

# **Feminist Epistemologies in Action 2012-13**

**Convenor  
Dr Karen Throsby  
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Autumn Term  
Mondays 3-5pm  
Ramphal 0.03/4**

## **Welcome to *Feminist Epistemologies in Action***

The aim of this module is to provide students with a thorough grounding in the extensive feminist engagement with epistemological and methodological questions, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This should give you a firm foundation from which not only to conduct your own research, but also to read critically the research of others.

The module begins from the premise that the decisions that researchers take in conducting, analysing and publishing research have political, ethical and theoretical implications. Over the course of the term, we will explore what assumptions and expectations underpin claims to “know”, and ask what relations of power are at work in those claims – not only in the context of gender relations, but also in relation to other axes of power and identity (race, class, sexuality etc). We will be asking whose knowledge counts in any given context, and exploring what feminism has contributed to those debates.

The teaching for the module will take the form of a two hour lecture / seminar on Mondays (3-5pm), starting in Week 2. Some minimal required reading is set for each week, but you are expected to supplement this with self-directed reading drawn from the module reading list, other modules you are taking, and your own research-led reading. In addition, I will also be inviting some researchers to come and talk with us about their own experiences of managing some of the dilemmas that we will be discussing. The module works best if everyone comes well-prepared and ready to talk about what they've read, problems they've encountered, and questions that they want to discuss and debate. There are very few right and wrong answers in this area, but plenty of puzzles and contradictions, so please come ready to discuss and debate.

I'm looking forward to working with you all on this module.

Best regards  
Karen

## Module aims

1. To provide students with a critical understanding of a range of feminist ontological, epistemological, methodological and ethical perspectives and debates;
2. To enable students to apply that critical understanding to their own reading and research

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of a wide range of feminist ontological, epistemological, methodological and ethical perspectives and debates;
2. Demonstrate an advanced understanding and awareness of the significance of difference and power in the research process;
3. Demonstrate independent research skills and oral and written communication skills;
4. Demonstrate the ability to comprehend and critically analyse the relationships between research theory and practice;
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the implications for research (and those involved in it) of different feminist approaches;
6. Critically evaluate the different approaches, drawing on both theoretical and empirical sources;
7. Undertake and present scholarly work;
8. Construct a coherent argument using appropriate evidence.

## Teaching

Teaching for the module will take the form of a two-hour weekly lecture-seminar. Students will be required *minimally* to have completed the key readings and ideally one other reading (either from the reading list, or identified through independent research), and to come to the sessions prepared to discuss those texts. The sessions will also include some guest speakers who will talk about their own experiences of doing feminist research, and some of the challenges, pleasures and problems that they encountered in the process of data collection, analysis, writing-up and dissemination.

## Assessment

The module is assessed through a 5000 word essay.

The deadlines for the submission of assessed essays, as well as penalties for late submission, are as published by the Department of Sociology. The Department's policies on word length apply to all submitted written work.

# **Module Outline**

**Week 2: What difference does feminism make to research?**

**Week 3: Feminist critiques of science and objectivity**

**Week 4: Feminist standpoint theory**

**Week 5: Quantitative research – feminism, gender and research methods**

**Week 6: Reflexivity**

**Week 7: Feminist Post-Modernism**

**Week 8: Taking Difference into Account: Race and Sexuality**

**Week 9: Feminist Psychoanalysis**

**Week 10: Post-Feminism**

## General useful reading

Alcoff, L and Potter, E (eds) (1993) *Feminist Epistemologies* London: Routledge

Crowley, H and Himmelweit, S (1992) *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* Buckingham: OUP

Duran, J (2001) *Worlds of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies* London: Routledge

Harding, S (ed) (1987) *Feminism and Methodology* Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage

Hill Collins, P (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Second Edition)* London: Routledge

Hughes, C (2002) *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Practice* Buckingham: OUP

Jones, K G and Jonasdottir, A G (eds) (2008) *The Political Interests of Feminism Revisited* Manchester: Manchester University Press

Letherby, G (2003) *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* Buckingham: OUP

Narayan, U and Harding, S (eds) (2000) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Ramazanoglu, C and Holland, J (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* London: Sage

Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge

Stanley, L (1993) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* London: Routledge

Tanesini, A (1999) *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* Oxford: Blackwells

Wilkinson, S and Kitzinger, C (eds) (1996) *Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reader* London: Sage

## **Week 2: What difference does feminism make to research?**

In this introductory session, we will be exploring some of the key concepts central to the module, and asking what difference feminism makes to research. We will also use this session to introduce our own research interests and to begin thinking about how this module might contribute to that ongoing work.

