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Gender Studies 300 Learning Journal

My intention with this project was to create a collection of personal narrative reflections in an informal tone as if I were writing in my own journal about my learning experiences. While they might not be technically superior, the style with which I write them reflects a key method through which I synthesize my own learning. Some of my most profound learning experiences have occurred outside the classroom in the form of informal discussions with classmates, friends, and family members. The cluttered, sometimes disorganized nature of the entries reflects the process of learning and synthesis that I experience in a genuine way. I chose to write in a physical journal because to me it feels more authentic to my personal method of reflecting on my learning. I practice journalling regularly in my own life and find it is a key tool in allowing me to lay out my thoughts and experiences in order to learn and grow from them. More than writing digitally, journal-writing acts, for me, as a vessel for stream-of-consciousness thinking. A value I hold closely in my education is that of curiosity and I want to express that through my work with this learning journal. I think this value is reflected through much of the material I absorb in the gender studies realm and the personal, subjective nature of much of what is covered in the discipline feels like it gives way to this form of reflection.

The unpolished nature of these entries reflects the unpolished journey of exploring the themes we discussed this term, and the format, I felt, best represented my personal exploration of these topics, themes, and stories, and the way that they apply to my own life. The experience is messy, but, I hope, insightful, reflective, and critical.

→ (this page) LEARNING JOURNAL #1 - JAN 13

On Jan 13 we spent most of the class interviewing fellow classmates and being interviewed by them. After learning 1. what we were looking forward to developing in the course and 2. a concept we each found to be important (from gender studies), we then introduced each other to the whole class. It was a good opportunity to reflect upon my own intentions going into this course and to also reflect upon the knowledge I have built up thus far in my gender studies pathway. Not only was it a valuable self-reflection opportunity but it was beneficial to learn about where all of my classmates were coming from, and to have some insight into their internal strengths and external skills - it allowed for a greater feeling of connection, which I feel will be beneficial moving forward with this course. I appreciated the opportunity to implement the ~~information~~ knowledge I gained from the ~~reading~~ chapter 'Discovering and Claiming Your Internal Strengths and External Skills' from 'Transforming Scholarship'. The main message I took away from that reading was the importance of being able to identify, and therefore engage with, internal ~~strengths~~ strengths and external skills that have been developed and/or nurtured through the study of gender studies. Internal strengths are more intrinsic and can be more easily overlooked, but manifest in the ways that a student may interact with the world around them. External skills are more quantifiable, being abilities that are learned through content & experience and cultivated through practice. Something I found interesting was the fact that concepts mentioned in the chapter as important to gender

students can manifest AS skills. For example, intersectionality was ~~mentioned~~ mentioned as a valuable concept, both in the chapter and in our class (a lot). Not only is it an important concept, though, as understanding it can allow for students to view issues in the real world through an intersectional lens, thus manifesting it as ~~a~~ a skill ~~as well~~ as well.

## ENTRY #1

## References

- Tracy Berger, M., & Radeloff, C. (2021). Discovering and Claiming Your Internal Strengths and External Skills. In *Transforming Scholarship* (pp. 169-199). Routledge.



