

Research project

The research project is a multi-part assignment. You must complete all parts in order to pass the course.

PHASE ONE: DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Students begin by brainstorming a problem or question to explore in their projects. Usually, this begins with a topical or geographic interest, such as the sexual politics of sports or understanding the experiences of the South Asian diaspora in Fiji. Then it is necessary to narrow down the object of study in ways that will make the research manageable. Rather than covering the whole history of sports in the South Asian diaspora, for example, is there a specific sport in a specific context that reveals the politics of sexuality in particularly useful ways? Has there been a particular local controversy over gender and race in Fiji that reveals useful insights about the South Asian diasporic experience there?

Grading of the assignment will favor in-depth analysis of a narrow theme rather than discussion of a topic in broad strokes.

PHASE TWO: RESEARCH AND SOURCE EVALUATION

Researching the academic literature can be difficult. From the outset, I want to discourage heavy reliance on simple google searches and internet articles. Finding scholarly sources takes time and patience, as does weeding through and evaluating these sources. Browse the library online databases for articles. There is the general Academic Search Complete, but also specialized databases focused on gender, US minority communities, geographic regions, as well as discipline-specific databases (sociology, linguistics, etc.). Search for books through Cruzcat or Google Books/Scholar.

Evaluating the quality and appropriateness of your sources is crucial to building your arguments. In this course, we have focused largely on feminist and queer-critical texts generated in disciplines like anthropology, literary studies, and cultural studies. These disciplines are highly reflective about the contested meanings of key terms like gender, sex, sexuality, fe/male, transgender, transsexual, diaspora, race, empire, nature, etc. Are your sources too? If not, how might the essay or book you're using look different if it had a more critical perspective? Would the descriptions or data it presents still be useful, or do you have a criticism of the essay's conclusions based on its assumptions? Be aware if the authors are journalists or popular nonfiction writers and generally try to find materials that engage with feminist, postcolonial and queer studies methods.

PHASE THREE: ARGUMENT PREPARATION

The first part of the assignment to submit is a **thesis, outline, and annotated bibliography, due May 16**. This assignment should not be completed in a rushed manner. Please venture a

hypothesis about your research object at this point, one that is **specific** enough that it is not obvious or already answered by the basic assumptions/framework you will use for your analysis. Additionally, clarify what objects you wish to analyze and hone in on a very focused point rather than generalizing. For example, someone interested in the sports theme above could end up with the following proposed thesis: 'Gurinder Chadha's 2003 film *Bend It Like Beckham* depicts interracial desire between two adolescent football players. Although the film attempts to simultaneously critique the homophobia and racism of British society, it uses a generational story that relies on liberal, developmentalist assumptions about the backwardness of South Asian diasporic communities. This returns sexuality to a colonial framework despite the film's interest in drawing upon the normative association of sports with national inclusion.'

Attempt to give sentence-level detail in your outlining – how do supporting sections and paragraphs help to build specific parts of the thesis? The outline should cover the complete scope of the paper. At this point, evaluate whether the outline themes can fill about 20 pages of text.

For the annotated bibliography, write a paragraph about each of 5-10 **scholarly** (not regular print media or internet articles) research sources you have identified as useful for your topic. It's OK if you spend time with a source and decide to discard it; your annotation can explain the weaknesses as necessary. Also identify at least two sources from the syllabus you wish to reference (you may annotate these more briefly).

PHASE FOUR: 10-PAGE DRAFT

The **10-page first draft** of writing is due on **May 30. Please bring three hard copies of your draft to class.** We will complete a draft review exercise in which you will exchange papers with two other students and give constructive feedback on the writing and research. Neel will also give you feedback at this stage.

PHASE FIVE: PRESENTATION

Our final class meeting (location TBA) will include 15-minute presentations on each research topic. Please spell out clearly your thesis and why the project matters in relation to the course themes. With instructor approval, you may do something creative for the presentation as long as you also have a part explaining the intervention to the class.

PHASE SIX: FINAL DRAFT

The **final paper is due on June 13.** It should follow these guidelines:

- 1) A-range papers will have a strong thesis and demonstrate a deep understanding of course concepts to provide a unique interpretation of your object of analysis. B-range papers will argue a defensible, analytic thesis, which will provide a strong interpretation; however, they may stick more closely to description or may miss some of the necessary theory, history, or geography for

a complete analysis. Papers falling below the B-range will likely suffer from a tendency to summarize (rather than analyze) readings, making generalizations that cannot be supported by evidence provided, use of “book-report” style and organization, or a lack of clarity or an arguable thesis.

2) Make sure your paper theme relates directly to themes of sexuality, empire, and diaspora (in any time period or geographic context). Use adequate evidence from course readings and research materials, quoting directly and properly citing articles and books. It may be useful to cite our introductory readings in order to frame your thesis. You are encouraged to cite two readings from the syllabus plus around five well-selected academic research sources.

3) Follow the honor code. The arguments and analysis in your papers should consist of your ideas formed by synthesizing and analyzing our course readings and lectures with your independent research. This means that if you consult websites you must cite them; it also means that you must distinguish your own arguments from those you come across in any/all materials you cite. If you directly copy words, phrases, or passages from another source, enclose them in quotation marks or offset (indent) them as embedded quotations with proper citation. You are prohibited from submitting work written by others and passing it off as your own.

4) The paper (not including bibliography) should be approximately 20 pages using standard formatting (12pt times new roman font, double-spacing, 1" margins). Do not add a separate title page.

5) Submit the paper as an email attachment (MS Word or OpenOffice are the preferred formats) to neel@ucsc.edu by 4pm on June 13.