*Central European University, Department of Gender Studies*

**Methodological Practice in Gender Studies**

**GENS 6022, 2 credits**

**mandatory PhD course, Fall 2017**

Professor: Elissa Helms Time: TBA

Email: helmse@ceu.edu Place: TBA

Office: Zrinyi 14, 507/A Office hours: TBA

**Course Description**

This two-credit PhD course is a mandatory requirement for students in the first year of the PhD program in Comparative Gender Studies. Its aim is to critically interrogate the relationship between theoretical concepts, methodological approaches, and research outcomes with the underlying goal of incorporating decolonizing and de-universalizing perspectives. In this spirit, and keeping with the objectives of the PhD program, this course will emphasize comparative and integrative approaches to research from different disciplinary perspectives. Graduate students are typically trained to critique the scholarship they read and often focus on gaps, missed opportunities, and failures. This course, in contrast, will focus on how good research is done when it is done well: how does analysis actually happen? What approaches lead us to productive insights? What theoretical frameworks and research designs best illuminate the complexities of gendered life and expression? How do we critically examine the cultural foundations and implicit universalisms embedded in various scholarly concepts and approaches? In other words, how to we begin to avoid present-centric and ethnocentric (”western”-centric) assumptions while operating in an English-language scholarly environment? In the first part of the course we will read and discuss critiques of and debates about some key areas of knowledge production in gender studies, namely comparison, de- and post- colonial critique, intersectionality, and transnationalism. Then we will move on to unpack the methodological underpinnings of exemplary pieces of research, both those assigned in the syllabus and those suggested by students. The final paper requires students to practice *doing* comparative and integrative analysis using primary materials on a topic related to their thesis projects.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

* Critically and knowledgeably reflect on the process of how gender studies research and analysis are produced
* Understand and critically evaluate scholarly debates about different approaches to comparison, multiple and overlapping social categories, decolonizing knowledge, and transcending nation-state boundaries in interdisciplinary gender studies research
* Identify and critically evaluate forms of research and analysis that most productively illuminate the workings of interlocking social and material inequalities of which gender and sexuality are critical axes
* Productively and knowledgeably relate the critiques and debates covered in this course to their own research interests and projects
* Design and carry out a comparative and/or integrative analysis of primary material that makes a rigorous attempt at producing de-universalized, systematic insights into social and material inequalities
* Achieve the aims of the personal learning goals set by each student at the beginning of the term

**Course Requirements and Grading**

Your grade will be based on:

50% Class participation and attendance

Personal learning goal(s) 10%

Preparation and input in class 20%

Suggested class reading and presentation 20%

50% Final paper

Paper development 15%

Final paper 35%

Class participation and attendance: Class participation from all students is a crucial element of this course. Attendance is therefore mandatory. If you are faced with an unforeseeable problem that prevents you from coming to class, please notify me as soon as possible and provide written documentation if applicable. For maximum points for class participation, you must regularly show you have read and critically assessed the assigned readings according to the goals of the course, set a well thought-out and realistic (set of) additional personal goal(s) for yourself at the beginning of the term, in groups of 2-3 suggest a carefully selected piece of exemplary research for the class to analyze and discuss and present the rationale for your choice in class, submit all work and peer feedback on time, and generally be engaged with the materials and discussions for the class.

Final paper: This assignment asks you to do what our readings and discussions are working towards: an integrative, de-universalizing piece of comparative analysis using some form of primary material chosen on a topic that is part of or closely related to your PhD thesis project. Think of it as an experiment or trial run for the comparative part of your comprehensive exam and the conceptualization of your thesis research. We will discuss the possibilities and parameters specifically in class and in individual consultations but you will have to settle on a topic fairly early. The first part of the assignment is due November 3: submit a 1-2 page paper proposal which specifies the topic, research material, and guiding research question. I must approve this plan before you continue. The final paper is due by Friday, December 30 at 4pm at the latest (see below). The length will be determined mostly by the amount of space you need to fully work out the comparative analysis – roughly from 12-25 double spaced pages. It is important that this paper (and the time I need to grade it and give meaningful feedback) does not eat into the time you need to work on your PhD proposals and comprehensive exam materials or the start of the winter term. Additionally, we all need to take a break over the winter to recharge our batteries! It is therefore crucial that you gather your research material for the paper *during* the fall term and use the period after the end of classes only for analysis and writing.

**Writing guidelines**

**The paper proposal and final paper must be submitted in hard copy AND uploaded to the e-learning site unless otherwise agreed upon.** Use 12-point font (Times New Roman, Arial, or other standard font) and double- or 1½-space with **page numbers** at the bottom. Please print double-sided. Electronic documents (uploaded or emailed) must **include your name and an indication of the content in the file name as well as at the beginning of the text itself**. Remember to *back up your files*so you don’t have to repeat your work! **Provide full references for all literature cited**, including those on our syllabus, and **avoid plagiarism**. If you are unsure about rules for citations and avoiding plagiarism, please see me or the Center for Academic Writing and consult CEU’s policy on academic dishonesty listed in the PhD Handbook. Plagiarism and academic misconduct will be taken very seriously and could result in failure of assignments or even the whole course.

