SWGS 497 Seminar in Engaged Research (Spring 2016)

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Dr. Comer ([kcomer@rice.edu](mailto:kcomer@rice.edu)) Class: W, 9:30- 11:50 (Hanszen 201) Office 317 Herring, Hrs T/W 2:30-3:45 + appt

Course Description

The Seminar in Engaged Research is a course taken in conjunction with SWGS 496: Practicum in Engaged Research. It takes as its starting point the questions: What is engaged research in the study of women, gender, and sexuality? How does it differ from other research methods? How does it draw upon feminist and other critical discourses? How does doing research in this manner influence the kinds of question we ask as well as our approaches to potential answers?

Gender studies and feminist scholars (as well as scholars in other fields) are increasingly theoretically attentive to the ways that social inequalities are constructed and represented in their work. They join researchers in other fields who find that much research can be faulted for the ways that it reproduces the very inequalities and exploitation that it set out to study, especially in the relationships between “researcher” and “researched.” For more than a decade, there has been new attention to developing methodologies that resonate with these theoretical concerns for social justice. Scholars and community organizers have developed principles and models of participatory research in collaboration with the work of community organizations. These efforts have been aimed at bringing research explicitly into the service of the communities being studied.

We address theoretical questions about the politics of representing from different locations, the power/knowledge relations that impact collaborations across social difference, and some of the lessons learned from specific engaged research efforts.

We explore questions about what it means to “engage” in a collaborative and reciprocal way as they have been raised by feminist theorists, ethnographers, and geographers, in discussions of witnessing, decolonial place-making, youth advocacy, and through perspectives of indigenous and critical race studies as well as affect theory. We work to understand the terms of various feminist debates, question our assumptions about knowledge, community action, and social justice. The seminar is not a traditional methods course, but rather is designed to be a space where we can explore together the complexities inherent in the practice of engaged research.

**Course Objectives – Students will be able to**

* demonstrate an understanding of the place of engaged research in the study of women, gender and sexuality within some of the major epistemological traditions of feminist studies
* understand, critique, and build on major analytical and methodological orientations in feminist research orally and in writing
* practice field note writing that records and reflects on the process of engaged research
* address a range of ethical and political issues and dilemmas in feminist and engaged research
* identify specific sites of feminist/sexuality studies inquiry as of significance to individual projects and demonstrate conversation with that inquiry/concern
* reflect orally and in writing on key features of engaged research as a practice in relation to one’s own research practice
* document the results of students’ engaged research project in a written report on the particular problem pursued in the Practicum and its relevance to women, gender and/or sexuality.
* visualize in poster format the key arguments of projects, demonstrate visual flow in choice of poster template, create effective argumentative section headers
* understand and practice oral skills particular to effective presentations of posters

**Required Texts**

* lisahunter, Elke Emerald & Gregory Martin, *Participatory Activist Research in a Globalised World*, London: Springer (2013), available through Fondren Library as an e-reading.
* Other readings/materials available on the course OWL-Space site.

**Course Requirements**

**Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Regular attendance in class and active participation in discussion are required, and will be included your final grade. Your participation grade will consist of

contributing to class discussion, preparing discussion questions, in-class writing

assignments, homework assignments, and posting a reading on your topic.

Reading Responses (15% -- 5 shorter pieces, 3 points each)

Each student will submit reading responses of varying lengths and post them on OWL-Space in the appropriate forum thread by the Sunday following class (.doc not pdfs please). Entries will draw from field journal notes, theoretical readings, class prompts. The purpose of the responses is to create smaller building-block segments of written work about key critical issues and field journal insights.

In Class Presentation (10 points)

Prepare a ten-minute presentation of one or two assigned essays on a seminar topic important to your research. The presentation can help you organize your thoughts around a significant concept, research practice, or practice concern. A handout on effective presentations can be found on OWL-Space.

Concepts and Methods Paper (20 points)

Each student will write a short critical paper of 5 or so pages based on our readings of feminist critiques of traditional research methods and practices. Students should include at least four readings from class and at least one outside reading pertinent to your specific topic. Think of it as a literature/methods review for your final project. Due: April 8.

**Final Project: The final project will consist of two parts.**

**Oral/Poster Presentation**. Students will give a public presentation at Rice University of their research on April 27.

Project Paper/Report: The final project as defined by each student in her/his research

plan with the collaborating organization will be due May 4.

Issues to consider in writing this paper are

• how you chose this project

• the specific theoretical issues at hand in conducting this particular project

• the specific methodological issues at hand in conducting this particular project

• the practical issues/problems

• what this work hopes to achieve

• possible future directions.

