

*Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies invites abstract submissions for a double-special issue scheduled for autumn 2024.*

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## THE FEMINIST CLASSROOM: PEDAGOGIES, CONTESTATIONS AND HORIZONS

Feminist studies and related fields, including queer, postcolonial and critical race studies, are under persistent fire. Such fire has, for example, led to an attempted, but failed, ban on gender studies in Romania in 2020, elected parliamentarians discrediting the research of named (often female and precariously employed) scholars as ‘pseudo-science’ in 2021 in Denmark, and – at this moment of writing – library shelves in the US are presumably being stripped of literature around race, sexual and gender diversity and other ‘divisive concepts.’ In the Netherlands, an array of newspaper columnists, politicians (including the minister of Justice and Security), and academics (including the *rectores magnifici* of Utrecht University and the University of Amsterdam) have been fanning the flames by painting ‘wokeness’ as a major threat to academic freedom. Indeed, conservative politics and media across borders have adopted the ‘anti-woke’ agenda, often centering their critiques on the academic sphere, for instance, presenting the introduction of trigger warnings in teaching as the unreasonable demands of ‘snowflake’ students, or claiming a funhouse-mirror power reversal whereby the threat of presumed ‘woke’ research disciplines (such as gender studies) purportedly police the ‘objective’ sciences. This mainstream uptake of ‘anti-gender’ and ‘anti-woke’ tendencies increasingly affects university teaching.

These circumstances cannot be fully understood without considering the neoliberalization of universities, that is, the transferal of neoliberal-capitalist political and economic ideology from the governance of states to the governance of higher education, centering privatization, profit motives, competition, and individual (rather than collective) risk (Gill, 2009). This neoliberalization of universities has heightened the precarity of academic jobs (Herschberg, Benschop & van den Brink, 2018), increased the use of surveillance and quantification practices (Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019), and generally fostered a managerialist, uncaring climate – even ensuring that widespread ‘diversity, equality and inclusion’ efforts often end up protecting the center of power (Ahmed, 2021). This uncaringness has been exacerbated in the Covid pandemic, among other things, through the insistence that teaching is ‘simply’ moved online (Plotnikof & Utoft, 2022) followed by the equally simplifying insistence, later in the pandemic, that we return to business as usual. The impact of the pandemic has fallen most heavily on women and other minoritized academics for many reasons, including skewed teaching responsibilities, skewed care burdens at home (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020) and gendered dynamics regarding emotional care for students (Gaudet, Marchand, Bujaki & Bourgeault, 2022).

In spite of these contemporary contextual factors, teaching about gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, socioeconomic inequality, and many other critical, social-justice related topics is still happening at universities. And rightly so. Our classrooms are filled with students with increasingly diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, with gender and sexual identities that

do not fall neatly within heteronormative binaries, and who are vocal about their mental health and accessibility needs. They are critical thinkers through their connections with communities with which they identify and they have a vocabulary to match. They bring their struggles for social justice into the classroom, understanding knowledge production as inherently political and calling for a decolonization of university curricula (De Jong, Icaza, Vázquez & Withaekx, 2017). Nevertheless, our curricula will sometimes confront them with (canonical) materials that are now deemed offensive or hurtful to specific groups of people or confront them with perspectives that do not always neatly align with their own political positioning. The classroom is the space where these frictions play out, since as teachers, we need to also allow room for those students who are more conservative, or even reactionary in their views. To be a university teacher in 2023 means having to navigate all these political and ideological positions with care and empathy, while critically reflecting on our own traditions, the canon and our relatively powerful position as teachers.

Therefore, in this double special issue, we zoom in on the classroom as a space of teaching feminism and feminist teaching in light of the mentioned contextual circumstances. What does it mean, and how do we manage to teach feminist theory and to practice feminist pedagogy (as well as related critical theories and pedagogies) in times of ‘wokeness’ and ‘anti-wokeness’, neoliberalization, and the (presumably) late stages of a pandemic?

