



London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership

Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

Course Code & Title	LISS213H Feminist Research Methods				
Convenor(s)	Dr Hannah Walters , King's College London, Education, Communication & Society				
Institution	King's College London	Department		LISS DTP	
Academic Year	2021-22	Term		Spring	
Number of sessions	4	Research Platform	Social Theory & Epistemology	Length of Session(s)	3 hours each
Day, Date		Start : End		Room Location	
Thursday 28 April 2022		14 :00-17:00		Via Zoom	
Thursday 5 May 2022		14 :00-17:00			
Wednesday 25 May 2022		14 :00-17:00			
Wednesday 1 June 2022		14 :00-17:00			
Enrolment Links:	Click here to register on Skillsforge. You may be prompted to log in. Questions? E-mail liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk				

Course Description:

Feminism, as both a political movement and a social theory, has made crucial contributions to our shared understandings of social research, and the power dynamics at work in the research process.

Moving from more abstract discussions around feminist theory, through to interactive explorations of the practical application of feminist research methods, this course aims to provide students with an introduction to ways of understanding, evaluating, and producing social research underpinned by feminist approaches and epistemologies. In doing so we will recognise and acknowledge the ways in which feminism is neither monolithic nor universal, and explore how the principles of feminist research have influenced social research – and the social world more broadly. We will pay close attention to the tensions, dilemmas and intersections at work in contemporary feminist thought, and how these play out in the field, with reference to the politics of feminist research, and issues around representation, voice, positionality and power.

The course will be delivered online through a combination of lectures, discussions and interactive activities relating to social research methods.

Reading List:

N.B. This is a general background reading list. Each section listed below includes suggested reading specific to that session. There are also many good quality feminist method readers available in LISS institution libraries.

Ackerly, B.A. and True, J. (2020). *Doing feminist research in political and social science*. London: Red Globe Press.

Brooks, A. (2006) 'Feminist standpoint epistemology: building knowledge and empowerment through women's lived experience', https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/12936_Chapter3.pdf



Gunaratnam Y., and Hamilton C. (2017) Introduction the Wherewithal of Feminist Methods. *Feminist Review*;115(1):1-12. doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0023-5

hooks, bell. (2004). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. In Sandra Harding (Ed.), *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Political and intellectual controversies* (pp. 153–159). New York: Routledge.

Leavy, P. and Harris, A.M. (2019). *Contemporary feminist research from theory to practice*. New York, Ny: Guilford Press.

Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (eds.) (2016). *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective*. Taylor & Francis.

Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Olufemi, L. (2020). *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power (Outspoken)*. London: Pluto Press.

Ryan-Flood, R and Gill, R. (2010). *Secrecy and silence in the research process: feminist reflections*. London: Routledge.

Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1990). Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes. In L. Stanley (Ed.), *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory, and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*. Routledge.

Videos:

Ahmed, S. (2018) 'What is feminist research?' FRI. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djc8TEUhPiA>

Ptolomey, A. (2021) 'Feminist, Creative & Participatory Research'. Fresh Voices Workshops. Available online at: <https://youtu.be/IN8k9OihyZw>

Walters, H., Gibson, L., Evans, S., Fairless-Nicholson, J. (2021). 'Lifeline Interviews'. UCL Methodological Toolkit. Available online at: <https://mediacentral.ucl.ac.uk/Play/68337>

Eligibility:

This course is open to all PhD students using social science methodologies, but may be of particular use to those studying issues relating to women's and girls' lives, marginalised or minoritized people and communities, or those who are planning on conducting research into inequalities and social justice.

Pre-course preparation:

The below are suggested readings for each session. These are not required readings, if a student has not read the text, they are still welcome to join the session. These readings are designed to enhance and deepen your understanding of themes and issues covered.

Number of students: 20 max



Session 1: *Feminism as Method* - the paradigm, politics and principles underpinning feminist research

This introductory session begins with a simple question: What is feminism? And, by extension, what is feminist research, and what does it mean to be a feminist researcher?

Building on these ideas, this session will first explore the history of feminist research as a means to position it within a broader context of academic and social inquiry, followed by an unpacking of why feminist research – epistemologies and methods – represent crucial interventions to the ways in which we as researchers understand and construct the social world.

We will explore biases at work in social research, and discuss the complexity and politics of representation in research processes. We will unpack ideas around who gets to speak, and who gets to produce knowledge in research processes, and discuss the ways in which feminist interventions might disrupt some of the power inequalities at work in research.