## LEARNING JOURNAL #2

Jan. 16

Today in class - we ~~to~~ participated in an exercise to identify potential pathways we might take after undergrad. In identifying existing skills and experience I could apply to support these potential pathways (either the non-profit route or grad school) - I'm realizing how relevant and helpful much of what we develop in this discipline (and in sociology, my other discipline) is to future endeavors. For the non-profit sector, an intersectional lens will help me approach social issues in a productive and holistic way. Critical reflexivity will help me go into this kind of work without the belief that I can fix everything, and with the understanding that I do not / can not know or understand where each individual is coming from. If I end up pursuing research in an academic setting, my skills in critical thinking, curiosity, and my capacity to apply a broad range of frameworks / interdisciplinary dexterity will allow me to approach issues from many different frameworks in order to understand and analyze them in a deeper way. Finally, for both path options, a decolonial understanding and advocacy perspective will be instrumental in my approach, no matter what I end up pursuing. Thinking of concepts as skills has widened my understanding of what I will be able to bring to the table in a professional setting and beyond. Finally, in our group discussion we talked about some thoughts we had about the reading, specifically that certain aspects of it felt outdated, as certain concepts were not ones we use anymore, or exist w/in a distinct binary. However what stood out to me was <sup>3</sup> <sup>6</sup> <sup>9</sup> <sup>12</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>18</sup> <sup>21</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>27</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>33</sup> <sup>36</sup> <sup>39</sup> <sup>42</sup> <sup>45</sup> <sup>48</sup> <sup>51</sup> <sup>54</sup> <sup>57</sup> <sup>60</sup> <sup>63</sup> <sup>66</sup> <sup>69</sup> <sup>72</sup> <sup>75</sup> <sup>78</sup> <sup>81</sup> <sup>84</sup> <sup>87</sup> <sup>90</sup> <sup>93</sup> <sup>96</sup> <sup>99</sup> <sup>102</sup> <sup>105</sup> <sup>108</sup> <sup>111</sup> <sup>114</sup> <sup>117</sup> <sup>120</sup> <sup>123</sup> <sup>126</sup> <sup>129</sup> <sup>132</sup> <sup>135</sup> <sup>138</sup> <sup>141</sup> <sup>144</sup> <sup>147</sup> <sup>150</sup> <sup>153</sup> <sup>156</sup> <sup>159</sup> <sup>162</sup> <sup>165</sup> <sup>168</sup> <sup>171</sup> <sup>174</sup> <sup>177</sup> <sup>180</sup> <sup>183</sup> <sup>186</sup> <sup>189</sup> <sup>192</sup> <sup>195</sup> <sup>198</sup> 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## LEARNING JOURNAL #3

Jan. 20

Today's discussion paired with the readings produced much thought-provoking themes. The main theme I identified from discussion was the complexity + nuance of defining "feminism". Maparyan identifies certain tensions between feminism and Women's/gender studies (was), such as the tension of focusing primarily on women than on all people, as well as the fact that was is defined by the class/institution within which it exists, while feminism is more broadly applicable. Our group also discussed the tensions between White/northern vs. global, transnational focus. Maparyan expresses that feminism will look different for everybody depending on experience and context, and it is therefore important to consider making sure to define what feminism looks like to you specifically in your work, because it will look so different for others. This made me think of self-location, something I've been educated on in the Indigenous studies courses I've taken. Self-location highlights not only our positionality, background, and contexts within which we exist, but also our motivations for engaging w/ the work and material we do. Defining what feminism means to oneself is also important in contrast to the rhetoric of feminist 'waves', which have the potential to narrow our vision + understanding. Categorizing feminism into waves, as we discussed, cannot account for the vast + diverse work that is encapsulated within. As such, we could also never talk about a universal feminist experience. This raises the question - how do I define my engagement with 'feminist' work? What is defining my particular stake in the matter? I believe it will be important to continually revisit this Q throughout my life/career to maintain reflexivity.

## ENTRY #3

### References

- Henry, A. (2012). Waves. In *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (pp. 102–118). Routledge.
- Maparyan, L. (2012). Feminism. In *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (pp. 17–33). Routledge.
- Piepmeyer, A. (2012). Besiegement. In *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (pp. 119–134). Routledge.



## LEARNING JOURNAL #4

JAN. 23 - Seminar: Annalee Lepp

"Building and Redefining Women's Studies in Canada" by Dr. Lepp spoke to me on many levels and articulated the difficulties I have with institutionalized learning, academia, and research. Lepp touches on "the highly specialized language more suited to a conversation among academics than a conversation with society at large" (p. 25), which ~~is~~ is an issue I have identified about academia as a whole. However, the ironic part about GNDR becoming this elitist, non-~~and~~ accessible space for only the highly educated is that it claims to work for the benefit of all marginalized communities - but how can the discipline do that if its information is inaccessible to most?

