

Abstract

What are Feminist research methods and how are they different from other, non-Feminist research methods? This presentation begins by interrogating the question of how research methods become labeled as Feminist. Building on this knowledge, we detail how this investigation guided our implementation of a new Feminist Research Methods course. The evaluation [research] of this course yielded information regarding the deeply ingrained connection students have between certain research methods and Feminist practice, despite completing a course that explicitly argued for the application of the label "Feminist" to any research rooted in Feminist theory or practices, regardless of the methodologies employed. Additionally, the evaluation [research] we performed of the first offering of this course has allowed us to revise the course based on evidence, not just "hunches," in ways that improve the student experience as well as identify some of the structural and pedagogical challenges when teaching Feminist research methods.

What are Feminist Research Methods?

Methods, Methodologies, Epistemology

- + Epistemology: a theory of knowledge, "ways of knowing"
- + Methods: techniques for gathering data
- + Methodology: "how" to use methods, is data gathering and interpretation consistent with what we believe about what knowledge is and how it should be created

Feminist Approaches to Scholarship

- + What constitute feminist questions?
- + How, explicitly, are methods deployed in decidedly feminist ways?
- + How are data shared in decidedly feminist ways?

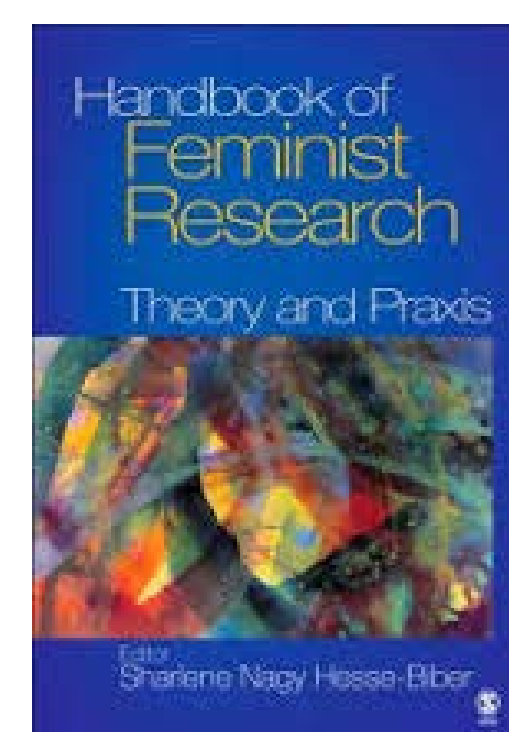
Development of Feminist Research Methods Course

Student Learning Outcomes

- + Correctly Deploy Research Methods
- + Accurate Discussion of Methodologies and Methods
- + Accurate Discussion of Projects as Feminist

Feminist Approach to Course Construction

- + Expose students to feminist scholars across the university
- + Make explicit all expectations
- + Engage multiple sources of knowledge
- + Engage multiple methods
- + Constantly revise course, week to week, based on student learning and student feedback
- + Offer students opportunities to revise work based on new learning



Annotated Course Schedule

Schedule—Which is always subject to change!	
Week One (Monday August 25, 2014): Getting Started	Introductions, syllabus review, class climate discussion. What does it mean to do feminist research? (Read several articles/excerpts) and discuss what makes these feminist. Readings: Hesse-Biber Chapter 1
Monday September 1, 2014: Labor Day, no class Weeks Two and Three (September 8 and 15, 2014): Variety of Feminist Approaches	During our class sessions each of these two weeks we will have Women & Gender Studies affiliated faculty come to class to give presentations about the ways in which they apply feminist research practices into the research in their disciplinary areas. Readings: To be provided by the guests.
Week Four: (September 22, 2014) Theory and Methods Intersect	Theory-Methods wheel. How does feminist theor(ies) inform feminist approaches to research? What is intersectional theory and how does it shape methodological and epistemological approaches? Readings: Hesse-Biber Chapter 2; Bonilla-Silva (Chapter 1, BB)
Week Five: (September 29, 2014): Ethics	A discussion of ethics in research with special attention to marginalized populations (Tuskegee Experiments, Holmesburg Prison, Humphries) Film: <i>Acres of Skin</i> Readings: Hesse-Biber Chapter 4
Weeks Six and Seven: (October 6 & 14, 2014) *note the day change October 14: Experiments	October 6: Discussion of the experimental method, causation and correlation, spuriousness, internal and external validity, random assignment versus random sampling, analyzing experimental data. Special focus on ethics of experiments. Readings: Goar (BB), Correll (BB), Jordan-Young (BB), October 14: Practice experiments in class and evaluate this method, more Women But Not Nearly Enough (BB)
Weeks Eight and Nine (October 20 and 27, 2014): Surveys and Secondary Data Analysis	October 20: Discussion of survey methods, various type of closed and open ended questions, question writing, stems/responses, reliability, validity, sampling techniques, analyzing survey data Readings: Hesse-Biber Chapter 10, Davis and Risman (BB) October 27: Practice surveys in class and evaluate this method, ICPSR project
Weeks Ten and Eleven (November 3 and 10, 2014): Observations & Ethnography	November 3: Discussion of observational techniques including participatory observation, non-participant observation and ethnography. Sampling and variable construction. Special focus on ethics of observation and ethnography. Analyzing observation and ethnographic data. Readings: Hesse-Biber Chapter 5, Amy Best (BB) November 10: Practice observational techniques and evaluate this method.
Weeks 12 and 13 (November 17 and 24, 2014): Interviews	November 17: Discussion of interviewing. Question design, building rapport, sampling and analysis. How do surveys and interviews compliment each other? Readings: Hesse-Biber chapters 7 & 8, Hattery CSA paper (BB) November 24: Practice interviewing techniques and evaluate this method.
Week 14: (December 1, 2014): Conclusions, final presentations	