**Grading**:

Course Attendance/Participation (20%)

Response Papers (15%)

In-Class Presentation (10%)

Concepts & Methods Short Paper (20%)

Final Project (35%: Presentation 10%, Paper 25%)

**Deadlines**: Because there are quite a lot of moving parts to this course and to the substance of projects, meeting deadlines is going to be very helpful. The course is structured to provide instruction at every step of the way, and staying on schedule is a way for students and their community partners to make best use of collaborative labors.

**Disability accommodations**: Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services.

**Week 1 Introduction**

Jan 13In-Class Activities/Discussion: What is engaged research, what feminist concepts/ideals matter to us (or challenge us) most?

-- lisahunter et al, Chaps 1-2 from *Participatory Activist Research in a Globalized World*, 1-26. (Fondren Library, e-text)

**Week 2 Becoming Feminist/Activist Researchers, Histories/Contexts**

Jan 20

-- lisahunter et al. Chaps 3-4, Critical Theory and Philosophical Orientations, from *Participatory Activist Research in a Globalized World*, 33-57.

-- Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, “Introduction: Activist Scholarship and the

Neoliberal University after 9/11,” in Sudbury & Okazawa-

Rey, eds., *Activist Scholarship: Antiracism, Feminism and Social Change* (Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 1-8.

-- Robin Kelley, “When History Sleeps: A Beginning,” from *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2003), 1-12.

--Incite! & Andrea Smith, “Introduction,” from *The Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex,”* (2009).

-- Marjorie DeVault, “On Becoming a Feminist Scholar,” in *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research* (1999), 5-19.

Luncheon with Community Collaborators, Cohen House, 11:30

Response Paper: What does it mean to do activist work in the current political climate?

**Week 3** **Nuts and Bolts: Data Construction, Writing Notes, Listening**

Jan 27

--**Review** (as needed) materials from pre-seminar, including Anderson/Jack;

Miner-Rubio et al; Stewart/Cole (on interviews, surveys, mixed-methods).

**For today**:

--lisahunter et al. Chap 6, “Methods of Constructing Field Texts,” from *Participatory Activist Research,* 73-102 (read selectively).

--Paulo Freire, “Creating Alternative Research Methods: Learning to Do It by Doing It,” in Budd Hall, Arthur Gillette, and Rajesh Tandon, eds., *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly: Participatory Research In Development* (Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982) 29-37.

-- Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, Chapters 1 & 2 in Writing *Ethnographic Notes* (1995), 1-38.

-- Asale Angel-Ajani, “Expert Witness: Notes Toward Revisiting the Politics of Listening,” *Anthropology and Humanism 29* (2004): 133–144.

In-class exercises in “thick description.” How to shape such an encompassing practice?

**Week 4 Critical Ethnography/Overview of Critical Feminist Research**

Feb 3

-- **Review**  (as needed) from pre-seminar, Maria Mies, “Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research,” in Bowles & Klein, eds., *Theories of Women’s Studies* (1983), 117-139.

**For today**:

-- D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography* (2005),1-50.

-- Judith Stacey, “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?” in Gluck & Patai,

eds., *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (Routledge, 1990), 111-19.

-- DeVault, “What is Feminist Methodology?” from *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research* (1999), 21-54.

Response Paper: What is Critical Ethnography? Applications of reading to my project.

**Week 5 In-class Writing Session (Free-write first, edit later)**

Feb 10

Why have I chosen the instruments (surveys, interviews, focus groups) I’ve chosen? What kind of knowledge do they provide? What might be limits of that knowledge? How do the materials read thus far help me think about these questions? Where am I personally with this project –why do I care? How do I define engaged or activist research, thus far? (Grapple questions you feel ready to address.)

3-minute “check-in” discussions during workshops, to support individual work.

Take exercise home, reflect, expand, or clarify, then submit. Edit for grammar and obvious confusions, but don’t heavily edit or begin wholesale reorganization, we’re after the first-thoughts nature of the exercise. You have 2.5 hours to write, so 5 pg. minimum.

**Week 6 Critical Feminist Research, cont’d: Alternative Epistemologies**

Feb 17

-- Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” in Fonow & Cook, eds., *Beyond*

*Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* (Indiana University Press,

1991), 35-59.

-- Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 773-797.

-- Sandra Harding, “Negotiating with the Positivist Legacy: New Social Justice Movements and a Standpoint Politics of Method,” in Steinmetz, ed., *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others* (2005), 346-365.

-- Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Free Association Books, 1991), 183-201.

**Week 7 Alternative Conceptions of Subjectivity, Space, Place, Time**

Feb 24

--Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Research Through Imperial Eyes,” *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed Books, 1999), Chaps 2, 3, 9.

-- Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” in *Just Methods*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar. Boulder, CO: Paradigm. 2008. 484-95.

--lisahunter, et. al, “LEAPing into Youth Work” from *Participatory Activist Research* (167-180).

--LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), “Embodied Tribalography,” YouTube 43min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upeVQniQdyc

--Adultism and Parenting for Social Change, Parts I & II (Teresa Brett) <http://www.kindredmedia.org/adultism-the-hidden-toxin-poisoning-our-> relationships-with-children/

--Teresa Graham Brett, “Parenting for Social Change” podcast <https://soundcloud.com/kindredcommunity/parenting-for-social-change>

--“A Draft Program for Young Adult Liberation,” Re-Evaluation Counseling <https://www.rc.org/publication/present_time/pt111/pt111_061_am>

**Response Paper. O**n the challenges of representing -- in theory, and in your own work.

**Week 8 Spring Recess**

March 2

**Week 9 Creating Engaged Research Practice: Case Studies**

March 9

-- Habell-Pallán, Retlin & Macklin, “Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities: Participatory Research, Community Engagement, and Archival Practice," *New American Notes Online (NANO)* 2014.

--Comer, “Surfeminism, Critical Regionalism, Public Scholarship,” forthcoming in *Critical Surf Studies: A Reader* (2016).

-- Shirley Suet-ling Tang, “Community-Centered Research as Knowledge/Capacity Building in Immigrant and Refugee Communities,” in Hale ed., *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (2008), 237-264.

--Rebecca Olive, “Physical Culture in Online Spaces,” *Media International Australia* (2015).

**Week 10 Our (Scholarly and Activist) Attachments & Epistemologies**

March 16

-- Lauren Berlant, “Introduction,” from *Cruel Optimism* (2011).

-- Laura Briggs, “Activisms and Epistemologies,” *Social Text* (2008, 26:4).

-- Andrea Smith, “The Problem with Privilege,” Andrea366 blog

<https://andrea366.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/the-problem-with-privilege-byandrea-smith/>

**Week 11** **Student Project Workshops**: **Intersectionality, Age,**

March 23

-- Crenshaw, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics, *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989).

--Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, “Toward Field Intersectional Studies,” *Signs* (2013).

--Colim-Walmsley, “The Queers Left Behind” *Huffington Post* (2016)

--Farrow, “Is Gay Marriage Anti-Black???” (2004) (short piece)

-- AgainstEquality.org – Queer Challenges to the Politics of Inclusion http://www.againstequality.org/

--Laws, “Understanding Ageism: Lessons from Feminism and Postmodernism”

(1995) (short piece)

--Sandberg, “The Old, the Ugly, the Queer: Thinking Old Age in Relation to

Queer Theory (2008).

includes Khadijah & Zoe student essay selection(s) + presentations

**Week 12 Student Project Workshops: Thinking Otherwise/Feminist, Queer, Decolonial World-Building**

March 30

-- Gordon, “Something More Powerful than Skepticism,” *Keeping Good Times: Reflections on Knowledge, Power, People* (2004).

--Joseph, “Introduction: Persistent Critique, Relentless Return,” *Against the Romance of Community* (2002).

--José Muñoz, Preface and Introduction, from *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999).

--Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Politics* Intro + Chap 4

--Sonia Saldívar-Hull? Chela Sandoval?

+ includes Cristell student essay selection(s) +presentation

**Week 13 Student Project Workshops: Physical Culture, Visitor, Poster Workshop**

April 6

9:30-10:30 **Visit from lisahunter**

--Wright, “Lesbian Firefighters” (2008)

-- Halberstam, *Female Masculinity”* intro + notes

--Review lisahunter, elke emerald, & Gregory Martin Intro

+ includes McKenzie student essay selection(s) + presentation

POSTER WORKSHOP: Visualizing Arguments – Visit from Dr. Festa

**Week 14 Engagement as (Personal) Transformation and The Issue of Positionality**

April 13

-- George Lipsitz, “Walleye Warriors and White Identities: Native Americans’

Treaty Rights, Composite Identities and Social Movements,” *Ethnic and Racial*

*Studies*

--Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (2007, from speech 1979), 110-113.

-- Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial

Discourses,” *boundary 2* (1984/85) 12/13: 333-358*.*

**I**ndividual visits to CWVOC for Poster support

**Week 15 Poster Mock-Up Due/CWVOC Feedback/Presentation Practice**

April 20

Public Presentation April 27th, 5:30-7pm, Humanities Bldg Lobby