Another theme that stood out to me in the reading was the call to develop a critical position about WWS, pointing out that "feminists who criticized men for using men's experiences to generalize to all human experiences, thereby ignoring the differences of gender, went ahead to commit a similar error by ignoring differences among women" (p. 21). To me I feel this is one of GNDR's most pressing issues - women's liberation isn't possible without liberation for ALL. Upon reflection, I understand GNDR, and project upon it, not as a study of women but as a study of power & oppressive systems and a building of community to work against these systems. However without first making our efforts accessible to all, we can never hope to achieve such a vision.

The part of class discussion I found most thought-provoking was that of the debate between activism/academia - what is the most effective ~~way~~ method of working towards liberation for ~~all~~ all? Dr. Lepp brought up the argument that GNDR lost its touch in the development of professionalism - but I do feel that, when done in an accessible way, the work of academic activists is vital in mobilizing and spreading well-researched knowledge. <sup>All roles are vital in true revolution!</sup>

## ENTRY #4

### References

Lepp, A. (2015). Building and Redefining Women's Studies in Canada. In *Solitudes of the Workplace: Women in Universities* (pp. 17-35). McGill-Queen's University Press.

## FEB 10 - Learning Journal #5

Dr. Carol Roy - Raging Grannies

Dr. Carol Roy's perspective on activism and academia was incredibly refreshing, as ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> her insights on age and the culture that exists around ~~and~~ delegitimizing activists who don't fit within the typical idea of an activist. Learning of the Grannies and the way they harnessed prejudices against them in a way that worked in their favour made me think back to a few classes ago when we talked about the skills we gain in GNDP and how we might be able to apply them in the future - gender studies students, of anyone in the university institution, would be aware of the various systems of power/oppression that exist, but are also uniquely equipped with abilities for critical thinking and reflexivity. In ~~which I imagine~~ this way, I feel that we are especially positioned, much like the grannies, to be able to harness these systems so as to work against them. Dr. Carol Roy highlighted two kinds of crucial knowledge - analytical and creative. Her call to us was to be the kind of people to bring the two kinds of knowledge together - to be able to both take things apart (analytical) and put them back together (creativity). I think this approach aligns with my perspective of the academic vs. activism debate that we also touched on in previous classes - that in fact, both (all) kinds of knowledge are valuable in the pursuit of liberation/equity for all people and the dismantling of oppressive structures. In a beautiful way, the Grannies embody a balance of creative ideas based in well thought out logic, and I felt inspired by their approach.

One of the last things Dr. Roy said as she finished her seminar was that as she was doing her PhD she was laughing and having fun. I feel it's so important to pursue something you feel passionate about, & it was wonderful to have someone in that ~~discussed that experience~~.

## ENTRY #5

### References

Roy, C. (2004). *The Raging Grannies: Wild Hats, Cheeky Songs and Witty Actions for a Better World*. Black Rose Books.



FEB 24 LEARNING JOURNAL  
ASTRID PEREZ PINAN



One of the readings for today, "Things That Make You Go Hmmm" brought up many thoughts for me as I read it. Ultimately, I felt that the article ~~is~~ largely felt like a complaint about the institutionalization of intersectionality with little to no exploration into what an alternative could look like. However in reflecting on the brief call for readers to be intentional in their usage of the term, my thoughts for moving forward based on what was discussed in the reading are that one must be intentional, understand performativity vs. true dedication to work for change - knowing that it is not enough to simply acknowledge one's privilege as a means of absolving them from any sort of power dynamic. I feel Astrid did a good job of making her positionality and context clear at the beginning of her presentation, and continued to weave in that narrative throughout her discussion. I appreciated Astrid's discussion about interconnectedness and the necessity of collaboration in the pursuit of social justice. This has been a major theme in a class I'm currently in which focuses on the non-profit sector, and the interdependence of community-centred work. ~~with~~ I feel this also ties in well with Ross's "Speaking up without tearing down", as she outlines that calling people in with difficult discussions can be "an extension of grace, the opportunity to grow and share learning and responsibility together", while reminding the reader that this does not necessarily mean that everyone will joyfully work together". Astrid's presentation was rife with realistic but hopeful notions of collaboration. Finally, Ross's article on the History of Sexuality deepened my understanding of ~~heter~~ hegemonic heterosexuality and the role it has played in (and continues to play) the framing ~~of~~ and understanding of social ~~and~~ cultural structures and systems.

