



# Book Review: Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online



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**Book Review**

## ABSTRACT

This book review critically examines *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online* (Howard et al., 2025), identifying it as a crucial intervention that bridges a significant gap in contemporary scholarship by envisioning online learning through the lens of feminist pedagogy. The collection challenges dominant instructional design norms and technological culture, underscoring fundamental values of care, equity, reflexivity, and social justice.

Structured into four thematic parts, the book consistently emphasises praxis, showcasing practical tools like social annotation and cryptoparties to foster equity and collaboration in e-spaces. Its primary strength lies in modelling feminist pedagogical principles through collaborative and student-centred approaches. While praised for its diverse contributions, the review notes some chapters could benefit from more analytical engagement with structural barriers to feminist agency in institutional settings. It acknowledges potential conceptual repetitions for novice readers. Nevertheless, the book is considered a vital resource for all e-learning stakeholders, promoting value-driven, ethical, and transformative online learning environments.

## KEYWORDS

feminism, feminist praxis, equity and social justice, humanising e-learning, feminist pedagogy, online learning environments.

## HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

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## INTRODUCTION

any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged. (bell hooks, 1994, p. 8)

E-learning modalities are increasingly embracing educational innovations that pave the way for equity, inclusion and student-centeredness. However, most existing scholarship focuses on instructional design, scalability, efficiency, assessment and evaluation, as well as modes of teaching and learning that cater to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While research studies have focused on how e-learning empowers female students, the aspect of feminist pedagogy itself has been undervalued so far. *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online*, by Howard et al. (2025), is a contribution that bridges a gap in dire need of contemporary scholarship. The collection serves as a critical intervention that envisions online learning from the lens of feminist pedagogy. In this way, the dominant norms of online instructional design and technological culture are questioned by introducing feminist pedagogical traditions that underscore the values of care, equity, reflexivity, and social justice in discussion. These values can be achieved through care, collaboration, and co-creation.

The book is divided into four parts: *Promoting Connections, Reflexivity, and Embodiment* (chapters 1-4); *Building Equity, Cooperation, and Co-Education* (chapters 5-8); *Creating Cultures of Care in the Online Classroom* (chapters 9-11); and *Interrogating Knowledge Production, Social Inequality, and Power* (chapters 12-14). The thematic organisation helps bridge theory and practice by incorporating modelling tools that facilitate online educators in celebrating feminist values through the employment of technological tools, thereby making reflection and practice go hand in hand. Echoes of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and bell hooks' intersectional feminism resonate when pedagogical practices that excavate trauma, digital surveillance and the politics of knowledge production are elaborated. Collecting the voices of scholars and practitioners from multiple contexts, this interdisciplinary, rich collection calls for reimaging online learning platforms as spaces that move beyond the myopic scenario of content delivery through redundant technical infrastructure. Community engagement for a more inclusive and transformative education is emphasised through the adoption of feminist pedagogy. After all, feminist pedagogy has the potential to establish educational justice, providing a transformative alternative to existing practices in online education.

### **Part 1: Promoting Connections, Reflexivity, and Embodiment**

The opening section explores how feminist pedagogy can foster deeper connections within and beyond the virtual classroom. Contributors emphasise the importance of grounding learning in community engagement, reflexivity, and embodied experience. Chapter 1, by Letizia Guglielmo, titled "Feminist Pedagogy and Collaborative Meaning Making," sets the ground for the theoretical underpinnings of feminist pedagogy through reframing discussion boards as dynamic spaces of co-creation with a room for feminist intervention. Guglielmo offers five rules of thumb that shape her vision of feminist pedagogy: keep technological tools simple, accessible, and consistent; establish and reinforce collaborative meaning making and co-teaching as central to the course design and to student success; decentre and distribute authority,

expertise, and voice; envision multiple ways in; and make your feminist pedagogy visible and transparent. She believes that “performing our commitment to decentring and disrupting hierarchy is essential to transformative feminist pedagogy in online learning” (p.33). Overall, the chapter focuses on “continued transformation of online distance learning as equitable and meaningful” (p.33) In chapter 2 titled “Co-Watching as Feminist Transformative Pedagogy”, Jo Hemlatha, Saanchi Saxena, and Rujuta Date, through a decolonial feminist perspective, delve into the questions: “What do transformative, inclusive, feminist learning spaces look like, and how do we make one of our own ?”(p.37). Through employing documentaries on sex work, they find synchronous co-watching to be a reflexive feminist pedagogical tool that excavates care by developing a sense of community. They “provide space for engagement that goes beyond 'formal' modes of learning by recognizing how ranting as critiquing is a legitimate academic practice” (p.48). Rebecca Cottrell and Ann Obermann, in chapter three titled “Collaborative Online Course Design”, challenge “traditional course design structures” that “have a greater focus on rubrics standards, and structures” (p.68) to propose a relational course design by focusing on feminist pedagogical principles of Weiler (1991) that include relational and conversational processes; faculty, designer, and student voices; strength and experience foci; and pedagogy and value-driven designs. They provide “two examples of application: a faculty course design summer institute model and an independent study with students collaborating as designers model” (p.68). Stephanie Rollag Yoon and her co-authors promote discussion templates that **prioritise** community and inclusion over transactional dialogue in Chapter 4, titled "Feminist Moves for Community in Online Discussions." They conclude that “relational-focused small groups, rather than transactional discussions, provide opportunities to expand connections, increasing student persistence rates” (p.84). Overall, the key takeaways of the section are collaboration through chat, discussion, synchronous online watching and dialogues for promoting a feminist online pedagogy.