### **Seminar questions**

- 1. What is feminist research?**
- 2. What difference does feminism make to research?**
- 3. Why have epistemological questions been so central to feminist theory and research?**
- 4. What is the relationship between method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research?**
- 5. Is there a feminist way of knowing?**

### **Key readings**

Finding, D (2010) “Living in the real world? What happens when the media covers feminist research”. Ch. 20 in Ryan-Flood, R and R. Gill (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge (Course extracts)

Harding, S (1987) “Introduction: Is there a feminist method?” In Harding, S (ed) *Feminist and Methodology* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Harding, S (1987) “Conclusion: epistemological questions”. In Harding, S (ed) *Feminist and Methodology* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

### **Further readings**

Alcoff, L and Potter, E (eds) (1993) *Feminist Epistemologies* London: Routledge (esp Ch. 1: Introduction: When feminisms intersect epistemology)

Braidotti, R. (1994) “Sexual difference as a nomadic political project”. Ch. 8, in *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* Columbia University Press: New York (available electronically)

Brooks, A and Hesse-Biber, S N (2007) “An invitation to feminist research”. In Hesse-Biber, S N and Brooks, A (eds) *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* London: Sage (Course extracts)

Gunew, S (ed) (1991) *A Reader In Feminist Knowledge* London: Routledge

Harding, S (1991) *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women's Lives* Buckingham: OUP (Ch. 5: What is feminist epistemology?)

Jagger, and Bordo, S (eds) (1989) *Gender / Body / Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* Rutgers University Press (esp. Part II: Feminist ways of knowing)

Lennon, K and Whitford, M (eds) (1994) *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* London: Routledge

Maynard, M (1994) "Methods, practice and epistemology: the debate about feminism and research". In Maynard, M and Purvis, J (eds) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective* London: Taylor Francis (Course extracts)

Ramazanoglu, C and Holland, J (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* London: Sage

Stanley, L and Wise, S (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology* London: Routledge

Stanley, L (1992) *Is there a lesbian epistemology?* Manchester

Stanley, L and Wise, S (1990) "Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes". In Stanley, L (ed) *Feminist Praxis: Research Theory and Epistemology in Sociology* London: Routledge

# Week 3: Feminist Critiques of science and objectivity

In this session, we will explore the ways in which feminist researchers have engaged with, and critiqued, the knowledge practices of “science” and the claims to objectivity that have characterised those practices. We will discuss the implications of these critiques for feminist research and the claims that can be made for it.

## Seminar questions:

1. What is the science question in feminism?
2. On what grounds have feminists critiqued science?
3. What can we learn from sex difference research?
4. What are the implications of feminist critiques of science for social scientific research?

## Key readings

Fausto-Sterling, A (2005) ‘The Bare Bones of Sex: Part 1 – Sex and Gender’, *Signs* 30 (2): 1491-1527

Haraway, D (1988) “Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective”. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575-599

## Further reading

Acker, J, Barry, K and Esseveld, J (1991) “Objectivity and truth: problems in doing feminist research”. Ch. 8 in Fonow, M and Cook, J (eds) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Anderson, E (2004) “Uses of value judgments in science: a general argument, with lessons from a case study of feminist research on divorce” *Hypatia* 19(1): 1-24

Baron-Cohen, S (2003) *The Essential Difference* London: Penguin

Crowley, H and Himmelweit, S (eds) (1992) *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* Buckingham: OUP (Part II: Biology, Society and the Female Body)

Fausto-Sterling, A (2000) *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* New York: Basicbooks (esp. Ch. 3 Of Gender and Genitals: the use and abuse of the modern intersexual; and Ch.7: Do sex hormones really exist?)

Fausto-Sterling, A (1992) *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Men and Women (Second Edition)* London: Basic Books (Ch. 2: A question of genius: Are men really smarter than women?)

