Feminist Ethnography  
Spring 2006

WST 6935 – Section 1366; 3 credits  
Instructor: Professor Florence Babb
Tuesdays 3-6pm; LIT 0223  
Office hours: Tues and Thurs 2-4pm and
TA / Writing Assistant: Matthew Kopka  
by appointment, 3326 Turlington Hall  
mattkop@ufl.edu  
Instructor: Professor Florence Babb
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Course description and objective:

This graduate seminar will consider issues in qualitative research methodology through reading and discussing feminist ethnographies as well as critical assessments of feminist scholarship and methods. We will ask challenging questions about interdisciplinarity and the ethics of field research, including the fundamental question of whether there is indeed a feminist ethnographic methodology. Moreover, we will discuss the feminist politics of ethnographic representation (by the researcher depicting the researched) and of positionality (of the researcher in relation to the researched). Case studies from a wide range of societies will present opportunities for students to consider the relative merits of various approaches in feminist anthropology and related fields in the social sciences. Seminar participants will be expected to try out their own feminist ethnographic writing, which will be shared with others in the course as a way to refine analytical and writing skills.

Course books, available at Wild Iris Bookstore, 802 W. University Avenue:


Course requirements and policies:

Participation

Because the course meets just once each week, full attendance in all classes is essential. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to participate in discussion. Everyone will have an opportunity to play a part in facilitating the weekly discussion. Brief two-page précis of the week’s reading will be collected during class periods to ensure that all have given thoughtful attention to the reading. Each student is allowed to skip two submissions of précis and to submit instead a short piece of ethnographic writing. [50% of course grade]

Paper

There will be a course paper of approximately 18-20pp based on additional reading, and in some cases ethnographic research, due at the end of the semester. I will expect to receive proposals for these papers by the end of February, including short bibliographies of material to be used and referenced. These papers may focus on a single ethnographic work to be examined closely or they may draw on multiple works on a specific topic of relevance to the course. Everyone will have an opportunity to give an oral presentation of their subject matter during the final weeks of the semester. [50% of course grade]

Academic Honesty

The University of Florida’s honor code requires all students to be honest in their academic work. University policies on cheating, plagiarism, and related issues are available at: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/academicguide.html

Accommodations

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to me when requesting accommodation.

Course readings:

Jan 10 Introduction to Feminist Ethnography

Read for first class on E-reserve:
Judith Stacey, “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?” Women’s
Studies International Forum 11(1), 1988
Lila Abu-Lughod, “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?” Women and
Performance 5(1), 1990
Kamala Visweswaran, “Defining Feminist Ethnography,” in Fictions of
Feminist Ethnography, University of Minnesota Press, 1994
Jan 17  Fieldnotes, Fiction, and Ethnographic Writing  
Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale* (all)

Jan 24  Histories of Feminist Ethnography  
**Guest: Dr. Faye Harrison, Professor of African American Studies and Anthropology**  
Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (eds.), pp. 83-245

Jan 31  Feminist Politics of Ethnographic Representation  
Behar and Gordon to p. 82, and pp. 247-335  
Video: “Number Our Days”

Feb 7  Positionality and Subjectivity in Feminist Research  
Diane L. Wolf (ed.), to p. 106

Feb 14  D. Wolf, to p. 221

Feb 21  Case Study: A US ethnography of gender and disability  
Gelya Frank, *Venus on Wheels* (all)

Feb 28  Case Study: Race, class, and sexuality in a Brazilian shantytown  
Donna Goldstein, *Laughter Out of Place*, to p. 135

Mar 7  Goldstein, to p. 274

Mar 14  Spring Break

Mar 21  Case Study: Caribbean women workers in the global economy  
Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels*, to p. 139

March 28  **Guest: Dr. Carmen Diana Deere, Director, Center for Latin American Studies**  
Freeman, to p. 261

Apr 4  Border Crossings and Intersectionality  
Behar and Gordon (eds.), pp. 337-441  
Video: “Adio Kerida”

Apr 11  The Ethnographic Turn in Feminist Research  
*Signs*, special issue on Methodologies 30(4):2009-2236

Apr 18  Class presentations

Apr 25  Class presentations

May 1  Exam week, papers due Monday at noon