

**Research Seminar for Majors  
in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:  
Crafting an Interdisciplinary Feminist Research Paper  
(WST 408)**

Spring 2018/Mondays 4-6:50

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**Course Description**

The senior research seminar is the capstone course for the interdisciplinary major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The course allows students to utilize research skills, concepts, methods, and materials generated from their coursework in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The object of the class is to have students working—as a group and on their own—for the entire semester on conducting original research in order to produce a 15-20 page interdisciplinary research paper on a topic of their choice as formulated and developed in seminar activities and discussions. Along with the research paper, students will also present their research in a 15-minute oral presentation to the seminar. Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in the campus-wide URECA Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creativity symposium on April 25, 2018. In considering what to work on, you will want to draw on materials from other Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes that have interested you intellectually, aesthetically, and/or politically. Students are expected to consider this research project in relation to specific career interests and life goals. For example, the research and presentation might help prepare you for a job interview or the paper you write might serve as a writing sample when applying to graduate programs in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies or other fields and professional schools. Our class meetings will be dedicated to intensive research and writing workshop activities, and so the format of the class may feel different from other classes you have taken at Stony Brook. Although there is not as much reading as in a typical WGSS class, the workload is as heavy, if not more so, than other classes. The key is to keep up with the weekly assignments and to engage constructively with the workshop activities and your fellow students/collaborators and their projects. Consider this an opportunity to clarify for yourself and others why you majored in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. What are the issues and questions that enliven you as a scholar and concern you as a person, and how do you propose to address these issues and concerns?

### **Learning outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the following skills:

- Evaluate interdisciplinary feminist methods (i.e. discourse analysis, film/literary cultural studies, historical research, and ethnography)
- Develop problem solving skills in the field of women's, gender, and sexuality studies by applying feminist methods to answer pressing research questions
- Refine research skills, including (but not limited to): developing a research question; selecting a method; conducting library research; and collecting, managing, and analyzing primary source materials
- Cultivate academic writing skills, including (but not limited to): outlining; drafting or free writing; moving from analysis to argument; revising and proofreading
- Gain experience and confidence in the collaborative process and an appreciation for giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Deliver a professional presentation showcasing an original interdisciplinary research project and using appropriate media or visual aids
- Compose a 15-20-page paper based on original research and written for an audience of fellow women's, gender, and sexuality studies scholars
- Ideally, prepare a poster presentation and share research findings at URECA's Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creativity on April 25

### **SBC learning outcomes**

This course fulfills the following Stony Brook Curriculum (SBC) requirements:

- EXP+ Experiential Learning: Employ interdisciplinary feminist methods (including discourse analysis, ethnography, literature, history, qualitative methods, and participant observation) to study and account for gender differences.
- SPK Speak Effectively before an audience: Students will discuss their research in the seminar and in a public presentation of their research project.
- WRD Write effectively within one's discipline: Express skills in critical and analytical thinking, argumentation, writing, interdisciplinary and collaborative research design.

### **Course Materials**

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, & William T. Fitzgerald, eds. *The Craft of Research*, Fourth Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016

Additional readings (such as articles, book chapters, and other excerpts), available as PDFs on Blackboard

**Students are required to have copies of the readings for every class.**

The text is available at the University Bookstore, and should also be available widely (both new and used) online. The text is also available on reserve in the library, and students are welcome to make copies of the selected readings using the copy on reserve. Failure to come to class with copies of the readings for that day will affect your grade.

### **Course Requirements**

**1. Attendance, participation, and collaboration (15%):** We are all in this together! Therefore, weekly attendance and participation/collaboration are mandatory and required for the successful completion of this course. In order to help you research and write your research paper, there are regular written assignments. Completing these assignments in a timely manner is important because we will discuss and offer feedback on these in class on the day they are due. As part of your seminar participation grade, you are also responsible for engaging each other, which means offering constructive feedback on the substance and structure of your fellow seminar participants' work and sharing ideas and materials (clippings or references can be photocopied and brought to class or posted to BB). Every student is expected to attend every class on time, and to participate each week.

Some hints on how to participate and collaborate most effectively:

- Keep a research journal for your project. This is the place where you can jot down thoughts/notes/reminders/citations/questions/etc.
- Take notes on feedback provided to you from your fellow students, as well as from the instructor and TA.
- Take notes on your fellow students' projects: what do you like about how they have formulated their topics, research questions, and methods? What could be made clearer or what aspects of the project need more development?
- In one-on-one and small group workshops, don't be shy about articulating what questions you want to ask in your research and describing the ways you will answer these questions. Be prepared to help others formulate their research questions and methods too. When we think about and discuss the questions our colleagues are asking and how they propose to answer them, we often gain insight into our own work.

## 2. Weekly Assignments:

**Topic statement (5%):** You will compose a formal statement of your research project following guidelines in *The Craft of Research*. The ungraded-but-required draft of your topic statement is due on January 29 and the final topic statement is due February 5.