At the same time, this session will include discussions around the power and privileges at work *within* feminist research and explore the ways in which feminism and feminist research are culturally and historically specific, with reference to intersectionality, positionality, research ethics, representation and reflexivity.

Suggested reading for this session:

Acker, J., Barry, K., & Esseveld, J. (1983). Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 6(4), 423–435.

Gunaratnam Y., and Hamilton C. (2017) Introduction the Wherewithal of Feminist Methods. *Feminist Review*;115(1):1-12. doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0023-5

Olufemi, L. (2020). *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power (Outspoken)*. London: Pluto Press. (especially Chapter 1: Introduction: Feminist Work is Justice Work)

Session 2: Power and privilege in the research process

Building on discussions of power and privilege in the last session, this workshop will further explore the role of power dynamics in the research process, including those at work between researchers and participants, and the ways in which structural inequalities bleed into the research space. This will also involve discussions around the cultural meanings attached to various research processes, including interpersonal relationships and the function of ethics/ethical practice in research settings.

In addition to discussions of how these power dynamics play out *during* research, we will also discuss the importance of paying attention to related inequalities throughout analytical and dissemination stages of the research project.



Finally, we will discuss the power dynamics at work in our own research, and explore (intersectional) feminist interventions and tactics to potentially disrupt these hierarchies.

Suggested reading for this session:

Gordon, R. (2019) 'Why would I want to be anonymous?' Questioning ethical principles of anonymity in cross-cultural feminist research, *Gender & Development*, 27:3, 541-554, DOI: [10.1080/13552074.2019.1664044](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1664044)

Grenz, S. (2005) 'Intersections of Sex and Power in Research on Prostitution: A Female Researcher Interviewing Male Heterosexual Clients', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(4), pp. 2091-2113.

Linabary JR, Hamel SA. (2017) Feminist Online Interviewing: Engaging Issues of Power, Resistance and Reflexivity in Practice. *Feminist Review*. 115(1):97-113. doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0041-3

Mohanty, C. (1991) 'Under Western Eyes. Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', in C. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres (eds.). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Tang, N. (2002). Interviewer and Interviewee Relationships Between Women. *Sociology*, 36(3), 703–721.

Session 3: Whose Stories? Standpoints, positionality and representation in feminist Research

Building on our discussions of standpoint and positionality from the first session, this session unpacks the importance of researcher positionality and the co-construction of knowledge during the research process. With reference to standpoint theorists, we will examine the political act of making visible our own identities and experiences in the field and through writing and sharing our findings.

In doing so we will explore the politics of representation in research – from planning stages through to sharing our findings – and reflect on how this might be interrogated further in our own work.

Suggested reading for this session:

Brooks, A. (2006) 'Feminist standpoint epistemology: building knowledge and empowerment through women's lived experience', https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/12936_Chapter3.pdf

Hemmings, C. (2011) *Why stories matter: the political grammar of feminist theory*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Introduction).

Levy D. L., and Johnson, C. W. (2012). What does the Q mean? Including queer voices in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*;11(2):130-140. doi:[10.1177/1473325011400485](https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325011400485)

Mellor, J., Ingram, N., Abrahams, J., & Beedell, P. (2014). Class matters in the interview setting? Positionality, situatedness and class. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 135–149.

Smith, D.E. (2010). *The everyday world as problematic : a feminist sociology / monograph*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.



Session 4: Doing Feminist Research: Methods in practice

In this final session we will discuss some of the methods mobilised in feminist research with specific reference to interviews, ethnography, and arts-based participatory methods. We will discuss the reasons these methods have been argued to bolster feminist goals around representation and emancipation, and explore some of the ways these have been used by other researchers.

We will look at examples of and, where possible, participate in some arts-based participatory methods, opening up space for dialogue around the ways in which these approaches serve feminist aims in the research process.

Suggested reading for this session:

Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Oliveira, E. (2019) The personal is political: a feminist reflection on a journey into participatory arts-based research with sex worker migrants in South Africa, *Gender & Development*, 27:3, 523-540, DOI: [10.1080/13552074.2019.1664047](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1664047)

Lomax, H. (2015). Seen and heard? Ethics and agency in participatory visual research with children, young people and families. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 4(3), 493– 502.

Mitchell, C. (2011). What's Participation Got to Do with it? Visual Methodologies in 'Girl-Method' to Address Gender-Based Violence in the Time of AIDS. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1(1), 51–59.

Renold, E. (2018) 'Feel what I feel': making da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activism on how sexual violence matters, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27:1, 37-55, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2017.1296352

Skeggs, B. (2016). 'Situating the production of feminist ethnography' in: Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective*. Taylor & Francis.