Gunew, S (ed) (1991) *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge* London: Routledge (Part VII: Biology and Feminism)



- Harding, S (1986) *The Science Question in Feminism* Buckingham: OUP
- Harding, S (1991) *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* Buckingham: OUP (Ch. 1: Introduction: After the Science Question in Feminism)
- Hundleby, C (2007) "Feminist empiricism". Ch. 2 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage
- Keller, E F and Longino, H (eds) (1996) *Feminism and Science* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Keller, E F (1983) "Gender and Science". In Harding, S and Hintikka, M B (eds) *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* London: D.Reidel Publishing Company
- Kournay, J (2010) *Philosophy of Science After Feminism* Oxford: OUP
- Leckenby, D (2007) "Feminist empiricism: challenging gender bias and 'setting the record straight'". Ch. 2 in Hesse-Biber, S N and Leavy, P L (eds) *Feminist Research Practice* London: Sage
- Longino, H (1990) *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Martin, E (1996) "The egg and the sperm: how science has constructed a romance back on stereotypical male-female roles". In Keller, E F and Longino, H (eds) *Feminism and Science* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Martin, E (1989) *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* Buckingham: OUP
- Oudshoorn, N (2000) "The birth of sex hormones". Ch. 3 in Schiebinger, L (ed) *Feminism and the Body* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Schiebinger, L (2000) "Skeletons in the closet: the first illustrations of the female skeleton in eighteenth century anatomy". Ch. 1 in Schiebinger, L (ed) *Feminism and the Body* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sprague, J (2005) *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* Oxford: Altamira Press (Ch, 2: Seeing through science: epistemologies)
- Tanesini, A (1999) *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* Oxford: Blackwells (esp: Ch. 3: Feminism and Science; and Ch. 7: Objectivity and Feminism)
- Wilson, E (1999) 'Introduction: Somatic Compliance-Feminism, Biology and Science', *Australian Feminist Studies* 14(29): 7-18
- Zeedyk, S (2007) 'The Science of Rape: (Mis)Constructions of Women's Trauma in Evolutionary Theory', *Feminist Review*, 86: 67-88

## Week 4: Feminist Standpoint

In this session, we will explore feminist standpoint theory and the ongoing responses to it. We will discuss the appeal of standpoint for conducting feminist research, as well as its limitations, and we will ask what standpoint theory has to offer contemporary feminist researchers.

### Seminar questions

1. What does it mean to adopt a feminist standpoint?
2. What critiques have been offered of standpoint theory? What possibilities does it provide?
3. What does it mean to value “experience” in research? What challenge does this pose to conventional scientific values?

### Key Readings

Houle, K (2009) “Making Strange Deconstruction and Feminist Standpoint Theory”, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 30 (1): 172-93

John, C (2011) “Strategic Ambivalence: A Feminist Standpoint Theory Reading of Nella Larsen’s Novels” *Feminist Formations* 23(1):94-117

### Further Readings

Brooks, A (2007) “Feminist standpoint epistemology: building knowledge and empowerment through women’s lived experience”. Ch. 3 in Hesse-Biber, S N and Brooks, A (eds) *Feminist Research Practice* London: Sage

Harding, S (1993) “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is ‘Strong Objectivity’?” in Alcoff, L and Potter, E (eds) *Feminist Epistemologies*

Harding, S (2004) “A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory’s Controversality” *Hypatia* 19 (1): 25-47

Hartsock, N (1983) “The feminist standpoint: developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism”. In Harding, S and Hintikka, M B (eds) *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* London: D.Reidel Publishing Company

Hekman, S (1997) “Truth and method: feminist standpoint theory revisited”. *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture* 22 (2) 341-365. (this same issue also includes a series of responses to this paper from Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins, Sandra Harding and Dorothy Smith, followed by a reply by Susan Hekman).

Ramazanoglu, C (1989) ‘Improving on Sociology: The Problems of Taking a Feminist Standpoint’ *Sociology* 23 (3): 427-442

Ramazanoglu, C and Holland, J (2004) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* London: Sage (Ch. 4 From truth / reality to knowledge / power: taking a feminist standpoint)

Rose, H (1983) "Hand, Brain and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences", *Signs* 9 (1): 73-90

Ruddick, S (2009) "On Maternal Thinking" *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37 (3-4): 305-08

Smith, D (1990) *The Conceptual Practices of Power: a Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* Boston: Northeastern University Press

Sprague, J (2005) *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* Oxford: Altamira Press (Ch. 3: Authority and Power)

Stanley, L (ed) (1990) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* London: Routledge (Section D: Analytically Using Experience).

