
PHILOS 119: FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Moses 243

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MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:30-8:00pm, Social Sciences Building 20.

OPEN OFFICE HOURS

Olivia: (Provisionally) **Tuesdays 1pm-3pm** in Moses 243. Also by appointment.

Pia: Wednesdays 12-2pm in Moses Hall 301

TOPIC

This advanced lecture course is an exploration of select issues at the intersection of feminism and philosophy. We will lay the groundwork for that exploration by investigating some core concepts in feminist theory, including social construction, oppression, epistemic positionality, and intersectionality. Then, we will analyze three influential philosophical approaches to thinking about sex oppression: humanistic feminism, gynocentric feminism, and the dominance approach. Finally, we will zero in on two topics that have been the focus of groundbreaking recent work. In a unit on epistemic injustice, we will ask: how do social power relations, including gendered power relations, shape our status and skills as knowers and communicators? Are there forms of knowledge that have been neglected or undervalued because of sexism or misogyny, and how might they best be recovered or revalorized? And in a unit on decolonial feminism, we will ask: How can feminism address the impact of colonialism and imperialism? How can it respect cultural difference without losing its critical bite? Throughout the course, we will particularly focus on the ways in which questions about the nature, status, and rights of women and female people intersect with questions about race, class, religion, coloniality, and disability. Readings will consist of a mixture of contemporary work and landmark texts from the past.

No prerequisites, but completion of at least one prior philosophy course is advised. Course requirements (detailed below): Three lectures per week; participation in one discussion section per week; four papers on selected topics.

LEARNING GOALS

You will be exposed to a variety of traditions of feminist thought, in a way that gives pride of place to intersectional considerations. You will practice engaging critically and creatively with moral, epistemological, and metaphysical questions about sex and gender. You will further build your ability to write your own work with confidence and clarity. In this course, we will particularly focus on developing a mutually supportive philosophical community, so you can also expect to further develop your skill in navigating difficult conversations in an inclusive and cooperative way.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING

We all learn differently, and your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of this course that you worry might prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

Some required readings will be available on bCourses. All required readings not on bCourses will be drawn from this collection:

- *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*. Eds. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger. Oxford University Press. 2005. (abbreviated in this syllabus as “TF”)
 - Unfortunately, this book is not available as an e-book. Students should borrow or purchase a hard copy.

Students may also wish to purchase a hard copy of this book, from which we will read excerpts, although the required material will also be available via bCourses.

- Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*. Oxford University Press. 2007.
 - This book is available as an e-book through the UC Berkeley Library: [E-book link](#)

I've also indicated optional supplementary readings for most weeks, and I've made many of these readings available via bCourses. These readings are for students who would like to venture further into a topic on their own.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

The assignments for this course are designed with two principal objectives in mind. First, they will give you the chance to clarify your understanding of authors' arguments, and to investigate problems at a deeper level than we are able to do in lecture/section. Second, they will provide you with opportunities to further hone your skill in philosophical writing.

You are required to complete **four papers** for the course. There is no in-class mid-term or final examination. The papers build in length and in grade weighting.

Here is the course grade breakdown:

Paper A (2-3 pages): 10%

Paper B (4 pages): 20%

Paper C (4 pages): 20%

Paper D (5 pages): 30%

Participation: 20%

Participation – As you can see, this course weighs participation rather heavily. Participation includes regular attendance and meaningful engagement in section, as well as (to a significantly more limited degree) engagement in lectures and/or in office hours. Philosophy is not just a spectator sport! You should show up ready to raise questions, challenge assumptions, and contribute constructively to our evolving collective understanding of the material. A participation guide, “Ways to contribute philosophically,” is available on bCourses under “Guidelines.”

Paper grade rubrics are also available online under “Guidelines.”

NB Graduate students will receive a grade based solely on completion of a term paper of ~20 pages.

LATE POLICY

You are allowed **three unpenalized late days**, which you may use at your absolute discretion. You can use a late day, or multiple late days, *whenever you like*. Late work should be uploaded to the corresponding assignment on bCourses. You do not need to provide a reason, but you must let Pia know that this is what you intend to do on or before the due date, and you must notify Pia when your late work is uploaded. Once you’ve used up your three days, all late assignments not excused by a note (doctor, dean, etc.) will be penalized at a rate of one third of a letter grade per day. The case of late *final* papers is special. If you have used up your late days, no papers turned in after the final due date will be accepted.

REWRITING POLICY

It is not possible to rewrite papers for a different grade.

COLLABORATION AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Collaboration is an essential part of philosophy. I encourage you to discuss your ideas and your papers with your classmates, your neighbors, your professors, your friends, your enemies... That said, it is important that you cite all your sources responsibly, and that the work in your papers be your own. This course has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you have questions about these matters, please do ask.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME (OLIVIA)

I will be delighted to meet with you during my scheduled office hours. If you cannot make my office hours but wish to meet, please email me. You can expect a survey soliciting feedback a few weeks into the term, and we may make adjustments to the pace or format of the course based on that feedback. I will respond to emails within 24 hours on a weekday; if you do not hear from me within that time frame, please email me again.

