

Interactive Session - Feminist Frontiers

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Abstract – This interactive session explores the feminist frontiers of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. The goals of the session are 1) to assist participants in developing their definitions of feminism; 2) to assist participants in developing their definitions of feminist pedagogy; and 3) to encourage participants to begin to explore specific ways to implement feminist pedagogy in their classrooms and ways it may be useful to engineering education. The session will be of interest to faculty who are interested in new pedagogical methods and/or increasing diversity in their classrooms. Together we will consider our current understanding of feminism and review scholarly distinctions between types of feminism. Then we will explore the tenets of feminist pedagogy and how it is implemented in the classroom. Finally, we will discuss how engineering education can benefit from feminist pedagogy. Examples and resources will be shared with participants to make the ideas more concrete.

Index Terms – Pedagogy, Feminism, Teaching/Learning

INVITATION

The “F” words – feminist, feminism, feminine – are what we call “loaded terms.” They evoke a strong emotional response and carry many different connotations which are dependent on one’s life experiences. People claim the title “feminist” for many different reasons related to their connotation of the words. On the other hand, others eschew the concept, again for many different reasons related to their connotations and meanings. Despite the variety of personal meanings, the scholarly literature on feminist theory and feminist pedagogy lays out a set of tenets for each type of feminism. Just as when someone tells you they are “Protestant” you know something about them (they are not Catholic or Atheist), but not really much. Are they literalists in interpreting the Bible? Do they believe in infant baptism? When they say they are “United Methodist,” you may know more about them, e.g. they are not literalists and they do believe in infant baptism. The label “feminist” is similar to the label “Protestant;” it conveys some, but not much, information. Just as there are different types of Protestants, there are different types of feminisms, such as liberal, cultural, radical, and poststructural. The parallel goes deeper in that a person may claim the label, but not believe some of the particular tenets of the group.

In this interactive session, we will explore several types of feminism, clarifying personal meanings through considering the meanings and uses in scholarly research. Participants will learn the tenets of these feminisms and consider their personal support for them.

The next step is to consider the implications of teaching from a feminist standpoint, using what is known as “feminist pedagogy.” Feminist pedagogy is not simply a collection of teaching strategies, but is enacted through the specific implementation of strategies. Cooperative learning, for example, can be implemented in a feminist way or a non-feminist way. In this session, we will discuss the tenets of feminist pedagogy and how they are implemented in the teaching/learning process. We will consider specific examples from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

In the final section of the session, participants and facilitators will reflect on how STEM education could benefit from feminist pedagogy and how individual faculty members can begin to implement it.

This session will appeal to any faculty member who is interested in applying new pedagogical methods. In addition, since feminist pedagogy attempts to address issues of those that may be marginalized by the dominant group¹, faculty interested in increasing diversity in the classroom will find this session useful. We invite you to join us in this thought-provoking session.

REFERENCES

- [1] Mayberry, M. (1998). Reproductive and Resistant Pedagogies: The Comparative Roles of Collaborative Learning and Feminist Pedagogy in Science Education, *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 443-459.

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