Stone-Mediator, S (2000) "Chandra Mohanty and the revaluing of 'experience'". Ch. 7 in Narayan, U and Harding, S (eds) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Post-colonial and Feminist World* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Tanesini, A (1999) *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* Oxford: Blackwell (Ch. 6: The Importance of Standpoint in Feminism)

# Week 5: Quantitative research – feminism, gender and research methods

In this session, we review long-standing debates around the compatibility of particular research paradigms with feminist research, interrogating the long association of feminist research with qualitative methods, and conversely, a historical (?) hostility towards quantitative methods. We will investigate the ethical and epistemological approaches that underpinned those commitments, and explore attempts to challenge that dichotomy.

## Seminar questions

1. On what grounds did (some) feminists argue that quantitative methods were incompatible with feminist research?
2. How have those arguments been countered?
3. What assumptions about qualitative and quantitative research underpin those critiques?
4. What can quantitative research bring to feminist research?

## Key readings

Hughes, C and Cohen, R (2010) "Feminists really do count: the complexity of feminist methodologies" *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13 (3): 189-196 (see also this whole special issue)

Letherby, G (2004) "Quoting and Counting: An Autobiographical Response to Oakley" *Sociology* 38 (1): 175-89

## Further readings

Cohen, R, Hughes, C, and Lampard, H (2011) "The Methodological Impact of Feminism: A Troubling Issue for Sociology?" *Sociology* 45(4): 570-86

DeVault, M (1996) "Talking Back to Sociology: Distinctive Contributions of Feminist Methodology" *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 29-50

Guba, E G (ed) (1990) *The Paradigm Dialog* Calif: Sage

Hester, M, Donovan, C and Fahmy, E (2010) "Feminist epistemology and the politics of method: surveying same sex domestic violence" *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13 (3): 251-263

Jayarathne, T E and Stewart, A J (1991) "Quantitative and qualitative methods in the social sciences: current feminist issues and practical strategies". Ch. 5 in Fonow, M and Cook, J (eds) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Kelly, L, Regan, L and Burton, S (1992) "Defending the indefensible? Quantitative methods and feminist research". Ch. 12 in Hinds, H, Phoenix, A and Stacey, J (eds) *Working Out: New Directions for Women's Studies* London: Falmer Press

- Lawson, V (1995) "The politics of difference: examining the quantitative / qualitative dualism in post-structuralist feminist research". *Professional Geographer* 47 (4): 449-457
- Miner-Rubino, K and Jayaratne, T E (2007) "Feminist survey research". Ch. 10 in Hesse-Biber, S N and Leavy, P L (eds) *Feminist Research Practice* London: Sage
- Miner-Rubino, K, Jayaratne, T E and Konik, J (2007) "Using survey research as a quantitative method for feminist social change". Ch. 10 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage
- Oakley, A (1998) "Gender, methodology and people's ways of knowing: some problems with feminism and the paradigm debates in social science". *Sociology* 32 (4): 707-731
- Oakley, A (1980) "Interviewing women". In Roberts, H (ed) *Doing Feminist Research* London: Routledge
- Rienharz, S (1993) "Neglected voices and excessive demands in feminist research" *Qualitative Sociology* 16 (1): 69-76
- Reinharz, S (1990) "So-called training in the so-called alternative paradigm". In Guba, E (ed) *The Paradigm Dialog* Calif: Sage
- Scott, J (2010) "Quantitative methods and gender inequalities" *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13 (3): 223-236
- Sprague, J (2005) *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* Oxford: Altamira Press (Ch. 4: How feminist count: critical strategies for quantitative methods)
- Stacey, J (1988) "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum* 11 (1): 21-27
- Stanley, L (ed) (1990) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* London: Routledge (Part II, Section B: Demolishing the 'quantitative v. qualitative' divide).
- Stewart, A J and Cole, E R (2007) "Narratives and numbers: feminist multiple methods research". Ch. 15 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage
- Wilson, R (2009) "Raising the curtain on survey work". Ch. 10 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge

