**FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY**

**PHIL-6941 (3 credits)**

**Autumn 2018**

**Thursdays,** 06:30PM - 09:00PM, Newcomb Hall 413

**Instructor**

Olivia Bailey

Newcomb Hall 105c

Office Hours: Thursdays 3-5 or by appointment

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**Description**

This course is an introduction to key issues in the feminist philosophical tradition. We will explore questions about women’s identities, abilities, obligations, and struggles that arise in the domains of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. We will begin with the core metaphysical question of what, exactly, womanhood consists in. We will ask: Is womanhood a matter of political or social position, personal conviction, or something else entirely? Then, we will turn to feminist epistemology, and investigate whether sexism and misogyny harm women (or men) in their capacities as knowers, and also whether women occupy a privileged position when it comes to some kinds of knowledge or understanding. We will conclude with the realm of the moral, and consider: Could there be a distinctively feminist ethics? And if so, how should it accommodate cultural and social diversity? Readings will consist primarily of a mixture of contemporary work and landmark texts from the past century.

**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 reflect on the ways in which work in feminist philosophy across the sub-disciplines of ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology hangs together, or fails to do so. And you will develop a sophisticated sense of one of the central recurring controversies in feminist theorizing: the tension between the efforts to valorize women’s ostensibly characteristic or distinctive natures(s), values, and abilities, on the one hand, and the resistance to essentializing or idealizing womanhood, on the other.

**Course Objectives**

After completing this course, you will be able to analyze and evaluate complex arguments relating to core topics in feminist philosophy. You will be prepared to engage critically and rigorously in the debates about women’s nature, abilities, and rights that are ongoing both within the academy and beyond it. You will be able to accurately represent the positions of key players in feminist philosophy, and you will be able to write and present your own work with more confidence and clarity than at the beginning of the term.

**Program Outcomes.**

This course partially satisfies the major requirement of completion of at least two 6000-level courses.

**Required Student Resources**

The readings for approximately the first third of this course are available online, under the “Files” section of the Canvas website. You must print these articles out and bring them to class (Exception: students using flat e-readers such as Nooks, Kindles, or iPads. See the Electronics Policy below).

In addition, you are required to purchase or borrow several books for this course. These are:

1. *Feminist Epistemologies*, edited by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter. Routledge, 2013.
2. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, by Miranda Fricker. Clarendon Press, 2007.
3. *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, by Nel Noddings, University of California Press, 2013. (NB: there are multiples editions of this work, but the 2013 edition is the one you want.
4. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, by Martha Nussbaum, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

**Electronics Policy**

*Neither phones nor laptops* will be permitted in class except as a matter of special accommodation (in accordance with the recommendations of the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility). You *must* bring the relevant texts with them to class. Flat reading devices such as Kindles or iPads will be allowed for in-class text access, but I highly recommend printing out the readings instead.

Why the electronics policy? Research shows that while students prefer to read on screens, student laptop use is correlated with poorer retention of lecture content, poorer retention of information from readings, worse performance on conceptual questions, worse course performance generally, and weaker self-reported understanding of course material. These results are likely linked to the fact that students engage in substantial multitasking behavior with their laptops and have non course-related software open and active about 42% of the time, on average. I have uploaded a summary of these findings, with references to the relevant studies, to the Canvas site.

**Evaluation Procedures and Grading Criteria**

The assignments for this course are designed with three principle objectives in mind. First, they will give you the chance to clarify your understanding of other philosophers’ work on key issues in feminist philosophy, and to develop your own ideas about those issues. Second, they will provide the opportunity to work on key skills for philosophical writing. And third, they will help you to hone your oral presentation abilities.

The bulk of the writing you do for this course will take the form of ***commentaries****.* You must write a minimum of seven commentaries over the course of the term. These commentaries will pertain to the reading material for the coming class session, and are due 24 hours before the course meets (so, 6:30 pm on Wednesday). You will rewrite at least two of these in light of comments from me. All revised commentaries will be due **December 12th.** Instructions for writing commentaries are available on the Canvas site, under “Files.”

Additionally, you will be responsible for writing and revising a ***term paper***. The schedule of assignments highlights the due dates for the outline and the final draft of the term paper. For undergraduates, the final draft may be as long as 4,000 words, excluding bibliography and footnotes. For graduate students, the final draft may be as long as 6,000 words, excluding bibliography and footnotes.

Each student will also be responsible for ***one presentation*** of approximately 10 minutes. Instructions for the presentation are also available on the Canvas site.