Feminist scholars present on how their work is feminist.

Evaluated first assignment. Changes made to the assignment process allowing resubmission. Changes made to in-class time allowing for in-class project work.

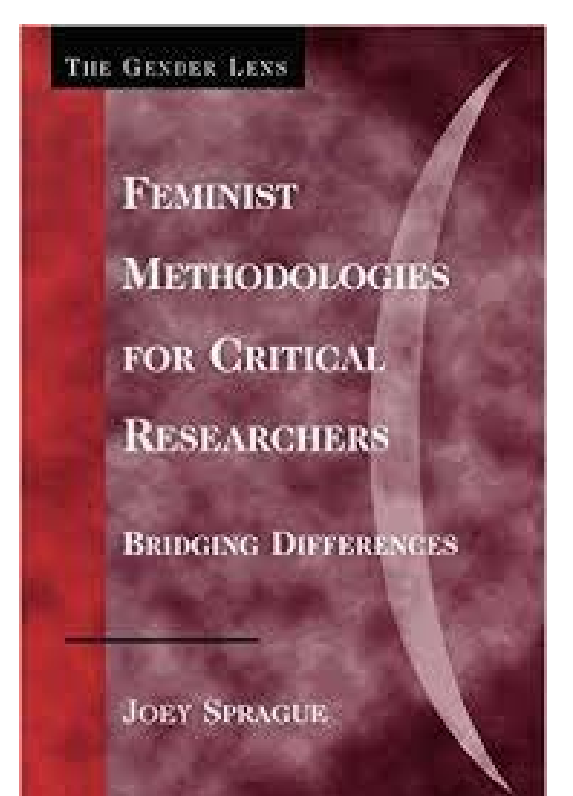
Revised final presentation guidelines to encourage focus on how methods were feminist.

Evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes

- + Correctly Deploy Methods
 - + Unconscious bias in expectations of students
 - + Unevenness in student preparation
 - + Revised submission opportunities to include resubmission once we began evaluating this SLO
- + Accurate Discussion of Methodologies
 - + Unevenness in student preparation led to unevenness in ability to discuss how groups completed their assignments
 - + Restructured class time to allow more time in class to workshop project ideas
- + Accurate Discussion of Projects as Feminist
 - + Challenge, especially for graduate students, in seeing experiments and surveys as feminist
 - + Students applied a very narrow definition of feminism to evaluate their projects

Evidence-Based Revisions to Course

- + Altered Assigned Textbook and Readings
 - + New textbook will be a primer in basic methods as well as feminist epistemology
 - + Supplementary articles will explicitly engage feminist epistemology
 - + Greater class time to be devoted to understanding how to employ methods
- + Greater Integration of Theory and Epistemology Throughout Course
 - + Added readings on basic feminist and intersectional theory and devote 1 class period to this discussion
- + Greater Integration of Librarian into the Course
 - + Expanded workshop on literature searches
 - + Include workshop on reading and interpreting research articles
- + Modified assignments
 - + Modified the order of assignments to maximize progressive nature of the development of methods
 - + Modified assignments to incorporate opportunities for revisions for each assignment
 - + Greater emphasis in assignments on student's understanding of the feminist nature of their projects



Acknowledgements

- + Students in WMST 410/610
- + Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities and Research (OSCAR),