## Week 6: Reflexivity and Power

In this session, we will explore the issues of reflexivity and power in the research process. Reflexivity has been commonly conceptualised within feminist research as a means of overcoming / circumventing / disrupting the conventional power relations within research. Through the introduction of reflexivity, the researcher is, in theory at least, able to position herself within the research process as fully implicated in the production and interpretation of data. From this perspective then, research data and analysis is not “discovered”, but made. However, the mobilisation of reflexivity within feminist research has also exposed it to accusations of self-absorption and solipsism; of politically disabling relativism.

### Seminar questions

1. What does it mean to be reflexive in research? What problems is reflexivity trying to solve?
2. What opportunities and challenges does reflexivity offer for feminist research?
3. What is the relationship between reflexivity and power?
4. What are the risks and possibilities of writing the self into research?

### Key readings

Reay, D (1996) “Perspectives on Stealing the Words Out of Women’s Mouths: Interpretation in the Research Process” *Feminist Review* 53: 57-73

Sanchez Taylor, J and J O’Connell Davidson (2010) “Unknowable secrets and golden silence: reflexivity and research on sex tourism” Ch. 3 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge (Course extracts)

### Further reading

Bott, E (2010) “Favourites and others: reflexivity and the shaping of subjectivities and data in qualitative research.” *Qualitative Research* 10 (2): 159-173

Ellis, C (1999) “Heartful autoethnography” *Qualitative Health Research* 9 (5): 669-683

Ellis, C and A Bochner (2000) “Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (eds) N Denzin and Y Lincoln New York: Sage, pp. 733-68

Ettorre, E (2005) “Gender, older female bodies and autoethnography: finding my feminist voice by telling my illness story” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 28: 535-546

Finlay, L (2002) “Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice”. *Qualitative Research* 2 (2): 209-230

Gill, R (1995) “Relativism, reflexivity and politics: interrogating discourse analysis from a feminist perspective”. In Wilkinson, S and Kitzinger, C (eds) *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* London: Sage

Grenz, S (2010) "The desire to talk and sex/gender-related silences in interviews with male heterosexual clients of prostitutes". Ch. 4 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge

Parpart, J (2010) "Choosing silence: rethinking voice, agency and women's empowerment". Ch. 1 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge

Pillow, W S (2003) "Confession, catharsis or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (2): 175-196

Rose, G (1997) "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and other Tactics" *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (3), pp. 305-20

Sampson, H, Bloor, M and Fincham, B (2008) "A Price Worth Paying? Considering the 'Cost' of Reflexive Research Methods and the Influence of Feminist Ways of 'Doing'" *Sociology* 42 (5): 919-33

Scharff, C (2010) "Silencing differences: the 'unspoken' dimensions of 'speaking for others'" Ch 6 in *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process*

Sparkes, A C (2000) "Autoethnography and narratives of self: reflections on criteria in action". *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17: 21-43

Stanley, L (1994) "The knowing because experiencing subject: narratives, lives and autobiography". Ch. 9 in Lennon, K and Whitford, M (eds) *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* London: Routledge

Stanley, L (1993) "On auto/biography in sociology" *Sociology* 27 (1): 41-52

# Week 7: Feminism and Postmodernism

Postmodern theories offered considerable potential for feminist theorising in its potential to unseat unitary and often deterministic identity categories and “truths”. However, they have also been treated with suspicion by some feminists as potentially rendering the category “woman”, around which so much feminist activism has been oriented, meaningless. In this session, we will explore some of the ways in which feminists have engaged with both the challenges and possibilities of postmodernism for feminist research.

## Seminar questions

1. What questions does postmodernism pose for feminism?
2. In what ways have postmodern theorising been critiqued by feminists?
3. What does postmodern theorising have to offer feminist researchers?
4. What knowledge claims can be made for research conducted from a postmodern perspective?
5. How might a postmodern theoretical approach impact upon / be reflected in research practice?
6. What feminist research have you read that is informed by a postmodern theoretical perspective? Did you find it persuasive?