**Abstract (5%):** You will compose an approximately 300-word abstract outlining your research project. Your abstract must include a working title for your paper, a clear statement of your research topic and question, a description of your methodological approach, examples of your primary sources, and an overview of your main argument and scholarly intervention. Some questions to consider as you write your abstract: (1) why is this an important topic to examine, and (2) how is it relevant to women's, gender, and sexuality studies? The ungraded-but-required draft of your abstract is due on February 26, and the graded final version is due on March 5.

**Annotated bibliography (10%):** To show the progress of their research, students will turn in a preliminary annotated works cited page of at least 10 sources (scholarly books and academic journals). Only two can be Internet sources (e.g. webpages, blogs, or newspaper articles). You will turn in a draft annotated bibliography with 10 sources and 4 completed annotations on February 19. The final annotated bibliography is due February 26. Students are especially encouraged to seek resources in highly regarded feminist and interdisciplinary journals, including: *Signs*, *Gender and Society*, *GLQ*, *Feminist Theory*, *Feminist Formations*, *Feminist Studies*, *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, *WSQ*.

Keep in mind that this preliminary list of sources is subject to change—you may not use all of the sources and you will find others as your research progresses. You may not use Wikipedia as one of your bibliographic sources. Wikipedia is a useful resource for general information on your topic and it can lead you to other sources. But it is not acceptable as a source for a scholarly research paper.

Your papers must use a formal and consistent citation style (MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style). For a helpful resource for information about proper citation style, please see Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>). All images and text from the Internet, journals, or books must have full citation to be used in any aspect of your research.

**Final Thesis, Research Question, & Outline (15%):** As you are analyzing your primary and secondary sources—and before you start the drafting process—you will compose a working thesis statement and an in-depth outline of how you will organize your research paper. The thesis

statement identifies the problem or the purpose of the paper; it explains what the research is about, and states your argument or perspective or rationale. The research questions state what you want to learn or investigate and why. Research questions on your topic should be open-ended, yet focused and clearly stated in order to direct your research and help you decide what references will be useful in finding an answer or solution. Write two to three specific questions on your research topic that you want to address. The methods are the ways you will get information. Explain in detail the techniques or processes used to conduct your research. The annotated outline is a detailed plan of the layout of the material in your paper—moving from the title, thesis, research questions and methods to elaborating an argument in your paper. Complete sentences should be used in alphanumeric outline format.

**3. Draft and final research paper (30%):** All of your research and writing this semester will culminate in the production of a 15-20 page paper. The ungraded-but-required 10+-page draft of your paper is due on Thurs, Apr 2 and can consist of either a specific and polished section from your paper (chosen from your outline) or a sketched overview of your entire paper. The final graded 15-20-page version of your paper is due **on the last day of classes (Monday April 30)**. Late papers will be penalized.

**4. Presentation of Research (20%):** Students will present their research projects to the class on April 9, 16, or 23. Each student will have 15 minutes to present her or his project, and there will be another 5 minutes for questions and comments. Although this may seem like a long presentation, students often discover that the time goes by quite quickly, and they are pressed to say everything they want to say. We will monitor the time closely, and students will be stopped after 15 minutes. This means each of you should practice your presentation in advance to ensure it is the right length. Students will be graded for their ability to make their arguments in a clear and concise manner, and for their capacity to handle questions from the audience. Students listening to the presentations will be graded on their engagement with the presentations, as exemplified by their thoughtful and constructive questions and comments for the presenters. Students will take notes on the presentations and will complete a presentation worksheet on each presentation to provide feedback to the presenter.

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the campus-wide URECA Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creativity Students symposium on April 25, 2018.

<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/ureca/celebration/index.php>

**Note: Students will submit all writing for this course on Blackboard. Assignments are due on BB at 3 p.m. each Monday before class. Please also bring a hard copy of your assignments to class for our discussions. We will return assignments by email with comments in track changes. Be sure to read these comments. All writing for the course must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font with 1" inch margins.**

**Grade scale:**

A	94-100
A-	89-93
B+	85-88
B	81-84
B-	77-80
C+	73-76
C	69-72
C-	65-68
D+	61-64
D	57-60

**Blackboard:** This class is on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>), and students are expected to consult Blackboard regularly for updates on readings and assignments. I also encourage students to use Blackboard to continue class discussions outside of class, and to recommend useful resources to each other that you have learned about in other classes, through your own reading, or in the media. See the Discussion board for the sharing forum.

**Classroom etiquette:** A good classroom atmosphere depends upon the behavior of both the instructor and the students. So, we need to respect each other and be courteous to each other. This means all of us should come to class on time, not leave early, answer cell phones, write emails or texts on phones or laptops, or talk when others are talking. Concentration and participation are necessary for good thinking!

I permit the use of laptops for note-taking and to consult electronic versions of reading materials. Using your laptop for other things during class time is not allowed—searching the web, checking social media, etc. is distracting to you and others!

**Email:** It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official University email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud>), but you may

verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at <http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo>. If you choose to forward your official University email to another off-campus account, faculty are not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts. You can set up Google Mail forwarding using these DoIT-provided instructions found at <http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/setting-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail>. If you need technical assistance, please contact Client Support at (631) 632-9800 or [supportteam@stonybrook.edu](mailto:supportteam@stonybrook.edu).

