

Portland State University

WS 415 Senior Seminar

Spring 2010

Dr. Ann Mussey

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Office Hours: Monday. 1-3pm

Office: NH 451X

Course Description: Research is the process of crossing borders and boundaries into unknown territory. Feminists are concerned with constructing knowledge not by objectifying the unknown and the Other, but by building ethical relationships between the researcher and the sources of their knowledge. This seminar will enable you to advance your knowledge of feminist research as you focus on an in-depth research project of your own design. You will select your topic, and using a research methodology compatible with feminist values and social justice goals, you will conduct original research. The product of this research may be a written paper or a project.

Course Goals:

1. gain familiarity with a variety of research methods, understanding the relationship of each to feminist commitments to social justice
2. illustrate ability to effectively use library research resources, including research databases, refworks, citation indexes, etc.
3. demonstrate ability to frame an inquiry relevant to feminist epistemology and your own scholarly development
4. demonstrate skill in applying research methods appropriate to your project
5. illustrate ability to share your research through a presentation of your work

Student Conduct Code: “All forms of academic dishonesty, cheating, and fraud, including but not limited to: (a) plagiarism, which includes, but is not limited to, word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer's ideas; (b) The buying and selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (c) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons” (<http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conductcode#ProscribedPSU>) Any assignments which violate this code will receive a failing grade, and all participants will be subject to disciplinary action. Any questions about this policy may be directed to the Office of Student Affairs, Smith Memorial Student Union.

Accessibility: Students with disabilities who need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Disability Services (ext. 5-4150) and to consult with the professor.

Note: Please note that the readings, assignments and due dates on this syllabus may change with reasonable notice. If you miss class, it is always your responsibility to find out what you missed, including changes in assignments or readings.

Participatory Requirements of the Course:

Attendance: You are required to attend all class meetings. In fact, attendance is crucial to the successful completion of your research project. If you miss class, it is always your responsibility to make sure you find out what you missed, including additional assignments, hand-outs, and/or changes to our schedule. Also, students are required to be in class on time, and to stay for the duration of the class period. If you miss a substantial amount of the class period, you will be marked absent for the day.

Participation: You are expected to actively participate in all class discussions. Come to class prepared to discuss all reading assignments including student work with carefully thought out critical observations, comments, and/or questions about the reading materials.

Presentations/Facilitated Discussion: Each student will be required to make two presentations of their work to the class during the term. The first one will be a brief presentation of their project proposal and their methodology followed by a facilitated discussion with students about your project. Students will have read your proposal. The second presentation will be a much more in depth presentation of your research outcomes at the end of the term. You are encouraged to use visual aids during your final presentation.

Written Assignments:

1. **Women's Studies Autobiography** (~ 5 pages, due April 7)

To help you develop and reflect on your project for this seminar, you will write an intellectual biography which reviews your intellectual development through the course of

your studies in women's studies. Your essay might explore the types of feminist scholarship that have most interested you, the course topics that have sparked you, and the areas for social change that you're most invested in. The goal of this paper is to help you focus your research topic and consider possible ways to approach your project.

2. Project Proposal: Initial Ideas (<1 page, due April 14)

In two to three paragraphs, , discuss the objectives of your research/project, discuss how you intend to approach finding an answer, and articulate any concerns you may have at this stage about the success of your research/project. You will present your initial ideas to the class for feedback.

3. Project Proposal Revised and Polished (2-3 pages, due April 21)

This revised proposal should be polished, better developed, frame your research topic as a question to be answered, incorporate feedback from the class, and include a brief discussion of your methods.

4. Bibliography with annotations for four most important sources (due May 5)

Using MLA citation guidelines, prepare a bibliography with a minimum of 10 scholarly sources that you will use. Write an annotation for four of the most relevant and substantive sources. Each of the four annotations should be no more than 160 words and include the following: brief summary of the argument and conclusion/findings/thesis; describe and evaluate the relevance of this source to your research.

5. Literature Review (due May 19)

A literature review is an analysis of the scholarship reviewed to date and will become part of your final written work. By this time, you should be able to summarize the arguments/evidence from at least some of the key scholarly sources you are drawing on for your project. You may have refocused your topic based on what you have read, as you find your research taking you in new directions. This literature review is an opportunity to reflect on and assess the information you have found. More than an annotated bibliography, which simply summarizes the theses of various resources, a literature review should engage those arguments and include *your* voice in the ongoing conversation about the topic.

6. Rough Draft/Peer Review (due May 26) You will write a rough draft of your paper. This layer in the writing process is an opportunity to gain additional feedback about the shape of your paper, the analysis of your data, your conclusions, and the implications of your work.

7. Class Presentation: (June 2 and 9) You will present your research outcomes and the implications of your findings in a 10 minute presentation to the class at the end of the term. Consider creative, technological, and/or artistic ways to present your work (making use of images, quotations, diagrams, models, etc.).

8. Final Paper and Project (due Wednesday, June 2)

9. Final Exam Meeting. (Wednesday, June 9, 1-4) You must attend the Final Exam Period

Grading Contract: In order to encourage thinking and learning, and discourage the use of grades as a measure of accomplishment, your work throughout the course will not be graded. You will receive feedback, but no letter grade on any of the assignments. All assignments will be given a check mark to indicate that I received it and read your entry. If I see that your work is consistently falling into the “C” range, I will request a private conference.

A “B” grade is based on your behavior. You will receive a “B” if you fulfill the following:

1. Attend classes regularly, missing no more than one class.
2. Arrive on time and leave on time with few exceptions.
3. Turn in all assignments in a timely fashion—which means on the due date or within two days.
4. Demonstrate a willingness to listen and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions.
5. Contact me if you have a serious illness or an unusual life circumstance that prevents you from fulfilling this contract. If you talk with me as soon as possible, we can renegotiate the contract.

Earning a “B+,” “A-,” or “A” will be based on my judgments regarding the quality of your work. For any grade higher than a “B,” you must fulfill the requirements for a “B” **and** also demonstrate in your classroom contributions and written work a superior comprehension of the arguments and ideas in the course materials, excellent writing abilities, critical engagement with the ideas in the course and in your research, strong research skills, and excellent presentation of research. You will be given feedback and guidance to help you understand and achieve what I consider to be “A” performance. This method is designed to eliminate some of the anxiety associated with grades. But if you find that it increases your anxiety, please speak with me, and we will come up with individualized alternatives.

Schedule of Assignments [Bb indicates that reading will be posted on BlackBoard as a pdf]