## ENTRY #6

### References

- Birk, M. (2017). Things That Make You Go Hmmm: Unmaking of the Racialized Self in a Graduate School Classroom. *Atlantis*, 28(1), 7-15.
- Ross, B. (2000). The Stubborn Clutter, the Undeniable Record, the Burning, Wilful Evidence: Teaching the History of Sexuality. *Atlantis*, 25(1), 28-38.
- Ross, L. (2019). *Speaking Up Without Tearing Down*. Learning for Justice.



## FEB 27 - LEARNING JOURNAL JAVINA BHANDAR - The political classroom

In class we discussed the political nature of what we, in gender studies, approach as a discipline. Underlined in our discussion was the importance of understanding the power dynamics within any given topic as the essence of what makes it political. We touched, also, on the difficulty of challenging your perspectives in the process of questioning what you believe to be normative - something I've had much experience with in my time in gender studies. However, ultimately, that is the foundation of the very discipline, and an important skill to develop in order to engage in any meaningful work. The threat that critical thinking poses to the 'normative' status quo is vividly illustrated in the article "The Anti-Critical Race Theory Campaign", which goes into depth on the lengths that people in positions of power are going to deconstruct the educational framework upon which much (if not all) of what is studied in gender studies is based. This critical perspective is also vital when approaching issues of EDI/D, as Marom details how performative these (EDI/D) structures can be if not engaged with in a relational (therefore intentional) manner. "In an atmosphere of growing societal divisiveness, EDI/D must be grounded in reciprocity while acknowledging differences and power hierarchies" (pg. 1103), just as the gender studies classroom should be structured. In class we discussed as a group classroom practices that have been part of our gender studies experiences, one of which being the "oops/ouch" method of discussion. To me this called back to earlier readings that called for calling people in rather than out. Ultimately the message I took from this week's discussions were the importance of discussion, the continual revisiting of difficult topics, and of relationality. Relationality is important in building meaningful EDI/D programs and also in maintaining a classroom atmosphere that's conducive to purposeful and productive discussion.

## ENTRY #7

### References

- Butler, J. (2006). Israel/Palestine and the paradoxes of academic freedom. *Radical Philosophy*, 135, 8-17.
- Marom, L. (2023). Resistance, Performativity, and Fragmentation: The Relational Arena of EDI/D in Canadian Higher Education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 46(4), 1083-1114. <https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.6071>
- Watson, L. (2023). The anti-"critical race theory" campaign - classroom censorship and racial backlash by another name. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 58(2), 487-549.



## MARCH 17 - LEARNING JOURNAL

### THEA CACCHIONI

A number of themes that Dr. Cacchioni touched on during her presentation stood out to me as significant:

- Acknowledgment of mentors (or of anyone you work with, really) - how important this is in an ethic of relationality, which is a topic that has been touched on a number of times in this class, as has the spirit of collaboration. While I understand the spirit of collaboration and relationality in the context of theoretical, research-based work, I had not before considered the extent to which this would be an important skill to develop professionally.
- Along the same vein of relationality, Dr. Cacchioni touched on the importance of authenticity when building professional relationships.
- The discussion of her research allowed both for an illustration of the advice she gave in an applied way, and an interesting insight into her area of expertise. The most interesting aspects of her work for me, was the discussion of the neoliberal contexts within which the topic of female sexual health issues have developed, and her personal connection to PCOS + the way that connection has manifested ~~in~~ in her work. It was valuable to hear from someone who has such a connection to the subject matter they work with.

Overall, Dr. Cacchioni provided valuable advice as to how best to behave within the professional setting while contributing compelling anecdotes of her own journey, which helped to frame her advice in a relatable and intriguing manner. Her discussion provided the lived experience that added a layer of nuance to the content of her book.

## ENTRY #8

### References

- Cacchioni, T. (2018). *Big Pharma, Women, and the Labour of Love*. University of Toronto Press.



