Women's Studies Department  
Simon Fraser University  
Fall 1995

W.S. 400-5  Methodological Issues in Women's Studies  
Lynne Hissey  
Harbour Centre  
Ev Mon/Wed

This course explores a variety of feminist perspectives, methods, and issues from policy analysis to postmodernism; from ethnographic research to epistemology; and from ideology critique to identity politics, for example. Although such an exploration cannot be exhaustive, we will be able to locate and discuss some of the central issues facing feminism today. Some of these issues appear abstract and esoteric; for instance, the debate over whether the very category of "women" is a viable one in need of redefinition or is, instead, a pernicious fiction that needs to be deconstructed and dismissed. But even in such an apparently "academic" issue, we can see concrete political implications. (Do we necessarily occlude differences and universalize if we retain the category "women"? Does deconstructing the category inevitably take us to a "postfeminist politics"?) Our focus, then, will always be on the implications for actual feminist work (both inside and outside the academy) of these different methods, approaches, and issues.

Although I will establish the agenda for the first half of the course, we will collaboratively decide upon topics for the course's second half. This will likely involve extending discussions on some issues already considered as well as adding new issues of particular interest and concern to you.

The course is demanding (after all, there's a lot at stake) and you will be required to do a lot of both reading and thinking. Its rewards will largely come from the participatory character of the seminar. I will, however, lecture once per week for the first half of the semester, lectures intended to identify and contextualize the issues at hand (e.g., what IS postmodernism, anyway?!)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

2 oral and written presentations (4-6 pp each): 40%
Seminar participation 20%
Final paper (15-20 pp) 40%

REQUIRED READINGS:

Shulamit Reinharz: Feminist Methods in Social Research
Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code: Changing Methods
Additional readings for weeks 7-12 determined in/by class in week 5