It goes without saying that reading the texts and attending section is mandatory.  **Philosophy is not a spectator sport**. You should come ready to raise questions, challenge assumptions, and contribute constructively to our evolving collective understanding of the material. A participation guideline, “Ways to contribute philosophically,” is available on Canvas.

**Course Grade Breakdown**

*Commentaries – 50% Term Paper – 20%* (outline 5%, final draft 15% percent)

*Participation – 20% Class Presentation (1) – 10%*

**Late policy:** You are allowed **three late days**, which you may use at your absolute discretion. You can use a late day, or multiple late days, *whenever you like*. You do not need to provide a reason, but you mustlet me know that this is what you intend to do before the due date. Once you’ve used up your three days, though, alllate commentaries or term paper first drafts not excused by a dean’s or doctor’s note will be penalized (1/3 of letter grade per day), no exceptions. The case of late *final* term papers is special. If you have used up your late days, I will not accept papers turned in after the Dec. 12 due date. In turning in your assignments, it is your responsibility to ensure that you send me the correct, uncorrupted files. Your assignments are to be uploaded to Canvas by 6:30 pm on the due date. They should be either in docx or pdf format, 12pt font, double-spaced.

**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 roommates, 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.

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**Attendance**

Because this course meets only once a week, it will be very difficult to make up for a missed session, and a single missed class will substantially impact your participation grade. You are expected to attend all meetings of the course. You will not be penalized for missing class if you are ill and have a medical excuse issued by the Student Health Center. If you need to miss class due to some other exceptional circumstance, please let me know.

**ADA/Accessibility Statement**

Any students with disabilities or other needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and should contact Goldman Center for Student Accessibility: [http://accessibility.tulane.edu](http://accessibility.tulane.edu/) or 504.862.8433.

**Code of Academic Conduct**

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e., [Code of Academic Conduct](https://college.tulane.edu/academic-honesty) and [Code of Student Conduct](https://conduct.tulane.edu/resources/code-student-conduct)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

**What you can expect from me**

I will be available at least 2 hours per week for office hours, and I will return all assignments (with the possible exception of the term paper) within five days. I will offer reading guides for each week, provided that you all find them useful. I will not be able to read whole drafts in advance of your turning them in, but I’m very happy to read outlines and discuss ideas with you.

**Course Schedule**

**Note that readings are subject to change!**

**8/30/18: Introduction: The Woman Question**(meta-philosophy, plus metaphysics session #1)

Readings:

* C. Gould, “The Woman Question,” from *Women and Philosophy: toward a theory of liberation,* eds. Gould and Wartofsky. 1980. Pgs. 5-33.
* S. Haslanger, “Gender and Social Construction: Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?” from *Theorizing Feminisms.* Ed. Haslanger. 2006. Pgs. 16-22.

*Key questions:* What does it mean to investigate “the woman question” philosophically? What does it mean to talk about gender as a social construction?

**9/6/18: The Social construction of gender: Beauvoir and MacKinnon** (metaphysics session #2)

Readings:

* S. Beauvoir, excerpts from *The Second Sex.* Trans. Borde and Malovany-Chevallier.

2011 [1949]. Pgs. 3-17, 272-274.

* C. MacKinnon, “Method and Politics,” from her book *Toward a Feminist Theory of* *the State.* 1991. Pgs. 106-125.
* C. MacKinnon, “Pornography, civil rights, and speech,” *Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review,* 1985. Pgs. 1-31 (you may wish to skim the rest of the article).

*Key questions:* What role might subordination (particularly sexual subordination) and/or objectification play in the construction of gender?

**9/13/18: The fragmentation of “woman”?** (metaphysics session #3)

Readings:

* A. Harris, “Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory,” *Stanford Lsw Review.* 1990. Pgs. 581-616, excluding those passages which are crossed-out in the uploaded version.
* E. Spelman, “The One and The Many,” from her book *Inessential Woman.* 1988. Pgs 133-159, excluding those pages which are crossed-out in the uploaded version.
* I. Young, “Gender as Seriality: thinking about women as a social collective,” from *Signs.*1994. Pgs. 713-738.

*Key questions:* Are attempts to identify any essential qualities that make women women bound to be problematically exclusionary? Can feminists do without a definition or conception of what it is to be a woman?

**9/20/18: After fragmentation: alternative conceptions of womanhood** (metaphysics session #4)

Readings:

* N. Stoljar, “Essence, Identity, and the Concept of Woman,” *Philosophical Topics.* 1995. Pgs. 261-293.
* S. Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?” from her book *Resisting Reality.* 2012.

*Key questions:* Do the alternative accounts of womanhood proposed by Young, Stoljar, and Haslangereffectively skirt the criticisms that inspired the anti-essentialists? To what extent can/should our philosophical conception of gender depart from our lay concepts and practices?