## Key Readings:

Butler, J (1995) “Contingent foundations: feminism and the question of ‘postmodernism’”. Ch. 2 in Benhabib, S, Butler, J, Cornell, D and Fraser, N (eds) *Feminist Contentions: a Philosophical Exchange* London: Routledge (Course extracts)

Fraser, N and Nicholson, L (1997) “Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism”. Ch. 7 in Meyers, D T (ed) *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*. (Course extracts)

## Further readings

Benhabib, S (1992) *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* Cambridge: Polity (Ch. 7: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism)

Bordo, S (1990) “Feminism, postmodernism and gender-scepticism”. Ch. 6 in Nicholson, L (ed) *Feminism / Postmodernism* London: Routledge

Butler, J (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* London: Routledge

Davis, K (2007) “Reclaiming women’s bodies: colonialist trope or critical epistemology?” *Sociological Review* 55: 50-64

Di Stefano, C (1990) “Dilemmas of difference: femininity, modernity and postmodernism”. Ch. 3 in Nicholson, L (ed) *Feminism / Postmodernism* London: Routledge



Fawcett, B and Featherstone, B (2005) "Setting the Scene: An Appraisal of Notions of Postmodernism, Postmodernity and Postmodern Feminism" *Practice and Research in Social Work: Postmodern Feminist Perspectives*, (eds) Fawcett, Featherstone, Fook and Rossiter London: Routledge, pp. 5-23

Featherstone, B (2005) "Researching into mother's violence: Some thoughts on the Process" pp. 121-38 in *Practice and Research in Social Work*

Flax, J (1987) "Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory" *Signs: Journal of Women In Culture and Society* 12 (4): 621-643

Gannon, S and Davies, B (2007) "Postmodern, poststructural and critical theories". Ch. 4 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage

Haraway, D (1991) "A Cyborg Manifesto: science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century". In Haraway, D *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* New York: Routledge

Hartsock, N (1990) "Postmodernism and political change: issues for feminist theory" *Cultural Critique* 14: 15-35

Lather, P (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern* London: Routledge

Leavy, P L (2007) "Feminist postmodernism and poststructuralism". Ch. 4 in Hesse-Biber, S N and Leavy, P L (eds) *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* London: Sage

McNay, L (1992) *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* Cambridge: Polity Press

Moya, Paula (2001/2010) "Chicana Feminism and Postmodernist Theory" in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (eds) C McCann and S Kim London: Routledge pp. 463-81

Probyn, E (1990) "Travels in the postmodern: making sense of the local". Ch. 8 in Nicholson, L (ed) *Feminism / Postmodernism* London: Routledge

Ramazanoglu, C (ed) (1993) *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism* London: Routledge

Tanesini, A (1999) *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* Oxford: Blackwells (Ch. 10: Feminism and Postmodernism)

Thornham, S (1998) "Postmodernism and Feminism" in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* ed. by S Sim London: Routledge

Yeatman, A (1994) "Postmodern epistemological politics and social science". Ch. 17 in Lennon, K and Whitford, M (eds) *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* London: Routledge

Young, I M (1990) "The ideal of community and the politics of difference". Ch. 12 in  
Nicholson, L (ed) *Feminism / Postmodernism* London: Routledge

# Week 8: Taking Difference into Account – Race and Sexuality

“Difference” has been an ongoing point of discussion (and tension) within feminism, with attempts to organise, research, theorise and agitate in the name of “women” flattening out significant differences between women. This has been experienced by many as exacerbating the many and varied oppressions that mark the process of “Othering”, both within and outside of feminism. Looking primarily at race (but also class, global location... and we could also include sexuality, (dis)ability etc in this list), we will investigate the epistemological, ethical and methodological challenges of “difference”, and look at the critiques mobilised by those whose who have spoken out against the exclusions that can occur within the rhetoric of inclusion.

## Seminar questions

1. If the issue is “difference”, then different from what?
2. What challenges (epistemological, ethical, political) does “difference” pose for feminist researchers?
3. In what ways have feminists responded to “difference”?
4. How might these debates apply to your own research?