Feminist pedagogy represents as much politics and an ethic, as a didactical practice and approach stressing principles such as transformative, collective learning, engaging personal experience, and the interrogation of power differences and epistemological stances (e.g. Crabtree, Sapp & Licona, 2009; Penny Light, Nicholas & Bondy, 2015; Webb, Allen & Walker, 2002). Mobilizing the long-standing tradition and extensive literature on feminist pedagogy in higher education is not about a defensive stance on what or how we teach, rather, we wish to show that feminist pedagogy—despite the contemporary moment—is a rich field and practice that thrives and constantly evolves. With this special issue, then, we wish to facilitate a deep-dive into current feminist pedagogy in higher education and contribute to the field’s continued development. To that effect, we welcome submissions from both teachers and students (see below) that draw on experiences from the classroom to examine how the structural and cultural forces described above affect feminist teaching in order to bring renewed attention to and a revitalization of (the urgency of) feminist pedagogy in higher education. In other words, we expect submissions to explicitly discuss these contextual factors, and how they play out locally in different national and academic settings, when addressing these and/or related questions:

- When practicing feminist pedagogy, how do/should teachers deal with **vulnerability**, **embodiment**, and **emotions** in the classroom, including their own?
- How do feminist teachers deal with teaching topics that may be potentially **triggering** to themselves?
- What would an **intersectional** feminist pedagogy look like in practice?
- How does the **positionality** of teachers and/or students affect their engagement in the classroom? For example, how can White feminist university teachers employ the pedagogical writings of Black women intellectuals, such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde, while avoiding **whitewashing**?
- If the classroom becomes a **safe** and/or **brave space** for marginalized students and faculty, what happens when we leave and enter the wider, uncaring **neoliberal university** contexts?

- How do feminist teachers deal with the messy reality of **translating into practice** feminist pedagogical intentions in university classrooms?
- What does (exam, MA thesis, PhD) **supervision** and student **mentoring** look like from a feminist pedagogical perspective?
- How is feminist pedagogy part of – or how may it be mobilized as part of – the **decolonization** of universities, including of curricula?
- What are the **impacts** of feminist pedagogy in academia, on students, on teachers, and beyond the classroom?
- What do teachers and students take with them from the feminist classroom, and how do they mobilize it in **activism** to achieve **societal transformation**?
- How do feminist teachers maneuver when faced with **anti-gender** and **anti-wokeness** discourses in the classroom *as well as* social-justice conscious and/or personally marginalized students?
- How might **quantifying technologies** of the neoliberal university (e.g. exam grading and student evaluations of teaching) be reconceptualized from a feminist pedagogical perspective?
- How might feminist pedagogy be employed in the ‘university teaching qualifications’ (UTQ)?
- What does or should feminist pedagogy in the university setting, and/or the feminist classroom, look and feel like from the **students’ perspective**?
- How can we make feminist classrooms **accessible** and **inclusive** to everyone?

## PREPARING YOUR SUBMISSION

The issue will be a double special issue. We welcome two types of submissions: articles and essays. Both may take a scholarly or non-traditional form, and be theoretical, commentary, empirical, poetic and/or artistic. Full-length articles contain a maximum of 6500 words and essays between 500-2500 words (incl. bibliography). We especially encourage essay submissions from university students and/or student instructors, so please circulate this call amongst your students or peers.

Please submit an abstract of 500 words for research papers or 200 words for essays by the 1st of June 2021. Indicate in the abstract the expected length of the final piece and include the contact details of all of the contributors in the abstract document. Abstracts (and manuscripts) can be written in English or Dutch. Note that the initial acceptance of an abstract does not guarantee publication and that the manuscripts will undergo a double-blind review process. All accepted contributions will be published fully open access. *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* is published by Amsterdam University Press: [Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies | Amsterdam University Press \(aup.nl\)](https://www.aup.nl/). See *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*’ author guidelines for instructions and requirements of all published formats: [Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies | Author guidelines](https://www.aup.nl/tijdschrift-voor-genderstudies/author-guidelines)

We strive for diversity among our contributors in terms of career stage, disciplines, self-identification, national location, and scholarly or activist affiliation. We are happy to

accommodate different accessibility needs or diverse styles of communication. Please get in touch with (one of) the editors for any of these issues.

Please email your abstract proposal as a Word file to all of the guest editors:

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## SUBMISSION TIMELINE

June 1, 2023: Abstract submission deadline.

July 15, 2023: Notification of acceptance/rejection and feedback from the guest editors for accepted abstracts.

October 1, 2023: First version manuscript submission deadline.

October 1 – November 15, 2023: Double-blind review process plus feedback from the guest editors.

February 1, 2024: Full and finalized manuscript submission deadline.

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