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## **Part Two: Building Equity, Cooperation, and Co-Education**

This section centres the student experience for a transformative experience through engaging in feminist pedagogical practices that lead towards consciousness raising through feminist praxis. Bridget Kriner, in chapter 5 titled “Building Participatory Spaces in Online Classrooms”, employs bell hook’s (1993) engaged feminist critical pedagogy (Bondy, 2015) with classroom as a participatory space to adapt it to asynchronous online learning environments through the “intentional use of formative assessments” (p.91). Kriner concludes that transactional distance can be decreased through feminist pedagogical tenets, i.e., community building and knowledge co-creation through employing assessment tools like “social annotation, interpolated videos, and wikis” (p.100). Xinyue Ren in Chapter 6 titled Technology Integration in Online Feminist Pedagogy employs Grissom-Broughton’s (2020) definition of feminist pedagogy to describe it as “a liberatory way of teaching to develop democratic and transformative learning experiences in which students can be empowered to make a social change” (p.105) as well as refers to Cannizzo (2021) who considers a feminist structured classroom inspirational towards subverting the traditional power structures between teachers and students. The chapter contributes to faculty professional development in implementing feminist pedagogy through the lens of TPACK framework proposed by Koehler and

Mishra (2006). The feminist pedagogy-based TPACK model suggests “contextualised learning support, meaningful networking, and mentoring opportunities” (p.115) to provide “active learning for social change” (p.117). Ashley Glassburn, in chapter 7, entitled “Consciousness Raising and Trauma-Informed Practice”, critiques dominant instructional models and proposes trauma-informed alternatives for asynchronous courses. The trauma-informed practice in online settings is beneficial “to build robust online learning communities that prepare students to handle big conversations, such as those on sexual assault, racism, addiction, religion, and abuse” (p.133). In continuation of the same thematic content, Clare Daniel, in chapter 8, “Social Annotation as Feminist Praxis”, employs a social annotation tool, *Hypothes.is* (<https://web.hypothes.is/>) for synchronous discussions in the first-year honours colloquium about sexuality, knowledge production, and education “for enacting feminist pedagogical praxis by disrupting the hierarchy of the traditional classroom, fostering co-education, and building equity among students and instructor” (p.138). Daniel concludes that social annotation tools can demonstrate “a more just and collective way of producing and circulating knowledge (p.149).” Overall, Section 2 delves deeper into feminist pedagogy ideals, paving the way for spaces that uphold feminist praxis by going beyond theory.

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### **Part Three: Creating Cultures of Care in the Online Classroom**

The third part emphasises humanising online learning through feminist pedagogy. The authors reject punitive, top-down instructional policies and instead propose student-centred practices that prioritise wellness of humanity. For example, in Chapter 9, “Humanising Online Learning with Feminist Pedagogy, Gurjar & Gurjar uphold the ideal of humanising online learning by employing intersectional feminist pedagogy (Anzaldúa, 2015; hooks, 2000; Lorde, 1984) to celebrate humanity by honouring people’s otherness (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). In this process, they challenge “racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary” borders “to connect with, nurture, and heal” and to “find connection, community, and a sense of belonging” (p.153) through celebrating intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991) in online settings. For this purpose, they use photovoice to determine students’ socio-cultural needs, elicit evocative experiences and render “a space for dialogue on complex topics such as marginalization, racism, political violence, gender equity, human rights, and other socio-cultural, economic, and political issues that affect individuals” (p.167). They consider bridging a foundational concept in feminist pedagogy and bridge online learning with feminist pedagogy themselves.

Rognlie, Frazier, and Siler in “What Does It Mean to “Humanize” Online Teaching” (chapter 10) advocate for co-constructed policies that humanise course expectations around participation, attendance, and late work. The inhuman biases that underlie the design process of LMS or other online practices must be challenged along with “a critical eye on the colonialist, misogynist, and racist history of projects aiming to qualify humanity and to humanize others” (p.184). The last chapter of this section titled “Care, Identity, and Empowerment in Emergency Remote Teaching” by Jaramillo Cherez and Romero-Hall is a continuation of the previous chapters by reiterating “students as individuals with complex, intersecting identities and understanding that students’ personal circumstances and contexts can either support or hinder their learning experiences” (p.200). Through presenting their findings from

Covid-19 times, Cherrez and Hall argue that care practices support students in crisis times. Overall, this section reaffirms that online classrooms must be built on compassionate principles, which should direct the learning process instead of an unreflective existing design directing humans.