**Students with disabilities:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128 (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students requiring emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information, go to the following web site: <http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu/fire/disabilities/asp>

**Critical Incident Management:** Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

**Academic Integrity:** Do not plagiarize, which is defined as "to take and use as one's own the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). This means you have plagiarized if, for example: you copy part or all of another student's paper, or use another student's paper from another class or semester, or if you download part or all of your paper from the internet and claim it as your own, or if you copy from a book and do not quote or cite the author. I take plagiarism very seriously. If you plagiarize, you will be turned in to Academic Judiciary. If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, come talk to me about it.

**University statement on Academic Integrity:** Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be

reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

**Questions?** Feel free to contact me and/or Rachel to discuss the course at any point during the semester. Come to office hours, make an appointment with one of us, send us an email, or see us after class.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Jan 22: Introduction: Doing feminist interdisciplinary research**

Review of key terms/questions for doing research in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

- I. Course Overview: Elements of a Senior Research Project
- II. Discussion: Tips on Choosing a Research Topic
- III. In-Class Activity: Brainstorming Research Topics

#### **Jan 29: Topics to Questions**

Read: "From Topics to Questions" from *The Craft of Research*, p. 33-48

- I. Discussion: From Topics, to Questions, to Problems, to Projects!
- II. Workshop: Topic Statements
- III. In-Class Activity: Topic Statement Round Robin

**Due:** Draft of Topic Statement (this will be used for our topic statement round robin)

#### **Feb 5: Library Day! Strategies for Effective Library Research**

**We will meet in our seminar room as usual, but will walk together over to the library, where a librarian will give us some useful tips on doing research. Students will spend another hour or so in the library doing research.**

Read: "Engaging Sources" from *The Craft of Research*, p. 85-104

- I. Workshop: Library Research (Meet in Melville Library, Classroom A)
- II. Discussion: What to Do with What You Find at the Library
- III. How to: Writing Annotated Bibliographies

**Due:** Final Topic Statement

#### **Feb 12: Research Design & Method I: Discourse and textual analysis**

Read: 1. Emily Martin's "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles" from *Signs* 16.3 (1991): 485-501

2. Jennifer C. Nash's "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality," *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 11.2 (2013): 1-24

- I. In-Class Activity: How Did These Essays Get Written
- II. Discussion: Discourse analysis; Historical/conceptual analysis

III. How-To: Writing Abstracts

**Due:** Draft Annotated Bibliography (a full list of bibliographic entries to be annotated; complete drafts of annotations for at least 4 of your sources)

**Sign up for presentations**

**Feb 19: Research Design & Method II: Ethnography and intersectional analysis**

Read: 1. Rayna Rapp's "The Power of 'Positive' Diagnosis: Medical and Maternal Discourse in Amniocentesis," in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene, Christina Gilmartin, and Robin Lyndenberg, eds. *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 287-300.

2. Michael Gill and Nirmala Erelles's "The Absent Presence of Elsie Lacks: Hauntings at the Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Disability," *African American Review* 50.2 (2017): 123-137

I. In-Class Activity: How Did These Essays Get Written

II. Discussion: Ethnography, cultural analysis

III. How-To: Writing Thesis Statements

**Due:** Final Annotated Bibliography (10 sources with complete annotations)

**Feb 26: Research Design & Method III: Historical/archival analysis**

Read: Rachel Corbman's "Remediating Disability Activism in the Lesbian Feminist Archive," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*

I. In-Class Activity: Ask Rachel How Her Essay Got Written

II. Discussion: Historical/archival analysis

III. How-To: Incorporating sources

**DUE:** Draft Abstract

**Sign up for mentoring meetings on March 19**

**March 5: Primary materials**

I. Primary Materials Workshop: From Description to Analysis to Argument

II. In-Class Activity: Reverse Research Round Robin

III. How-To: Outlining

\*Be sure to bring at least one of your primary materials to class!

**Due:** Final Abstract

**March 12: Spring break: spend 3+ hours on your project over break!**

**March 19: Mentoring meetings**

Office hours during class period. Mandatory appointments!

**Due:** Draft Thesis, Research Questions, and Annotated Outline (these documents will serve as the basis for our conversation)

**March 26: Drafting and revising**

Read: "Planning and Drafting" and "Organizing Your Argument" from *The Craft of Research*, pp. 177-199

- I. Discussion: Our writing processes
- II. In-Class Activity: Free writing
- III. How-To: From Zero Drafts to Polished Prose

**Due:** Final Thesis, Research Questions, and Outline

**April 2: Presenting our research**

- I. Discussion: Styles of presentation
- II. In-class activity: Preparing a presentation outline with a peer
- III. How-To: The Academic Presentation

**Due:** 10+-Page Draft

Friday, April 6: WGSS Graduate Conference: Spaces of Dissent  
Keynote speaker: Jennifer Nash  
Students are encouraged to attend to see feminist interdisciplinary research in action!

**April 9: Presentations**

**April 16: Presentations**

**April 23: Presentations**

Wednesday, April 25: URECA Research Symposium

**April 30: Course wrap-up/party!!**

**Due:** Final papers