LEARNING JOURNAL - MARCH 13  
ANNALEE LEPP

The Master's Tools will  
Never Dismantle the  
Master's House  
- Introduction  
- Canada

Something I've been trying to weave together in a coherent way is Audre Lorde's discussion of how "women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance + to educate men as to our experiences and needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns" (pg. 113), and how the Canadian government attempting to protect sex workers (Canada chapter Sex Workers Organising for Change) from patriarchal oppression was, in fact, an ~~exercise~~ exercising of patriarchal power in itself. The only true way ~~to~~ to protect sex workers is to involve them in decision-making. The way that the government approached this was patriarchal, colonial, and patronizing - exactly what Lorde argues against in her article. I found the government's language around the issue particularly interesting - labelling sex workers as 'victims'. In doing this, the master is using the master's tools to dig a deeper ditch within which sex workers in Canada must try to survive, rather than deconstructing the structures that have subjected them to ~~to~~ certain situations. Of course, it is logical that those with lived experiences would be consulted - however, ~~as~~ as the chapter outlines, the law created detrimental effects to the lives and livelihoods of so many Indigenous, trans, queer, and racialized sex workers (pg. 156). Dr. Lepp's discussion wave in the info, from the readings with her own experiences with GATTW. As Lorde outlines in her article, it is important to take the differences of women + make them into strengths - I feel Dr. Lepp illustrated the importance of doing that in the context of sex work, tying that approach into what GATTW outlines as their values in the introduction of Sex Workers Organising for Change, namely that they prioritize ~~and~~

Supporting women's self-organizing (pg. 7). In reading about the Canadian government's attempt to create a law in 'protection' of women against trafficking, it becomes apparent how crucial the value of supporting women's self-organization becomes in the creation of solutions and situations which actually benefit those involved.

(Actually - not just women - all marginalized voices!)

## ENTRY #9

### References

Lepp, A. (2018). Canada. In *Sex Workers Organising for Change: Self-representation, community mobilisation, and working conditions* (pp. 151-195). Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.

Lorde, A. (1984). *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. In *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.

Stacey, M., & Gerasimov, B. (2018). Introduction. In *Sex Workers Organising for Change: Self-representation, community mobilisation, and working conditions* (pp. 5-39). Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.



MARCH 24 - SHANEE PRASAD  
LEARNING JOURNAL



Last learning journal! I'm glad to have the chance to finish off my process of reflection and synthesis by focusing on Shanee's discussion.

She began with an acknowledgment of her background. I always appreciated when speakers for this class would start off with something like this. For example, Astrid Perez Pinan started off with something similar, prompting us to think about how our backgrounds contribute to we understand ourselves. Shanee did a wonderful job at demonstrating self-location and situating oneself in one's work, for her this being an explanation for her motivations for doing the anti-oppressive work she's involved in now. Her outlook about organizing and participating in socially/politically involved work felt very optimistic, while realistic at the same time. Much of what Shanee discussed tied in to what was covered earlier in the course on calling people in vs. calling them out (*Speaking Up Without Tearing Down*, Ross). She was incredibly effective in this way (and inspirational) - her discussion of anti-oppression, DEI, and colonialism felt inherently welcoming, which is so crucial in a time and context that feels so isolating and polarized.

A major theme Shanee talked about was letting go of the notion of perfection in order to be able to get anything done in the world of social justice. I feel this can be applied to many of the themes touched on this term - for example, the Raging Grannies embraced this mindset in their unorthodox approach to social justice, which in fact allowed them to be incredibly effective precisely for the reason that they didn't neatly fit within conventions. Or, in the stories of so many speakers who shared their career journeys - it seemed that a commonality throughout was embracing flexibility in the face of unexpected change, opportunities, and challenges as a means of success.

## ENTRY #10

### References

- Ross, L. (2019). *Speaking Up Without Tearing Down*. Learning for Justice.
- Roy, C. (2004). *The Raging Grannies: Wild Hats, Cheeky Songs and Witty Actions for a Better World*. Black Rose Books.