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Mosaico feminista
Tejiendo conocimiento a través de las culturas
Feminist Mosaic
Weaving Knowledge Across Cultures

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Appendix A

Feminist pedagogies for online teaching

Teaching a graduate seminar on feminist theories in the Fall of 2021 semester as a member of an online intellectual community, engaging in class discussions via Zoom, and weaving knowledge together was an invitation to explore creativity during the COVID-19 pandemic. We started each one of our classes with the “check in” exercise, which has been a routine for me in my teaching for many years. Checking in means that each one of us (the students and the professor) would take turns and share one or two words to describe how we were doing; the professor would be the last one to check in. “I am tired” and “I am exhausted” or “I think I am sick” were common ways to check in during the challenging days of the pandemic. The exercise helped us learn about how we were doing, individually and collectively, but also to explore different expressions of honest human engagement and connection via Zoom. Redefining vulnerability as strength and a possibility to explore authenticity helped us explore ways to communicate online and to learn to be fully human during challenging times. We similarly did our individual “check out” at the end of each class to wrap up our class discussions, to share about how each one of us was doing, and to weave lessons and the emerging knowledge after surprisingly stimulating class discussions.

This was the course description of our *Feminist Theories* graduate seminar:

This course offers an introduction to critical feminist thought and it is informed by some of the most relevant contributions of feminist scholars across disciplines. The professor hopes this course will help students engage with these readings, which are mainly inspired by feminist scholarship examining contrasting (yet interrelated) areas, including but not limited to women of color and feminist epistemologies, race relations and colonization, violence, disability, technology, transgender lives and feminism.

This course is not the last word in feminist theorizing, and it will not cover other relevant topics included in more introductory or advanced courses in feminist theory. However, the course is inspired by the possibility of nurturing the kind of intellectual inquiry that is in conversation with a genuine sense of social responsibility promoting social justice, change, and healing—locally, nationally, and internationally. The course hopes to contribute to the professional development of students, especially as they think about their own intellectual projects and academic goals.

The feminist seminar incorporated freewriting exercises, which followed the customary check in. The freewriting exercise involved the following steps:

- (a) students and the professor took turns to briefly share their individual reactions to the readings assigned for that day's class. In general, anger, confusion, curiosity, gratitude, among many other reactions were shared by each one of us;
- (b) the professor took meticulous notes while listening to each student;
- (c) the professor was the last one to share her own personal reaction to the readings and included that as well in her notes;
- (d) the professor then summarized what the entire group shared, suggested a few potential writing prompts, and then the group collectively decided on a writing prompt;
- (e) the professor and the students turn off the video and the sound and wrote individually in response to the prompt. The professor highlighted the importance of writing freely—writing, writing, writing judgment-free, grammar-free, shame-free, etc.—for 5 minutes. She encouraged

- the students: “don’t think much, just keep writing, writing, writing”;
- (f) the professor offered options to students, either writing by hand or using their laptop;
 - (g) the professor kept track of time, and when time was up, she asked each student to select a sentence or a reflection from the text they just wrote and send that via email to her. Each student sent the sentence or paragraph they would like to share with the group;
 - (h) the professor created a Word document to organize the sentences anonymously, at times following a poetic format;
 - (i) the professor shared the document next class and invited students to reflect collectively.

We, the contributors who gave life to this anthology and the editor, engaged in the above exercise every day we met, online, in the Fall of 2021. We engaged in the freewriting exercise for the first time in person the last day of the semester but followed all the same steps as indicated above. That last day of class, our group reflected about what we have learned during the semester, and we collectively came up with this prompt: “What is feminism?” Except for two students, all submitted their text, and I included my own (the last reflection in the text). The professor shared the document before the end of class to wrap up a fantastic semester; Appendix B shows that collective text.

This freewriting exercise is inspired by the freewriting activities we engaged in our *Feminist Writing Salon* at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (from Spring of 2020 to Spring of 2021), and also as a way to cope and process collectively, for example, police brutality and anti-Black racism among other relevant social and cultural events. I had the honor of co-founding that feminist space as well as co-facilitating these freewriting exercises with two esteemed feminist scholars, Dr. Pavithra Vasudevan and Dr. Nnenna Odum, and I will be forever grateful for their feminist solidarity, creativity, engagement, and friendship.

I have used this freewriting exercise in different professional settings, for example, while co-facilitating workshops for colleagues who teach a Difficult Dialogues course at UT Austin. In one of those professional engagements, I had the opportunity to meet Sarah Ropp, who is now Dr. Sarah Ropp at the University of Pennsylvania. Years after our first meeting, Dr. Sarah Ropp kindly

prepared a document explaining the ways we have used the exercise, especially during challenging times. As a way to support students and faculty process intense emotions caused by campus unrest and protest around the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, she describes the freewriting activity I have used in the past. See Appendix C for a detailed description of the exercise. I am grateful to Dr. Sarah Ropp for preparing this information and sharing with others, especially during painful and intense times.

I hope that the information shared in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C would be of benefit to educators and other agents of social change who believe in feminist inspired creative writing, and its powerful potential, individually and collectively.

Revised and finalized in Uvalde,
a few hours after summer solstice 2024.