MEETING SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE!)

UNIT 1: ORIENTATIONS

August 25: Introductions and syllabus.

- Readings: bell hooks, "[Come Closer to Feminism,](#)" and "[Feminist Politics: Where we stand.](#)" Available on bCourses. "Syllabus." Available on bCourses.
 - Optional: Janice Moulton, "[A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method](#)", in Ann Garry & Marilyn Pearsall (eds.), *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Routledge), 11-25. Available on bCourses. Margaret Urban Walker, "[Some thoughts on Feminists, Philosophy, and Feminist Philosophy.](#)" Available on bCourses.
- Themes: What is the relationship between feminism and philosophy? What is feminist philosophy? What kinds of questions does/should philosophers working on feminism or as feminists ask?
- In class: Introduction/syllabus review, flash writing.

August 30: Oppression

- Readings: Marilyn Frye, "[Sexism.](#)" Available on bCourses. Iris M. Young, "[Five Faces of Oppression](#)" in TF. Also available on bCourses.
 - Optional Further Reading: Alison Bailey, "[Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression'](#)." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29.3 (1998). Available on bCourses.
- Themes: Structural vs. nonstructural oppression. Understanding diverse dimensions of oppression. Missing faces?

September 1: Introducing Social Construction

- Reading: Susan Wendell, "The Social Construction of Disability" in TF
 - Optional further reading: Susan Wendell, "[Toward a feminist theory of disability.](#)" *Hypatia* 4.2 (1989): 104-124. Available on bCourses.
- What kinds of things are socially constructed? Is being a woman and/or a female and/or a femme person a sort of disability? Why or why not?

September 6: University Holiday, no class.

September 8: Social Construction and Gender

- Reading: Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Social Construction: Who? What? When? Where? How?" in TF
 - Optional Further Reading: Sally Haslanger, "[Gender and Race: \(What\) are they? \(What\) do we want them to be?](#)" from her book *Resisting Reality*. 2012. Available on bCourses.
- Themes: Object construction vs. idea construction. Gender abolitionism?

September 13: Social Construction and Gender: Alternatives to Haslanger?

- Reading: Katharine Jenkins, "[Amelioration and inclusion: Gender identity and the concept of woman.](#)" *Ethics* 126.2 (2016): 394-421. Available on Canvas.
 - Optional Further Reading: Nathalie Stoljar, "[Essence, Identity, and the Concept of Woman.](#)" *Philosophical Topics*. 1995. Pgs. 261-293. Available on Canvas.
- Themes: fragmenting gender. What work do we need gender concepts to do for us?

September 15: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Essentialism

- Readings: Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” in TF, and Trina Grillo, “Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House” in TF
- Highly recommended *short* secondary readings: The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” in TF, Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” available on bCourses (I will discuss these in class).
 - Optional Further Reading: Patricia Hill Collins, “The Politics of Black Feminist Thought” in TF. Matsuda Mari, “On Identity Politics,” in TF. Maria Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman, ["Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for 'the woman's voice'."](#) Women's Studies International Forum. Vol. 6. No. 6. Pergamon, 1983. Available on bCourses.
- Themes: What is identity politics, and where did it come from? How about intersectionality? What is essentialism? Are there any unobjectionable forms of essentialism? Can a commitment to anti-essentialism run into conflict with feminist activist aims?

September 16: Assignment A due at 11.59 pm pacific.

September 20: Representation and Solidarity

- Reading: Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others” in TF.
 - Optional further reading: McIntosh, Peggy. ["White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."](#) Available on bCourses.
- Themes: epistemic position, the duty to represent, privilege and silence.

UNIT 2: FORMS OF FEMINISM

September 22: Early Humanistic Feminism

- Readings: Sojourner Truth, "Ar'n't I a Woman?" in TF, JS Mill, “The Subjection of Women,” in TF
- Themes: humanism and humanization, what (if anything!) Truth and Mill share in common. Relation to Orientation concepts of social construction and intersectionality.

September 27: The Second Sex

- Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, Introduction to ["The Second Sex."](#) Available on bCourses.
 - Optional further reading: Judith Butler, "Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution." To be made available on bCourses.
- Themes: Beauvoir as humanist?

September 29: Contemporary Humanistic Feminism

- Reading: Martha C. Nussbaum, "Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings" in TF
 - Optional further reading: Amartya Sen, “More than 100 Million Women are Missing,” in TF
- Themes: humanism, relativism, and anti-essentialism, humanism in a global context.

October 4: Gynocentric Feminism

- Reading: Sara Ruddick, "Notes Toward a Feminist Maternal Peace Politics," in TF, Paula Allen Gunn, "Who is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism" in TF.
- Themes: Is there such a thing as a women's ethics, a women's politics? If there is a distinctively feminine ethical perspective, should it be (re)valorized?

October 6: Comparing Gynocentric and Humanistic Feminisms

- Reading: Iris M. Young, "Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics" in TF
- Themes: What do these two strands of feminism have in common? Is one less prone to objectionable essentialism than the other? How do we assess their relative promise and peril?

