

Gender Politics & Social Research



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Module summary

This module approaches feminist theory and methodology at advanced levels, critically exploring feminist research on a number of different issues and engaging with the politics of the research process itself. As a core module on the Gender Studies MA, it is intended to prepare students for conducting independent research and producing their dissertation.

The bulk of the module introduces different methodologies and methods, encouraging students to reflect critically on their strengths and weaknesses, and how feminists have used them in the service of political projects. In the last part of the module, students design research projects on one of two case-study issues and attempt to operationalise key theories.

Module structure

1. Gendering the research agenda: feminist theory and research
2. Intersectionality in practice
3. Assessment workshop
4. The politics of knowledge: feminist epistemologies and methodologies
5. Reflexivity, power and ethics in feminist research
6. The politics of numbers: can quantitative research be feminist?
7. The politics of experience: the feminist interview
8. The politics of authenticity: feminist ethnography and claims to truth
9. The politics of representation: content and discourse analysis
10. Assessment workshop
11. Case studies: putting feminist theories and methodologies into practice
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Module assessment

The module is assessed by a portfolio, consisting of the following components:

1. A 1,000 word concept note on one feminist theoretical perspective (to be submitted in session 3 for formative feedback);
2. A 2,000 word evaluation of a piece of feminist research (to be submitted in session 9 for formative feedback);
3. A 2,000 word reflective piece on the process of designing your case-study project (to be drafted during sessions 11 and 12 with tutor support)

The whole final portfolio is submitted in early January. Guidance on the individual elements and on putting the portfolio together is given throughout the module.

Comments from students

- ‘The module uses real gender-related issues to teach research methods and methodologies, and communicates that research is important and relevant.’
- ‘Topics like abortion and sex work were such a good way in to talking about different methodologies and methods.’
- ‘The content was interesting, intellectually challenging and, I believe, an amazing starting point for the rest of the course.’
- ‘For me, I had a good understanding of feminist activism but not a strong understanding of feminist theory and this class helped to fill that gap for me.’
- ‘For me the flexible and open atmosphere of the classroom environment was the best feature of the course.’