**Personal devices and readings**

**Bring a copy of the assigned readings to class** with you for reference. You are strongly encouraged to buy the printed reader, although all readings are also posted in pdf format on the e-learning site and some readings will be added later in the term. You may have a **laptop or a large tablet** in class if you are using it for taking notes, consulting the readings, etc. (It’s very obvious to everyone when you are doing something else. Please be considerate.) Do not attempt this with a smart phone. All **phones must be switched off during class**. And try to take care of your bathroom needs before class, too!

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**Schedule of Topics, Assignments and Readings**

**Week 1 Introduction and Introductions**

Sept. 22 Rationale and goals of the course

Reading:

* Fernando Coronil, “Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996): 51-87.

**Week 2 Decolonizing, postcolonizing**

Sept. 29

Reading:

* Ramón Grosfoguel, Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality. Decoloniz­ing political economy and postcolonial studies. In: *Eurozine* (2008), http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.pdf, 15/07/2011.
* Jennifer Suchland, “Is Postsocialism Transnational?” *Signs* (36)4 (Summer 2011): 837-862.

**Week 3 Decolonizing empire**

Oct. 6

Reading:

* Uma Narayan. *Dislocating Cultures. Identities, Traditions, And Third World Feminism.* Routledge 1997, Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 41-117 (pp. 195-209 are notes).
* Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 2007. “Empire, Desire and Violence: A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of the Prisoner ‘Abuse’ in Abu Ghraib and the Question of ‘Gender Equal­ity,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9 (1): 38-59.

**Due: personal learning goals – send to all by email before class**

**Week 4 Comparison**

Oct. 13

Reading:

* Linda Gordon, “Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women’s Welfare Activism 1890-1945.” *The Journal of American History* 78(1991), 559-590.
* Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies.” In Ann Laura Stoler (ed.) *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Duke University Press, 2006: 23-67.

**Week 5 More Comparison: a view from humanities**

*Oct. 20* *The time for this class will need to be moved: stay tuned!*

Guest lecturer: Jasmina Lukić – “From Comparative to Transnational Literature: What Do We Compare in Literary Studies?”

Reading:

* Culler, Jonathan. 2007. ‘Comparative Literature, at Last’. In *The Literary in Theory*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press): 254-267.
* Lionnet, Françoise. 2006. “Cultivating Mere Gardens? Comparative Francophonies, Postcolonial Studies, and Transnational Feminisms.” In Saussy, Haun (ed.) *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press): 100-113.

Discussion of paper topics: be prepared to present your preliminary ideas for the final paper. We may or may not have time for this in class, but please also send it to me by email and schedule a consultation with me to discuss it.

**Week 6 Integration as intersectionality and assemblage**

Oct. 27

Reading:

* Jasbir Puar, 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press: Conclusion: 204-222.
* Jasbir Puar. “‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: intersectionality, assemblage, and affective politics,” *Meritum – Belo Horizonte* 8(2), Jul/Dez 2013: 371-390.
* Brittney Cooper, “Intersectionality,” in Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 385-406.

**Week 7 Entangled categories**

Nov. 3

Reading:

* Mahua Sarkar, *Visible Histories, Disappearing Women. Producing Muslim Womanhood in Late Colonial Bengal*, Duke UP 2008, 48-77, 230-242.
* Sirma Bilge, Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance: An Intersectional Approach to the Agency of Veiled Muslim Women. In: *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31 (2010) 1, 9-28.

**Paper proposal due in class**

**Week 8 Imperial histories**

*Nov. 10*

Reading:

* Steven Feierman, African Histories and the Dissolution of World Histories. In: Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, Jean O’Barr (eds), *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contribu­tions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities*, University of Chi­cago Press 1993, 167-212.
* Claire Midgley, Anti-slavery and the Roots of ‘Imperial Feminism’. In: Claire Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, 161-179.

**Week 9 Exemplary research suggested by students (1)**

*Nov. 17* *This meeting may need to be rescheduled. Stay tuned!*

**Week 10 Exemplary research suggested by students (2)**

Nov. 24

**Week 11 Exemplary research suggested by students (3)**

Dec. 1

**Week 12 Conclusions (or possible 4th class for readings suggested by students)**

Dec. 8 Discussions of final papers: be prepared to summarize the rationale for your research design and how you plan to go about doing the analysis

And/or possible additional readings depending on student interests/needs

**Final Paper Due: Friday, December 30 by 4pm** (earlier submission is welcomed!)

Late papers will be graded down one notch for each day they are late. Extensions can be considered on an individual basis but only with very strong reasons.