

UC SANTA BARBARA

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[Andrea Estrada](#)

UCSB Conference to Explore the Evolution of Feminist Studies

Scholars from around the country will gather at UC Santa Barbara for a three-day conference focused on feminist studies as an area of academic inquiry. Topics will include trends in the field; constructions of feminist histories; and future directions for research, curriculum, and pedagogy.

The conference, titled "The Past, Present, and Future of Feminist Studies," will begin at 7 a.m. on Thursday, February 9, in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 HSSB, in Santa Barbara. The events are free, and most are open to the public.

The purpose of the conference is twofold. First, it brings together a community of scholars who will present their own work while reflecting on trajectories in the field. In addition, it provides an opportunity to consider the transformations within UCSB's own training of Ph.D. students.

"The conference celebrates a program that no longer exists, and marks the transition to a Ph.D. program in Feminist Studies at UCSB," said Eileen Boris, Hull Professor and Chair of Feminist Studies. The program to which Boris refers is the Pre-Doctoral Dissertation Program, which began in the 1990's, and every year brought two doctoral students from universities across the country -- and even around the world -- to study at UCSB. The students had the opportunity to complete their dissertations, gain further mentoring, and teach one undergraduate course.

"It was very exciting because as a small women's studies program, as we were then, we got the latest cutting-edge research from up and coming scholars," Boris explained. "It was a very unique and innovative program -- particularly for the time." The dissertation program ended with the inauguration of UCSB's doctoral program in Feminist Studies.

The conference is organized around the doctoral program's areas of emphasis, which include genders and sexualities, productive and reproductive labors, and race and nation. Panels will address those topics, as well as ways in which women's studies as an arena of knowledge production has changed and expanded over time.

"Feminist Studies has its own subjects and questions that draw on methods from different disciplines, and is always changing," said Boris. "The field has expanded both in areas and topics. What has emerged are intersectional and transnational approaches to knowledge that look at the subject of woman or gender not as set in time and place, but as fluid and defined and redefined through a whole range of categories, such as gender and sexuality, class, race and ethnicity, disability and ability, and religion. There just isn't a universal notion of woman and of women's studies."

As women's movements and feminist thoughts have changed over time, and as certain kinds of intellectual trends have impacted social, political, and cultural thought, so, too, the field has changed with the introduction of post-structuralism, new racial studies, queer studies, work on transnationalism and globalization, and a return to a more robust understanding of class and economic materialities, Boris continued.

"All this has impacted the field," she said. "So we're taking the epistemological question of what the field is, where it has been, and where it is going. And we're doing it within the framework of the broad areas in which we initially organized our program."

More information about the conference, including a complete schedule, is available at <http://ucsbfeministstudiesconference.wordpress.com>.

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About UC Santa Barbara

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