*Central European University, Department of Gender Studies*

**Methodological Practice in Gender Studies**

**GENS 6022, 2 credits**

**mandatory PhD course, Fall 2023**

**Instructor: Jasmina Lukic** Time: Tuesdays 13:30-15:10

Place: TBA

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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. The course aims to critically interrogate the relationship between theoretical concepts, methodological approaches, and epistemology through critical reflection on processes of knowledge production and on our categories of analysis. In keeping with the objectives of the PhD program, this course will emphasize comparative and integrative approaches to research from different disciplinary perspectives, focusing on creating a sound basis for intellectual inquiry. The course will pay particular attention to the question of traveling concepts as a form of comparative analysis. Producing an interdisciplinary frame of thinking, where traditional modes of knowledge production are called into question, feminist theory is continually re-thinking its key concepts, thus creating changes in conceptual frameworks that have significant theoretical and methodological implications. This part of the course starts from Mieke Bal’s claim that concepts ‘if well thought though, offer miniature theories’ (Bal 2002, 22) that have to be used in a self-reflexive way. The course invites students to help shape the content of the course by selecting the concepts to be discussed in class as traveling concepts. The final paper asks students to present a comparative and critical analysis of a traveling concept central to their dissertation research.

**Course Goals**

The course aims to involve students in interdisciplinary critical thinking and to develop a comparative sensibility which will help them to theoretically and methodologically position themselves and their dissertation research. Discussing a number of traveling concepts and comparing their theoretical and methodological trajectories and the contexts in which they arose, students will become more clearly aware of their own locatedness in regard to different disciplinary traditions, and within feminist theory and gender studies as an interdisciplinary field of research.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

* Identify and critically reflect on the methodological underpinnings of gender studies research and analysis, including their own dissertation projects;
* Understand and critically evaluate different scholarly approaches to comparison, integrating multiple and overlapping social categories, and locating the starting point of various strands of knowledge production in interdisciplinary gender studies research;
* Understand and critically discuss the idea of ‘traveling concepts’;
* Critically re-think the scope, meaning, history, and contexts surrounding several key concepts in gender studies with an understanding of the theoretical and methodological implications of different shifts in their use;
* Understand the consequences of significant shifts in conceptual frameworks within a larger theoretical frame;
* Be able to perform similar critical analysis for other key concepts they will be using in their own PhD proposals research.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

Your grade will be based on:

Class attendance 10%

Class participation 10%

Methodology presentation 20%

Concept presentation 20%

Final paper 40%

Class attendance: regular attendance in all sessions is mandatory. If you are faced with an unforeseeable illness or problem that prevents you from coming to class, please notify one or both of us as soon as possible and provide written documentation if applicable. Online participation can be arranged if necessary as an exception but is not an option for regular attendance.

Class participation: Active class participation from all students is a crucial element of this course. 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, submit all work and peer feedback on time, and generally be engaged with the materials and discussions for the class. Please aim for a high level of critical engagement with the materials rather than mere quantity.

Methodology presentation: In-class oral presentation (10 minutes) of the methodological approach(es) you plan to use in your dissertation research (not theory, not methods, but the perspective(s) and approach to research that follow from your theoretical framework). Reflect on how your project would look differently if you were to use a different approach, how your methodology affects your methods and research design or theoretical tool kit and ultimately the (kind of) conclusions you will draw.

Concept presentation: In-class oral presentation (max. 15 minutes) of the concept you have chosen as one that is key to your dissertation research. Trace its trajectory of travel and the way(s) in which it has been mobilized and developed in different debates, by whom and in what areas of thought? In your analysis, compare the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which this concept has figured. How have the similarities and differences in these contexts shaped the way in which it has been understood? The presentation can be used as a basis for your final paper if you choose the “Concept” option (see below).

Final paper: 3-4000 words, due by Tuesday, Dec. 24 at 16:00. The final paper is based on your class presentation.

**Writing guidelines**

**The paper should be sent via e-mail in Word format** (no pdf)**.** Use 12-point font (Times New Roman, Arial, or other standard font) and double- or 1½-space with **page numbers** at the bottom. 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.

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**Schedule of Topics, Assignments and Readings**

*NB*: required readings listed here are on the e-learning site (moodle) from the start of classes. Texts corresponding to traveling concepts chosen by students will be uploaded later.

**Week 1 Introduction: methodology as space between theory and method**

Introductions

Rationale and goals of the course

Methodology and scholarly grounding

Preparation: be prepared to present and reflect on the methodological underpinnings of your thesis project, the approaches you feel at home with, and what you would still like to work on.

**Week 2 Epistemology: interrogating the zero point of knowledge production**

Reading:

* Nina Lykke. “Transversal Dialogues on Intersectionality, Socialist Feminism and Epistemologies of Ignorance”. Nora—Nordic Journal of Feminist And Gender Research. 2020, VOL. 28, NO. 3, 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2019.1708786>
* Claudia de Lima Costa. “Latin America, Decoloniality, and Translation : Feminists Building Connectant Epistemologies”. In *Theories of the Flesh : Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation, and Resistance*. Ed. by Andrea J. Pitts, Mariana Ortega, and José Medina. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190062965.003.0011>

**Week 3 Traveling concepts**

Reading:

* Mieke Bal. “Concepts”, in *Traveling Concepts in the Humanities* (University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 22-55.
* Christina Hughes. “Developing Conceptual Literacy”, in *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002). DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857024459

Class discussion to decide on a traveling concept for week 7 (suggested possibilities include: culture, body, identity, reading, post-humanism, reality, agency, visuality, hybridity, narrative).

**Week 4 Traveling theories**

Reading:

* Hawkesworth, Mary and Lisa Disch. “Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World”. *In Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Ed. by Mary Hawkesworth and Lisa Disch. (Oxford University Press, 2016).
* Said, Edward. “Traveling Theory”. In *The world, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 226-247.
* Elizabeth Grosz, “The Future of Feminist Theory: The Dreams of New Knowledges”, in *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice,* eds. Henriette Grunkel at al. (Palgrave 2012), pp. 13-22.

**Week 5 Methodology presentations**

10-minute presentations, 20 minutes for each student

**Week 6**  **Gender**

Short student presentations: Each student has to come with his/her explanation of gender as a traveling concept and suggest 10-15 pages paper/excerpt from a paper/book chapter which describes as close as possible their understanding of the concept of gender. Suggested texts are to be distributed to the class one week earlier at latest.

**Week 7** **Traveling concept: students’ choice**

Students’ choice of a traveling concept as agreed upon in week 3. Readings TBA, depending on the concept chosen in the class.

**Week 8 Comparison in history and anthropology**

Reading:

* 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.
* Linda Gordon, “Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women’s Welfare Activism 1890-1945.” *The Journal of American History* 78(1991), 559-590.

Due: one-paragraph proposal for Concept presentation (emailed before the start of class)

**Week 9 Comparison in Literature and Cultural Studies**

Reading:

* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Rethinking Comparativism” in *New Literary History*, Volume 40, Number 3, Summer 2009, pp. 609-626
* Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, “Transnationalizing Comparison: The Uses and Abuses of Cross-Cultural Analogy”, in *New Literary History*, Volume 40, Number 3, Summer 2009, pp. 473-499

**Week 10 Concepts presentations: double class**

1:30-3:10 – the second class to be negotiated as close as possible on the same day.

**Due: Paper Proposal** (uploaded to the moodle)

**Week 11**

**Concepts presentations: double class**

**Week 12 Final discussion**

Dec. 6 Readings TBA

**Final Paper Due: Tuesday, December 28 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 only with strong reasons.