FEMINIST GEOGRAPHIES:
TRACING AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN
FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY

Instructor:
Minelle Mahtani
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Email: mahtani@utsc.utoronto.ca
Course format: Graduate seminar
Total hours: 24 hours (two hours a week)
Fridays, 1-3 pm (room 2125a)

Description:
How might we more effectively trace personal epistemologies of feminist geography through a specifically organized conversation about the informal and formal processes of knowledge mobilization within the academy? This course will explore the complicit and complex forms of epistemology that are enacted in the subfield of feminist geography by inviting a different feminist geographer into the classroom every week, where we will read one of her articles as well as discussing an article or book that inspired her the most. Guests will be key thinkers in the field as well as some up and coming scholars. The course will ultimately offer a renewed mapping of feminist geography by investigating the relationship between affective pleasures of reading through theory, the discursive spaces of the academy and how certain readings inspire us to move towards more creative and imaginative places for renewal and revitalized conversations about epistemologies.

Course texts:

Also see the following Open Access book for Rachel Silvey’s guest lecture:

Evaluation scheme:
1. Critical analyses of readings (four altogether): 25%
2. Participation: 20%
3. Proposal for final paper (due 7th week of class): 10%
4. Final research paper (due last day of class): 35%
5. Paper presentation (last day of class): 10%
Assignments:

1. **25% Critical analyses of the readings**
   You must write a summary and critique of the readings assigned for **FOUR classes**. These approximately one to three page submissions will consist of short papers/questions based on one or more of the readings assigned for that day. You are required to choose which classes you will do this for ahead of time. These papers will be used to structure the conversations we will have.

   **IMPORTANT:** These papers are due by **1 PM on the Thursday before the class** in which we will discuss the readings to which your questions are related. Email your paper to:

   mahtani@utsc.utoronto.ca

   Your critical analysis should include:
   
   a) A concise (approx. 2-3 sentence to a paragraph) summary of the main points of the readings. You can either approach each reading individually, or take the group of readings as a whole. What is the main argument (or how do they differ)? How do the authors support her/his arguments? What narrative strategies does the author use to get his/her point across? Ask yourself how you would communicate what you have learned to someone non-academic, in clear, articulate sentences. Do not try to sound overly intellectual or verbose.

   With each set of readings we will most likely spend a few minutes talking about how the author went about their research. So ask yourself: what is the research question? What methods are employed? What quantitative or qualitative data is employed?

   b) What do you make of this reading? How does it relate to your own experiences if at all? What problems did you have with the reading? Provide your own critical analysis of the piece. What questions or issues do the assigned readings raise in your mind? What are the points of agreement and disagreement between you and the author? What things does the author do well, what things do they do less well? How might they have enhanced their methodological approach?

   c) Two well-conceived, well-articulated and non-rhetorical questions pertaining to the readings which you might ask the author, or that you wish to pose to your peers in class.

   d) A short paragraph that provides some sense of the direction in which you think the conversation about these questions should proceed. **This is important!** Of course, it is also valuable to add any questions that you are still unclear about, even if they seem mundane or simplistic. No question is stupid!
I will begin classes by asking students who completed the critical analyses for that week to open the discussion with their comments, which will include a synopsis of the article(s), then a set of issues you were dealing with as you read through the article, and finally how you situate yourself and your research in relation to your own engagement with the article as a piece of work.

Nota Bene: The more insightful and sophisticated your questions/preliminary responses are, the higher your mark will be. Style counts. So does punctuation, grammar and spelling. Please don’t make me cringe while reading your critical analyses. You may use references in your questions.

Please note that this assignment is due before the relevant class so that your actual questions can structure the discussion we have (rather than just my sense of what you should want to discuss).

If your assignment is submitted after the 5 pm deadline, you will receive no more than (and if the paper is poorly executed, fewer than) 2 out of 5 marks. Students may not submit an assignment more than one week after its due date.

Please send the critical analysis in the body of the email as well as submitting it as an attachment.

Please also post your critical analysis on Blackboard under the discussion header.

Do not forget to bring these critical analyses with you to class to facilitate lively discussion. I will not be providing detailed comments on these papers (keep in mind I do my best to peruse all responses on Wednesday night and have a limited window of opportunity to read them all). However, if you would like feedback on your critical analyses, please come and see me before the midterm point, and I will be happy to provide you with some constructive comments for improvement.

2. **20% Participation in class**

Since this is a seminar course, students are expected to participate orally at a high level. This does not, however, suggest that the student who talks the most (or the loudest) will get the highest participation mark. Rather, satisfactory participation skills entail ensuring a respectful, critical, and constructive approach to the views expressed by your peers. For each class meeting, you should come prepared to specify a passage or an idea in the reading that you found interesting and be able to explain your reasons in class. You should also be prepared to reflect upon how the particular text assigned for that day aids or confuses your understanding of the issues that we have been working on this course. You may be asked to summarize class discussion at the end of a class. I do this regularly. I encourage you to create a classroom climate which is open and democratic. Respect for other class members is non-negotiable. For more information on appropriate behaviour in a seminar-style class, I ask that you carefully read over the following document which will
provide you with tips on how to participate in class discussion in respectful and productive ways:

http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/seminars.htm

3. **10% Proposal for final paper** (due the 7th week of class)
I expect to see a two page proposal for your final paper. This should include at least 5 bibliography references and a clear outline for what you plan to discuss in your final paper. This proposal should be approximately two pages long.

4. **35% Term paper - DUE THE LAST DAY OF CLASS - NO EXCEPTIONS!**
This is your opportunity to research an area of autobiography that has sparked your interest. If you undertake a formal research paper you should include references from scholarly journals and books to support your argument. Your paper should be at least 10 pages in length, double spaced, 11-12 point font, with standard margins. You also have the option of doing a less formal term assignment that we will discuss further in class. This option does not mean less work. In fact, students who opt for this type of original research option put in a lot more time and effort than a standard research paper. Either way, you should discuss your topic with me well in advance of the end of term due date. Assignments are due on the last day of class with no exceptions.

5. **10% Paper presentation**
Each student will be required to make a five minute presentation of his/her final paper.

I am available during my scheduled office hours. I am also available, by appointment, at many other times. Please contact me via e-mail to arrange a meeting.

**SCHEDULE:**

**Friday September 12** - Introduction to the course: expectations

**Friday September 19** Guest speaker: Minelle Mahtani, University of Toronto


Mahtani, Minelle. 2002. “Paradoxical Space.” Gender, Place and Culture uploaded

**Friday September 26** Guest speaker: Katherine McKittrick, Queen’s University


**Friday October 3**
**Guest speaker: Audrey Kobayashi, Queen’s University**


Kobayashi, A. and Boyle, M. (Forthcoming). "Colonizing Colonized: Sartre and Fanon." In A. Bakan and E. Dua eds. Marxism and Anti-Racism: Conversations. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Note: The draft that was sent hand uploaded has a different title but still use this version, please)


**Friday October 10 – Linda Peake, York University**


**October 17 - Rachel Silvey, University of Toronto**

Silvey, R. 2002. “Sweatshops and the Corporatization of the University,” Gender, Place, and Culture 9(2): 201-207


**Friday October 24 - Sue Ruddick, University of Toronto**


Friday October 31 - Sharlene Mollette, University of Toronto


Friday November 7 - Deb Cowen, University of Toronto


Introduction and post

Friday November 14

Mahtani in Chicago – NO CLASS

Friday November 21 - Michelle Buckley, University of Toronto


Friday November 28 -Final class: presentations