## Key Readings

Narayan, U (1989) “The project of feminist epistemology: perspectives from a non-western feminist”. In Jagger, and Bordo, S (eds) *Gender / Body / Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* Rutgers University Press (Course extracts)

Anthias, F (2002) “Beyond feminism and multiculturalism: locating difference and the politics of location” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 25 (3): 275-294

## Further readings

Bhavnani, K (2007) “Interconnections and configurations: toward a global feminist ethnography”. Ch. 37 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage

Collins, P (1990/2010) “Defining Black Feminist Thought” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (eds) by C McCann and S Kim London: Routledge, pp. 341-56

Crowley, H and Himmelweit, S (1992) “Discrimination, subordination and difference: feminist perspectives”. Ch. 1 in Crowley, H and Himmelweit, S (eds) (1992) *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* Buckingham: Open University Press

Davis, K (2010) “Avoiding the ‘R-word’: racism in feminist collectives”. Ch. 11 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge

Davis, K (2007) *The Making of Our Bodies Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* Durham: Duke University Press

- Fuss, D (1989) *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* London: Routledge
- Hill Collins, P (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Second Edition)* London: Routledge
- Hunter, M (2002) "Rethinking epistemology, methodology and racism: or, is White sociology really dead?" *Race & Society* 5: 119-138
- Ingraham, C (2010) "The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender" *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (eds) C McCann and S Kim London: Routledge pp. 357-69
- Kim, H S (2007) "The politics of border crossings: black, postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives". Ch. 5 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage
- Lewis, G (2010) "Animating hatreds: research encounters, organisational secrets, emotional truths". Ch. 16 in Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R (eds) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* London: Routledge
- Lorde, A (1992) "Age, race, class and sex: women redefining difference". In Crowley, H and Himmelweit, S (eds) *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Lorde, A (1984) *Sister Outsider: essays and speeches* Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press
- Minh-ha, T T (1987) "Difference: 'a special third world women issue'" *Feminist Review* 25: 5-22
- Mohanty, C (1988) "Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses" *Feminist Review* 30: 61-88
- Narayan, U and Harding, S (eds) (2000) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World* Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Phoenix, A (1994) "Practising feminist research: the intersection of gender and 'race' in the research process". Ch. 3 in Maynard, M and Purvis, J (eds) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective* London: Taylor and Francis
- Reay, D (2007) "Future directions in difference research: recognising and responding to difference". Ch. 33 in Hesse-Biber, S N (ed) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* London: Sage
- Scott, J (1988) "Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism" *Feminist Studies* 14 (1): 33-50
- Spivak, G (1988) "Can the subaltern speak?" In Nelson, C and Grossberg, L (1988) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* Basingstoke: Macmillan

Strickland, S (1994) "Feminism, postmodernism and difference". Ch. 17 in Lennon, K and Whitford, M (eds) *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* London: Routledge

# Week 9: Feminism and Psychoanalysis

As we have seen, social identity is gendered, and in order to achieve social change, we need to understand how these gendered identities are constructed. Psychoanalysis teaches that 'biology is not destiny', and as such, it provides a useful framework for understanding "sexual difference". However, it is not without its critics; many feminists have accused it of ignoring factors related to racial, class, and cultural differences. This week we will examine the debates surrounding the use of psychoanalysis in feminist research and the ways in which "the social" may be incorporated.

## Seminar Questions:

1. How do feminists critique psychoanalysis?
2. Is it possible to incorporate "the social" into psychoanalysis?
3. What is essentialism?
4. What is sexual difference?

## Key readings:

Sapegno, M (2002) "Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A European Phenomenon" in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies* ed. by G Griffin and R Braidotti  
London: Zed Books, pp. 110-26 (Course extracts)

Young, I (1997) "Is Male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Domination?". Ch. 1 in Meyers, D T (ed) *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader* (hard copy from KT)

## Further readings:

Abel, E (1997) "Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation" in *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* ed. by Abel, E, B Christian, and H Moglen London: University of California Press, pp. 102-34

Brennan, T (1990) *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* London: Routledge

Butler, J (1990) "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse" in *Feminism/Postmodernism* pp. 324-40

Chodorow, N (1997) "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective" in *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader* ed. by Diana Tietjens Meyers, London: Routledge, pp. 8-20

Cosgrove, L (2003) "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Psychological Research" *Hypatia* 18 (2): 85-112

Craib, I (2001) "Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Feminism", Ch. 10 in *Psychoanalysis: A Critical Introduction* Cambridge: Polity Press