October 7: Assignment B due at 11.59 pm pacific.

October 11: The Dominance Approach

- Reading: Catharine MacKinnon, "Difference and Domination: On Sex Discrimination" in TF
- Optional further reading: Catharine MacKinnon, "Desire and Power" in TF
- Themes: What is distinctive about the dominance approach? Why think that conceptualizing sexism in terms of sameness/difference has failed us?

October 13: The Dominance Approach II: gendered bodily discipline

- Reading: Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in TF.
 - Optional Further Reading: Susan Bordo, "[Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body](#)," from *Unbearable Weight*. Available on bCourses.
- Themes: Body policing, feminine presentation, feminist phenomenology.

October 18: Objectification

- Reading: Rae Langton, "[Projection and Objectification](#)," on bCourses.
 - Optional further reading: Martha Nussbaum, "[Objectification](#)," on bCourses.

October 20: (re)Thinking the Erotic

- Readings: bell hooks, "Seduced by Violence No More," in TF, Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" in TF, Amia Srinivasan, "[Does anyone have the right to sex?](#)" available on bCourses.
- Themes: Reconceptualizing eroticism. If the dominance approach correctly diagnoses the problem, then what is the solution?

UNIT 3: FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

October 25: Epistemic Injustice

- Reading: Miranda Fricker, Chapter One of *Epistemic Injustice*. [Available Online Here](#), get started reading Ch.2 as well
- Themes: What is identity power? What could it mean to harm someone specifically in their capacity as a knower?

October 27: Epistemic Injustice, Continued

- Reading: Miranda Fricker, Chapter Two of Epistemic Injustice. [Available Online Here](#). Elizabeth Barnes, “The Hysteria Accusation” (short, available [here](#))
 - Optional Further Reading: Chapters 3 and 7 of Epistemic Injustice. [Available Online Here](#).
 - Resource: UnMute Podcast Episode 009: Philosophers Myisha Cherry and Kristie Dotson discuss ignorance (and other topics!). [Available Here](#).
- Themes: What is testimonial injustice? Can someone be a victim of testimonial injustice in virtue of being overly trusted?

November 1: Standpoint

- Reading: Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff, “[Are ‘Old Wives’ Tales’ Justified?](#)” from Feminist Epistemologies. Available on Canvas.
 - Optional further reading: Nancy Hartsock, “[The Feminist Standpoint](#),” from Discovering Reality. Ed. Harding and Hintikka. Available on Canvas.
- Themes: Recognizing/recovering different forms of knowledge/understanding. Women’s wisdom (?).

November 3: Knowing what it’s like: imagining across difference

- Reading: Amy Kind, “Bridging the Divide,” to be available on bCourses. Olivia Bailey, “[Empathy and Testimonial Trust](#),” available on bCourses,
- Themes: Can a man know what it’s like to be a woman? What are the limits to imagination across difference?

UNIT 4: GLOBAL/DECOLONIAL FEMINISMS

November 8: *no class*

November 10: Standpoint Epistemology in a Global Context

- Reading: Uma Narayan, “[The project of feminist epistemology: Perspectives from a nonwestern feminist](#),” from *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. 2004 [1988]. Available on bCourses.
 - Optional further reading: Uma Narayan, “Cross-cultural connections, Border-Crossings, and Death by Culture,” in TF
- Themes: Does standpoint epistemology properly take account of epistemic marginalization? Is it responsive to the cares and concerns of nonwestern feminists?

November 11: Assignment C due at 11.59 pm pacific.

November 15: Guest lecture, Alida Liberman

November 17: Multiculturalism and Feminism

- Reading: Susan Okin, "[Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?](#)" in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (1999) 9-24. Available on bCourses. Lower priority but still worth reading: short commentaries from [Abdullahi An-Na'im](#), [Bhikhu Parekh](#), and [Saskia Sassen](#). Available on bCourses.
 - Optional further reading: additional short commentaries included in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* The e-book is available [here](#).
- Themes: (How) can we reconcile feminism and multiculturalism?

November 22: Traditionalist feminisms, transnational feminisms

- Reading: Serene J. Khader, "[Do Muslim women need freedom? Traditionalist feminisms and transnational politics.](#)" *Politics & Gender* 12.4 (2016): 727-753. Available on Canvas.
 - Optional further reading: Serene J. Khader, "[Transnational Feminisms, Nonideal Theory, and "Other" Women's Power.](#)" *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 3 1 (2017).
- Themes: Pushing back on Okin. Imperialism. Complementarian feminisms?

November 29: Gender and coloniality

- Reading: María Lugones, "[Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system.](#)" *Hypatia* 22.1 (2007): 186-219. Available on Canvas.
 - Optional further reading: María Lugones, "[The Coloniality of Gender.](#)" Available on Canvas.
- Themes: Gender as a colonial construct?

December 1: Wrap up/reflections on feminist methodology

- Reading: María Lugones, "[Playfulness, World-travelling, and loving perception.](#)" Available on Canvas.
- Themes: Feminist methodologies. Where to go from here?

December 14 (provisional): Assignment D due at 11.59 pm Pacific.
