

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT PODCAST SERIES:
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES:
TEACHING WITH THE GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT**

**Topic: Teaching, Pedagogy, and Uses of the Archive in the Context of the
Classroom**

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Intro: Welcome to *Contextualizing Feminist Voices: Teaching With the Global Feminisms Project*. This series is focused on teaching, pedagogy, and uses of the archive in the context of the classroom. Designed with a special emphasis on educators, in each episode you will learn from instructors who have used the project's interviews in their courses, and about activities and resources for incorporating the archive into your class.

Maddie House: Today we will be joined by Dr. Janaya Lasker-Ferretti, who currently serves as coordinator of second-year Italian courses in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. She has published on women and futurism, and her current scholarly interests include language, pedagogy, oral history, and comics. Janaya holds a PhD in Italian Studies from the University of California at Berkeley.

Maddie House: Thank you so much for joining us today. I wanted to start by asking you: Could you briefly describe the course that you use the archive in?

Janaya Lasker-Ferretti: Of course, and thank you for having me. So, the course that I'm teaching and using the interviews in is Italian 232, which is the fourth semester of the language requirement here at the University of Michigan. We have a language requirement in LS&A, so students take 4 semesters of a language, and so this is the very last language course of the requirement.

MH: Thank you for sharing. And how do you use the material in the archive in this course?

JLF: So since it's 232 and it's typically a coordinated section, we have certain grammar structures that we need to absolutely study in this course. So usually we have the grammar textbook, and in this grammar textbook, typically you would have a lot of cultural readings or, you know, literary readings, and basically what I've done is I've just gutted that and taken all of that out, and instead I used the interviews from the archive as the cultural content of the course. So therefore, everything we do culturally is related to the interviews.

MH: That's a really innovative approach. Seems like you're really redesigning elementary language learning. And what do you think is the most effective about the way you use Global Feminisms materials?

JLF: I think it's effective to just make it the focus of the entire course. So I should say that I have been using- we listened to two full interviews, so the interviews that we have been listening to, probably each one is around 45 minutes to an hour, and then, you know, I break it up into kind of 15-minute sections. Everything's divided into chapters and they do 5 chapters. So they're still doing their grammar, but for their content, they have to listen to two parts of the interview, and we do it of course at the same time. But they prepare by, you know, I created a Quizlet which is a way to learn some of the vocabulary and I take the words from the interview to prepare them to study, and I also alternate the way in which they consume the interviews. So for example, there are four parts. We're going to have to watch two of those parts and then they read two of those parts. So it goes watching it, reading it, watching it, reading it, just to develop those different skills of listening and also reading. So I think it's effective because it also becomes the sole focus of our work culturally. And then, too, within these interviews we can also find a plethora of examples of the grammar structures that they're studying. So the two go hand in hand because we can always use that- the text- to look more closely at language.

MH: Fantastic. And which interviewees are you featuring?

JLF: Yeah, so I am using the interview by Michela Murgia, who is a famous feminist in Italy and she comes from Sardinia, and also I'm using the interview of Valentina Coletta, who is a trans activist. And so, one thing that in pairing these two, using these two as the major focus of the course, it's been surprising how much regional culture comes out of these two interviews. So for example, in the interview with Michela Murgia, she talks about how she has this elective family, which is this traditional Sardinian custom that is now no longer used, but she chose to be in a part of another family. And so this cultural idea is very much rooted in Sardinian culture. And also too, in the case of Valentina Coletta, she was born intersex and is trans and is a trans activist and she says that her childhood was so happy and that she was pretty much accepted, at least by the adults around her, because in Naples, which is the closest major city to where she grew up, there is this historical figure of the Femminiello, which is kind of like a third-gender, and is seen in the Italian culture as to bring luck and it's very accepted. And so therefore these regional aspects, which especially in terms of culture and, you know, Italian culture because there are so many different regions and different regional traditions, really come out through these individual stories.

MH: I love that you're using the archive to highlight trans stories of joy because I feel like so many mainstream stories are of hardship and grief. But that's really cool to hear.

JLF: I love highlighting that and we all kind of remember that in doing the course too.

MH: Yeah, that's fantastic. Do you have any advice for others about pitfalls to avoid in using the Global Feminisms materials in courses, or any difficulties to look out for?

JLF: I think some things need to be scaffolded, just to be able to prepare them for the reading. Also too, I mean in my case because I have to teach grammar along with content with the culture, sometimes you wish that you had more time to develop some of the other themes because there's so many things that come from just one simple interview. So one thing that I have done to be able to address things that we don't have time in class, because they are so rich, these interviews are so incredibly rich and you could talk about them for hours, is that the students' presentations- so I supply, I go through the interview, I find the main topics, and then I have students do presentations on these topics, so they get to choose, but they're all coming from the interview- the interviews themselves. So that's a way to kind of like be able to enhance- if you can't address all of the issues in an interview, you can have students present on them, like the things that you can't get to in a regular course.

MH: Yeah, I think that idea will be really helpful for other professors. I wish I was taking Italian. Could you discuss further how you use the materials in a course that's not focused on Italian feminist content?

JLF: Yes, thanks. So, because we really do have to do a balancing act between language and contents and culture and grammar, it is the sole cultural focus of our course, but we can't spend every single day going in depth into the materials. So, for example, on days in which we discuss the interviews, I really kind of try to have them come up with the themes. And then, in our practice of grammar, we can go back and use the interviews to further reinforce them. But it remains a little bit superficial because we're not spending day in, day out addressing the interviews, but we do have certain days in which they're there. But also too, all of our exams include the material, all of our presentations, everything is always going back to it, so there's a way to marry it to the grammar and always kind of reinforcing the meaning. But again, I feel like that's a concerted effort to do that. And so, when it's not the sole focus, and you want it to be a profound experience for the students because it is really like showing and telling, you know, like they get to hear the person's- the story of this person's life. And especially focusing on activism, asking about activism here and how the life of an activist- because really these interviews have to do also with activism and how they have become activists.

MH: And I think the course might be specifically valuable because it's not the main focus and that you might attract students who wouldn't sign up for a gender studies course but are still getting exposed to that sort of material and ideals.

JLF: Oh, for sure. And also too, people who, I've had some Women's Studies majors, and they are trying to get credit for it because they think it's just so applicable to their studies.

MH: Yep! Is there anything else you want to add?

JLF: No, I think it's such a resource, especially for language instructors. I think that the students really appreciate hearing 'this is real life, it's not from the textbook', right? The textbook, I think, especially language textbooks, are so general, and yes, they talk about cultural things, but it seems so fake, so when you put some content that's so real and so compelling in front of the students, I think it has a lasting impact.

MH: Well, thank you so much for joining us today, and I know this will be a very valuable asset for other language professors, and I hope that this can encourage more language professors to use this material in new ways.

JLF: I hope so, too. Thank you so much for having me.

Maddie House: Thank you again to Dr. Janaya Lasker-Ferretti for joining us on the podcast today and sharing her experiences in incorporating Global Feminisms interviews into Italian language courses. We hope her creative uses of the interviews to teach grammar, speaking skills, and more will inspire other instructors to consider the ways feminist oral histories can be used to teach more than gender studies.

Outro: Thank you for listening to this episode of Contextualizing Feminist Voices: Teaching With the Global Feminisms Project, a podcast created by the Global Feminisms Project. The entire team hopes it will help you understand and incorporate the materials on the website into your class. If you liked this episode, check out the other podcasts in the series, as well as materials about countries, teaching resources, and interviews on the [website](#).