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#### **Part Four: Interrogating Knowledge Production, Social Inequality, and Power**

The final section zooms out to address systemic injustice, examining the dynamics in knowledge production that lead to social inequities. Karen Barton, in Chapter 12 titled "Using Feminist Pedagogy in Online Geography Courses", employs feminist pedagogy by using a story and web mapping software in a geography course to enhance students' awareness of the misrepresentation of African literacy, based on their undervalued cartography. The focus is to enable students to challenge and, therefore, subvert colonial cartographies by replacing them with "more inclusive cartographies of language systems in West Africa" (p.208). For this purpose, the intersectional and inclusive approach is considered liberating, paving the way for sustainability. Chapter 13 titled "Cryptoparties as Sites of Feminist Pedagogy" by Sarah Payne et al., introduces "cryptoparties" that critique and refuse systems of power, thereby becoming a site of agency. Through the use of Zoom against the Machine (ZAtM), the threat modelling exercise and the collaborative community norms embodied feminist and critical approaches to learning in this chapter. The authors conclude that "Cryptoparty participants might need more explicit scaffolding and support to engage fully with the critical and consciousness-raising aspects of cryptoparties (p.229)." The last chapter by Jacquelyne Thoni Howard, Surveillance and Data in Online Classrooms, poses a "question whether feminist pedagogical practices can coexist in online courses when using surveillance and data collection tools to monitor students' behaviour (p.234)." The chapter concludes with a compelling critique of surveillance technologies in education and their role in perpetuating hierarchical power structures, accompanied by a vital call to action for instructors and institutions to resist unethical data practices in digital learning environments. Overall, Part 4 explores the **application** of feminist pedagogies to foster agency by decolonising the latest technologies from inhumane practices such as surveillance and dominance.

## **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Emphasis on praxis turns out to be the key strength of *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online*. The contributors not only theorise about feminist pedagogy but also model it through collaborative writing and watching, community-engaged discussion and research, and student-centred course design. The range of tools—such as social annotation, participatory assessments, trauma-informed flipped classrooms, and cryptoparties—renders e-learning practitioners a vision to foster equity, bridging, and collaboration in e-spaces. Additionally, the diversity of experiences across online learning systems and countries makes the book valuable both for novice and experienced online stakeholders, as well as those who orient their school of thought around feminism and women's studies.

In this way, the book is a significant contribution not only to critical digital pedagogy but also to feminist vision in online education. This is culminated through the interdisciplinarity of themes and practices, as well as the diversity

and geographical spread of the contributors and their praxis. The primary contribution lies in challenging and thereby disrupting the hierarchies in online learning, which is not often discussed, and offering alternatives such as promoting care through the same technocratic models in vogue, thus centring learners' voices. Additionally, by foregrounding post-COVID-19 pedagogy as a transformative phase in e-learning, the book highlights the ever-evolving nature and transformative potential of online learning.

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Of course, no book is without limitations, and *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online* is no exception. While a wide variety of perspectives are offered, some chapters may feel more descriptive and less analytical, with limited critical engagement with the structural barriers that limit feminist agency in institutional settings (e.g., adjunct precarity, surveillance capitalism, and neoliberal metrics of success). A more nuanced debate about the divergence between feminist pedagogy ideals and institutional realities would have enriched the book's discussion. Additionally, each chapter explains feminist pedagogy in its own way, thereby developing multiple and sometimes repetitive strands for the broader concept. The interplay of feminist pedagogy and humanist pedagogy in Part 3 may confuse novice readers who struggle to differentiate between inclusive humanist education for all and feminist pedagogy. Nevertheless, *the collection* is a vital resource for inculcating educators with a vision for care-oriented, inclusive, and justice-oriented, transformative online learning environments.

An explicit discussion about the constraints women face due to institutional and/or structural barriers would have strengthened the overall theme of the book by focusing on how to implement feminist pedagogies, especially in a world increasingly dominated by data-driven AI and corporatised surveillance-based systems. Still, the book contributes to feminist thought in digital spaces, particularly through promoting design justice that challenges traditional design practices of undermining marginalised people in online settings (DJN, 2018). All e-learning stakeholders, be they teachers/students or educational technologists/curators, instructional designers and administrators of programmes would benefit from the work by focusing more on value-driven design as well as ethical, liberatory and inclusive online practices.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

Overall, the collection brings feminist pedagogy into dialogue with the existing e-learning stakeholders as well as the real-time challenges in the educational design of online and distance teaching and learning. With the ever-expanding e-learning vistas around the world, the book voices the praxis vision of feminist pedagogy by going beyond the notion of traditional 'women, for women, by women' feminism for the collaborative construction of knowledge disseminated through care and equity.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no competing interests.

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