

Introduction to This Guide

Feminist pedagogy is not a toolbox, a collection of strategies, a list of practices, or a specific classroom arrangement. It is an overarching philosophy—a theory of teaching and learning that integrates feminist values with related theories and research on teaching and learning.

It begins with our beliefs and motivations: *why do we teach? why do students learn? what are the goals of learning?* We know that the consequences of our motives for teaching and learning are significant: Keith Trigwell and Mike Prosser have shown that the instructor’s intentions in teaching (“why the person adopts a particular strategy”) have a greater impact on student learning than the instructor’s actual strategies for teaching (“what the person does”) (78). Their research has shown that approaches to teaching that are purposefully focused on the students and aimed at changing conceptual frameworks lead to deeper learning practices than teacher-centered, information-driven approaches (Trigwell 98). The implications are that **the instructor’s fundamental beliefs and values about teaching, learning, and knowledge-making matter.**

In this guide, [we explain some of the fundamental beliefs, values, and intentions behind feminist pedagogy to inform a deliberate application in specific classrooms](#)—any and all classrooms, as feminist pedagogy can inform any disciplinary context. (For a more focused exploration of feminist pedagogy specifically within the women’s studies classroom, see Holly Hassel and Nerissa Nelson’s “A Signature Feminist Pedagogy: Connection and Transformation in Women’s Studies.”)

This guide is not a primer on feminism, though, so we begin having assumed the following:

We live within a patriarchy, a term which we define—following the work of Allan Johnson—as a society that’s structure is “male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified” (5).

- For more, read Allan Johnson’s *Gender Knot*, particularly [chapter one, “Where are we?”](#) and [chapter two, “Patriarchy, the System: An It, Not a He, a Them, or an Us.”](#)

Differences exist “between and among groups” of people based on lived experiences that are informed by the complex interactions between “history, culture, power, and ideology” (McLaren 43).

- For more, read Peter McLaren’s [taxonomy of approaches to difference](#).

The concept of “woman” does not exist in isolation from other identities. Rather, identity is “intersectional,” a term that recognizes the interlocking and inextricable relationship between different aspects of identity and systems of oppression.

- For more, read Kimberlé Crenshaw’s [“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.”](#)

[Start →](#)