Flax, J (1993) "Final Analysis: Can Psychoanalysis Survive in the Postmodern West?" Ch. 2 in *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy* London: Routledge

Flax, J (1990) *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* Oxford: University of California Press

Grosz, E (1993) "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason" in *Feminist Epistemologies*, pp. 187-216

Irigaray, L (2004) "The Intimate Require Separate Dwellings" Ch. 4 in *Luce Irigaray: Key Writings* London: Continuum

Jones, A (1984) "Julia Kristeva on Feminism – The Limits of a Semiotic Politics" in *Feminist Review* 18(Winter) pp. 56-83

Kristeva, K (1991) *Strangers to Ourselves* London: Columbia University Press

Labuski, C (2008) "Virginal Thresholds" in *Luce Irigaray: Teaching* (eds) M Green and L Irigaray London: Continuum, pp. 13-23

Rothfield, P (1990) "Feminism, Subjectivity, and Sexual Difference" in *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct* ed. S Gunew, London: Routledge, pp. 121-146

Rowley, H and E Grosz (1990) "Psychoanalysis and Feminism". Pages 175-204 in *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct* ed. S. Gunew. London: Routledge.

Tanesini, A (1999) "Feminism and 'Malestream' Epistemology" Ch 2 in *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* Blackwell: Oxford

# Week 10: Post-Feminism

Post-Feminism. Third-wave feminism. Feminist backlash. Many of the conceptual frameworks we have studied originated in the Second-wave feminist movement, but how do they address 21<sup>st</sup> century critics who claim feminism no longer exists? In this final week we will consider the future of feminist paradigms, and specifically look at the concept of intersectionality as a (possible) way forward.

## Seminar Questions

1. What problems do post-feminism and third-wave feminism pose for feminist research?
2. What is intersectionality?
3. Is there a space in 21<sup>st</sup>-century research for feminist way(s) of knowing?

## Key Readings

Howie, G and Tauchert, H (2004/2007) "Feminist Dissonance: The Logic of Late Feminism" in *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration* ed. by S Gillis, G Howie, and R Munford Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 46-58 (Course extracts)

McCall, L (2005) "The Complexity of Intersectionality" *Signs* 30 (3): 1771-800

## Further Readings

Aronson, P (2003) "Feminists or Postfeminists? Young Women's Attitudes Towards Feminism and Gender Relations" *Gender and Society* 17(6): 903-22

Chow, Y (2011) "Moving, Sensing Intersectionality: A Case Study of Miss China Europe" *Signs* 36(2) : 411-36

Dean, J (2010) *Rethinking Contemporary Feminist Politics* Basingstoke: Palgrave

Faludi, S (1992) *Backlash* London: Vintage

Garrison, Ednie Kaeh (2007) "Contests for Meaning of Third Wave Feminism: Feminism and Popular Consciousness" pp. 185-197 in *Third Wave Feminism*

Gill, R and Scharff, C (2011) *New femininities: postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity* Houndmills: Palgrave (available electronically)

Gillis, S (2007) "Neither Cyborg Nor Goddess: The (Im)Possibilities of Cyberfeminism" pp. 168-184 in *Third Wave Feminism*

McRobbie, A (2004) "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture" *Feminist Media Studies* 4(3): 255-64

Orr, C (1997) "Charting the Currents of Third Wave" *Hypatia* 12(3): 29-45



Walby, S (1990) "Post-Post-Modernism? Theorizing Social Complexity" in M. Barrett and A. Phillips eds *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* Cambridge: Polity Press

Wright, E (2000) *Lacan and Postfeminism* Cambridge: Icon Books

Zalewski, M (2000) *Feminism After Postmodernism: Theorising through Practice* London: Routledge

Feminism operates on various feminist epistemologies, methodologies, and methods. While there is no consensus on how to organize or label these, there are a few generalities that can be drawn between these epistemologies, particularly in the international relations (IR) context. Classifying these epistemologies generally under the umbrella (or in the constellation) of postpositivism makes clear the contrasts between positivist social science and more critical approaches. Summary and Keywords. Feminism operates on various feminist epistemologies, methodologies, and methods. While there is no consensus on how to organize or label these, there are a few generalities that can be drawn between these epistemologies, particularly in the international relations (IR) context.