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and Code of Student Conduct

(<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

### **Accessibility Services**

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "[Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/statement-commitment-regarding-persons-disabilities-february-25-2021)" at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/statement-commitment-regarding-persons-disabilities-february-25-2021>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

### **Equity and Diversity Statement**

All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated; please alert me to any behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any person in this course or otherwise creates an intimidating or hostile environment. You'll find additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto online at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.