**9/27/18 (Trans)gender identity (**metaphysics session #5)

Readings:

* K. Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of a Woman.”

*Key Questions:* (How) should we make sense of the distinction between gender and gender identity? Should we be gender abolitionists?

**10/4/18: Introducing standpoint epistemology** (epistemology session #1)

Readings:

* Dalmiya and Alcoff, “Are ‘Old Wives’ Tales’ Justified?” from *Feminist Epistemologies.* (not online, to be found in book purchased /borrowed for class). Pgs. 217-243.
* N. Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint,” from *Discovering Reality.* Ed. Harding and Hintikka. 1983 (available online. Pgs 283-210.

*Key questions:* Are there forms of knowledge or understanding to which woman have privileged access? What, exactly, does it mean to be a standpoint epistemologist?

**10/11/18: No class**

**10/18/18: Critiquing standpoint epistemology** (epistemology session #2)

Readings:

* B. Bar-On, “Marginality and Epistemic Privilege,” from *Feminist Epistemologies.* (not online, to be found in book purchased /borrowed for class). Pgs. 83-100.
* U. Narayan, “The project of feminist epistemology: Perspectives from a nonwestern feminist,” from *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader.* 2004 [1988].
* *Possibly:* M. Lugones, “Playfulness, World-travelling, and loving perception.” *Hypatia*. 1987

*Key questions:* Does standpoint epistemology properly take account of epistemic marginalization? Is it responsive to the cares and concerns of nonwestern feminists?

**10/25/18: Epistemic Injustice** (epistemology session #3)

Reading:

* M. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, pages 1-85

*Key Questions:* What is testimonial injustice? Why should we be concerned about it?

**11/1/18: Epistemic Injustice, continued** (epistemology session #4)

Reading:

* M. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 86-175.

*Key Questions:* How might we develop testimonial justice? And what in hermeneutical injustice?

**11/8/18: Care Ethics** (ethics session #1)

Reading:

* N. Noddings, *Caring*, Chapter 1-3.

*Key Questions:* What is care, and why should we care about it?

**11/15/18: Care Ethics, continued** (ethics session #2)

Reading:

* N. Noddings, *Caring*, Chapters 4 and 8
* C. Card, “Caring and Evil,” *Hypatia.* 1990.
* B. Houston, “Caring and Exploitation,” *Hypatia.* 1990

*Key questions:* Does care ethics run the risk of morally authorizing behavior that is, intuitively, vicious? How can a defender of an ethic of care respond to her critics?

**11/22/18: No class**

**11/28/18: TERM PAPER OUTLINES DUE IN, 6:30pm.**

**11/29/18: Feminist ethics and global justice**

Reading:

* M. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*. Introduction and Ch. 1.

*Key questions:* What is the capabilities approach? Can it appropriately accommodate cultural difference?

**12/6/18: Feminist ethics and global justice, continued.**

Reading:

* M. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*. Chs. 2 and 4.

*Key questions:* How does the capabilities approach stack up against welfarist approaches? To what extent can the traditional valuation of woman as lovers and carers be integrated with the ideal of justice?

**12/12/18: TERM PAPERS DUE IN AT 6:30pm. REVISED COMMENTARIES ALSO DUE IN AT 6:30pm.**

**ONE WAVE information**

*Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available: you can learn more at* [*titleix.tulane.edu*](http://titleix.tulane.edu/)*.  Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am mandated by the university to report to the Title IX Coordinator, as Tulane and I want to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. You do not need to respond to outreach from the university if you do not want.*

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| **Confidential** | **Private** |
| *Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.* | *Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.* |
| **Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) | (504) 314-2277 or**  **The Line (24/7) | (504) 264-6074** | **Case Management & Victim Support Services | (504) 314-2160 or** [**srss@tulane.edu**](mailto:srss@tulane.edu) |
| **Student Health Center | (504) 865-5255** | **Tulane University Police (TUPD) | Uptown (504) 865-5911. Downtown (504) 988-5531** |
| **Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) | (504) 654-9543** | **Title IX Coordinator | (504) 865-5615 or** [**msmith76@tulane.edu**](mailto:msmith76@tulane.edu) |

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| **Strictly Confidential** | **Mostly Confidential** |
| *Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.* | *Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.* |
| **Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) | (504) 314-2277** | **Coordinator of Violence Prevention | (504) 314-2161** |
| **Student Health Center | (504) 865-5255** | **Tulane University Police (TUPD) | (504) 865-5911** |
| **Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education | (504) 654-9543** | **Office of Institutional Equity | (504) 862-8083** |