The content of this course will depend partly on the interests of the students participating, but my initial plan is to spend the first half discussing some basic concerns in Women’s Studies research and the second half discussing student presentations of examples of research methods employed in their major areas of interest.

Topics for the first half will include:

1. Diversity. How should Women’s Studies research reflect differences among women and take full account not only of gender, but age, class race, sexual identity, (dis)ability, ethnicity, and other aspects of a person’s identity? Is gender a meaningful category of analysis? We will read Elizabeth Spelman’s and some other points of view on these topics.

2. Ethics. What is involved in the ethical treatment of people (and other living beings), communities and other cultural products during research? What standards of ethics have been developed/adopted by feminist researchers? What ethical controversies should researchers consider and take into account? Can researchers avoid exploitation and appropriation? If so How? If not how can they minimize them?

3. The Practical Politics of Academia. Academia is not the apolitical ‘ivory tower’ it is sometimes imagined to be. It is a collection of interacting, highly competitive, hierarchical bureaucracies. Nevertheless, many people manage to do satisfying and progressive work in academia. What are the politics of publishing, conferences, job searching, tenure, promotion, recommendations, etc.?

4. Work-problems. It is my belief that every person doing creative work encounters work-problems, such as writers block, petrifying fear of failure (or success), post-partum depression, terror or self doubt in the face of criticism, and fallow periods in which it seems as if the brain has been emptied of all potential. ‘Successful’ academics rarely speak of their work-problems, which tends to isolate people who are struggling with them. What kinds of work problems typically arise for academics, and for graduate students in particular? How do people cope with them?

In the second half of the course, students will make critical presentations to the seminar of studies/articles/essays in their own areas of interest and concentration which they particularly admire, and the seminar will discuss the methods employed by these examples of research. The purpose will be to help each student begin to find a method for her research and to identify and answer the major methodological questions she is likely to encounter.
Required Reading:


Additional articles and research sources will be made available by the instructor.

Course Requirements

All students will be required to write and present to the seminar one shore critical essay (5-6 pages at 250 words/page) on exemplary research in their fields of special interest (for 30% of the final mark), to prepare a short list of discussion questions for each class in the first half of the course (for 10% of the final mark), and to attend class regularly and participate (10% of the final mark). Students will also be required to write a 20-25 page (at 250 words/page) essay discussing the major methodological issues they expect to be involved in the research for their theses (for 50% of the final mark)

I will provide more detailed instructions for the written assignments in class.