

II. WOMEN'S STUDIES AND PEDAGOGY:

INTRODUCTION

Readers of this cluster of articles on “Women’s Studies and Pedagogy” will recognize the long-standing attention to the question of “feminist pedagogy” that has preoccupied people in this discipline for many years. For this cluster, then, we thought to limit the discussion to questions about pedagogy in the academic field of Women’s Studies itself, recognizing both that feminist pedagogical concerns have spread much beyond this discipline, and that there might be questions and issues raised about pedagogy in Women’s Studies that fell outside of the feminist pedagogy literature. Of course, making a distinction between feminist pedagogy generally and Women’s Studies specifically is both difficult and hard to hold on to in many instances, as the lines between them constantly blur. Indeed, for many people both in the field and more generally, these two are coterminous; feminist pedagogy defines Women’s Studies, and Women’s Studies must practise “feminist pedagogy.” What precisely defines either of these terms or phrases, though, has always been contested, especially as many feminist pedagogical practices seem to intersect and resonate with thinking more broadly about critical pedagogies, and in light of shifts in higher education towards active learning practices, student-centred teaching, experiential and service learning, learning communities, etc. What, if anything, we as editors then wondered, defined pedagogy in Women’s Studies specifically? Was it enough to simply say it was defined by and as “feminist” in order to claim its difference from other pedagogies? Or were there other things to say about the kinds of pedagogical thinking and practice in this field today?

Happily, the collection in this cluster illustrates the variety and complexity of thinking about pedagogy that has come to dominate the field of Women’s Studies. From analyses of what one does in the classroom in order to reach certain learning aims and

objectives, to questions about what those aims and objectives are and/or should be, to reflections on who is in the classroom (literally and figuratively) and the differences those bodies make, to current debates on what constitutes the field itself, to positing the effects of rethinking learning as un-learning, the essays in this collection approach the question of Women’s Studies and Pedagogy in a myriad of rich and varied ways that challenge any simple understandings of either of those terms. While, in some broad way, they all share a belief that pedagogy is a transformative experience, their approaches to that issue, and what they have to say about the nature of that “transformation,” vary widely. Taken together, they highlight just how complex the question of “teaching” is and must be, and they push us in different ways to reflect on what are so often our taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching in this field.

The first “mini cluster” of these articles represent what has long been one of the dominant approaches to teaching in Women’s Studies: a focus on “activism” and producing students as “activists.” “Art Galleries, Academia, and Women in Fur Masks: A Case Study of Using Visual Art to Promote Engaged Classroom Learning,” Rachel K. Brickner and Laurie Dalton’s exposition of how they worked their university’s art gallery staging of a Guerilla Girls show into their co-taught course on global development, is both an engaging read and a provocative idea to expand the possibilities presented to students in their course. The authors’ focus on getting students to see the art exhibit and accompanying workshops as opportunities to think about how to undertake actions around seemingly unrelated topics exemplifies a thinking about teaching as extending well beyond the space of the classroom or the content of the course itself. In much the same way, Danielle M. DeMuth’s article, “Feminist and Activist Learning Outcomes: What Should Students

Be Able to Do as a Result of this Women's and Gender Studies Project/Course/Curriculum?" takes activism in the Women's Studies classroom as its subject of inquiry, and asks how to build that goal across the curriculum, rather than its more usual position as one assignment in a course. In exploring this question, using her own courses and experiences as examples, DeMuth's piece raises the question not only of what a student should learn and be able to do at the end of a Women's Studies degree, but nods at the question of what constitutes the field itself—a question that, while DeMuth doesn't take it up directly, does get taken up later in this collection by other authors. Finally, in "Women's Studies, Community Service-Learning, and the Dynamics of Privilege," Joanne Muzak thinks about service learning projects in Women's Studies and their importance for developing students' recognition of how much different social positionings makes a difference to people's lives and possibilities. These three articles together argue for understanding pedagogy as that which necessarily goes beyond the classroom space and, instead, which engages students, albeit in different ways, in the other various worlds they occupy. From "tips and tricks" to reflections on what those accomplish, these articles continue the tradition of Women's Studies' focus on pedagogy as a focus on transformative learning about social justice beyond the course itself.

Muzak's exploration of the role that social identity positions play in pedagogical experiences is taken up and further elaborated on by Erica Lawson in "Feminist Pedagogies: The Textuality of the Racialized Body in the Feminist Classroom," a reflection on the ways in which the bodily "other" is positioned as professor in the classroom, in the field, in the institution. Moving between these different levels, Lawson wonders about the tensions between traditional feminist pedagogical desires to challenge the authority of the professor, and both the possibilities for and the desirability of non-white bodies doing that. She focuses attention onto the role of privilege in that longstanding trope of feminist pedagogies, in the process pushing us all to reconsider some of the assumptions that

undergird this foundational concept in Women's Studies. In "The Challenges of a 'Multicultural' Classroom: Some Reflections," Tania Das Gupta picks up many of the same issues as Lawson, further exploring her own position as both powerful and marginalized in the classroom. But she extends this examination of differences and power to look at how they operate between and among students in her classrooms too, in the process reflecting on the limits of multiculturalism in Canada—a policy that, she argues, ultimately too often ends up reifying differences between students, rather than building communities across and over those differences.

While both Lawson's and Das Gupta's explorations of the professorial body raise the issue of assumed "appropriate" subjects of and for Women's Studies (although neither uses this term), this question is taken up more directly in the following two articles: "Doing Feminist Biblical Criticism in a Women's Studies Context" by Pamela J. Milne and "Rethinking Women's Studies: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and the Introductory Course" by Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice.

In her critical look at what her Biblical Studies course and emphasis brings to a Women's Studies classroom, Milne asks: what are the innovative ways in which biblical studies as a field can aid students in asking methodological questions and exploring epistemological issues in Women's Studies itself? In crossing the borders between these fields, her article pushes us to re-examine questions about both the assumed and the changing parameters of Women's Studies. Hobbs and Rice likewise take up this same question about the changing borders or parameters of the field by contemplating curriculum in the introductory level course(s) and the range of issues and topics covered. Through a quick survey of syllabi from across Canadian institutions and programs/departments, they note the ongoing shifts in definition of this field and begin to reflect on what these expanding borders mean for the field's intellectual and institutional identities.

Finally, in "A Pedagogy of Provocation: Teaching *Troubling Women's Studies*," Kate Bride shifts our attention away from thinking

about pedagogy as a question of teaching to focus on the idea of “learning.” Using her experience in co-teaching a particular text in a graduate course, she contemplates the importance of un-learning—in pedagogy in general and in Women’s Studies in particular, and explores the challenges posed by this shift of focus in pedagogical practice. In her insistence on un-attaching from disciplinary comfort, stability, or sense of “home,” Bride’s article indeed “provokes” us to rethink our own investments in this field, and to question its contents, approaches, questions, and borders—along with any aims or goals we might think attach to its “teaching.”

Taken together, then, the articles in this cluster come full circle—from thinking

about teaching to learning, from a range of attachments to particular versions of the field to questions about what the field’s subjects and parameters are, from reflections on about what we do in and bring to the classroom in a myriad of ways to challenges to us all to “un-learn” our versions of Women’s Studies. They surely encompass the kinds of rethinking about Women’s Studies and Pedagogy that demand of us to continue to theorize the difficult and productive connections between these terms.

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Editors***