

## **Feminist Ethnography** **Spring 2006**

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

Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility*. Stanford University Press, 1992.

Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (eds.), *Women Writing Culture*. University of California Press, 1995.

Diane L. Wolf (ed.), *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Westview Press, 1996.

Gelya Frank, *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue on Disability, Biography, and Being Female*. University of California Press, 2000.

Donna M. Goldstein, *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown*. University of California Press, 2003.

Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean*. Duke University Press, 2000.

*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, special issue on Methodologies. Vol. 30, no. 4, summer 2005.

## 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**