

PHIL 315: INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Winter 2016
TR 18-19:50
Room: TBA
Instructor: Martina Ferrari

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Course Description: This course introduces some key concepts, ideas, and frameworks commonly used in feminist philosophy. By providing a brief historical overview of feminism’s historical trajectory, the first part of this course deals with the difficult question of the place of women in the history of philosophy. The second part of this course ventures where the history of philosophy has not dared: searching for an answer to Beauvoir’s question, “What is a Woman?” In the third part, this continued examination of the question shows how differences in race, class, and sexual orientation defy efforts to assert a single story of women, thereby revealing the dilemma at the heart of Beauvoir’s question. The last part of the course considers feminism in a global context and seeks possibilities for alliances across difference. Throughout the term, we will grapple with broad philosophical questions such as: What does it mean to do philosophy as a woman and/or feminist? What can philosophy do for feminism and vice versa? What is the relation between feminist theory and praxis? Ideally, students will come out of this course with a strong background in feminist philosophy and a nuanced understanding of what it has to offer.

Course Goals:

- Develop intellectual generosity and critical skills
- Develop clarity in expression (both written and verbal expression) and rigor in argument
- Gain exposure to feminist appropriations and criticisms of the Western philosophical tradition as well as debates within feminist thinking.
- Become fluent in various approaches to feminist philosophy and getting into the habit of reflecting critically on gender and sexuality
- Become a better writer and a thoughtful thinker

Required Texts:

All readings will be available on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Written Work (71%), broken down as follows:

- **Reflection Papers (7% each):** There will be three writing assignments of two pages in length that will require you to analyze a personal experience in light of the readings covered in the specific section of the course. You will be asked to critically reflect upon a personal experience analogous to the ones discussed by the authors—be it your experience reading canonical philosophical texts, the struggle of finding your own voice, or the difficulty in determining what woman is. The reflection papers are due at the beginning of the class period on 1/12 or 1/26; 2/9 or 2/16; and 2/23 or 3/1. Since these are short papers, do not summarize or re-state arguments and events in the reading. Assume the audience is familiar with the text and move directly to the analysis of the gendered implications of the situation at hand.

→No late papers are accepted.

- **Midterm Paper (20%):** For this class, you will have a midterm of 4-5 pages in length. The midterm paper will be due on Friday, 2/5 no later than 11:59 pm. Papers should be submitted on Canvas.
- **Final Paper (30%):** The **final exam** will be 6-7 pages in length. It will be due on 3/15 no later than 11:59 pm. Papers should be submitted on Canvas.

→ **Late** midterm and final papers are **penalized one letter grade** for every day the paper is late.

Oral Contribution (30%), broken down as follows:

- **Participation (20%):** Your written work for the class is the space for presenting well-thought-out analysis and response. Class discussion will be your forum for trying out and experimenting with new and old ideas, and working through the material in the reading. I expect you to be prepared each day to 1) discuss the reading, 2) ask questions about its meaning and merit, 3) help others find the answers, 4) discern presuppositions, 5) trace consequences, 6) reconstruct arguments, and 7) evaluate strengths and weaknesses of positions. At the end of each class, I will ask you to **self-evaluate** your participation, assign yourself a grade, and justify that decision. I will then check the self-assigned grade and finalize your day's participation grade. More details on the self-assessment process will be provided in class.
- **Attendance (5% of the Participation):** Needless to say, good participation presupposes attendance. Participation is not a function of quantity, but it does require presence in body and spirit. Therefore, your participation grade will be determined by your attendance of class (5% of the participation grade), together with your self-assessment of your participation. Participation for this class is **mandatory**. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Your grade will be reduced by one third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence after that. If you miss class more than five times *for any reason*, you cannot earn a passing grade. If you are late more than 15 minutes you will be counted as absent.
- **Discussion Leaders (5% each):** Each student will be responsible for leading the discussion **twice** per semester. Being a leader entails reading the material especially carefully and coming up with two discussion questions that will help guide our discussion that day. The three questions should be **emailed to me no later than 12pm** on the day of class.

Grading Criteria: To do excellent work on the papers in this course, you need to be able to do more than just reiterate what various authors have said in your reading or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand and comprehend the material, but that you have thought critically about it, fully fleshing out its subtleties and implications so that you can creatively apply the material at many levels. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; however, "B" work doesn't capture the complexity of the issues and tends to accurately summarize what has been read or said in class. A "C" suggests a struggle with the material that manages an average, basic comprehension of it but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. An "F" indicates no understanding of the material.

A **handout** that details expectations for writing for this course, the policy on rewritten work, and grading guidelines will be available on Canvas.

Grades on papers and exams will be given on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

100-97:	A+	82-80:	B-
96-93:	A	79-77:	C+
92-90:	A-	76-73:	C
89-87:	B+	72-70:	C-
86-83:	B	69-60:	D

Additional Course Policies:

Incompletes and extensions will be given *only* in the event of documented emergencies.

No Electronics. If I warn you to put an electronic device away, expect it to reflect on your grade. If I have to warn you a second time, I will ask for you to leave and/or you will be marked absent for the day.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Sexual Violence: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are *required reporters*. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu

Accessibility: If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Academic Honesty: There will be **zero tolerance** for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be handed given to the university authorities. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website:

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

**** I will do my best to create a productive environment and inspire free thinking throughout the course. I will treat everyone fairly and with respect. In return, I expect you to do your best and treat everyone with respect. I want all of us to hold each other accountable. For this, communication is the key. Please come and talk to me if anything is bothering you. The subject matter will at times be sensitive and the discussions may be heated – and this is quite alright, as long as we don't stop communicating. We shall build our classroom community together and contribute in our own unique way.*

Readings and Assignment Schedule

Class schedule and readings are subject to revision. You will be notified ahead of time if and when this happens. (If there is anything you find pertinent to this class or the topics we discuss – readings, videos, images, etc. contact me about including it in our schedule).

	Tuana, "Reading Philosophy as a Woman" (11); Alcoff, "Of Philosophy and Guerrilla Wars" (9); bell hooks, "Talking back" (8)
1/7 1/11 <i>Last day to drop w/o W</i>	Rousseau, selections from "Sophie," from <i>Emile</i> (19); Lloyd, "The Man of Reason" (16)
Week 2	
1/12 Reflection Paper #1a Due	Wollstonecraft, "Introduction," "Dedication," and ch 2, from <i>Vindications</i> (32);
1/14	Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i> , (35); Frye, "To Be and Be Seen" (15)
Week 3	II - What is a Woman?
1/19	Beauvoir, "Introduction," (16), selections from "Myths" chapter 1 (<53) from <i>The Second Sex</i> <u>Recommended:</u> Gilman, "As to Humanness" (17)
1/21	Beauvoir; selections from Chapter 2, section IV; Chapter 3 (13)
Week 4	
1/26 Reflection Paper #1b Due	Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System" (21)
1/28	Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Construction" (10)
Week 5	
2/2	Heinamaa, "Woman: Nature, Product, Style" (15)
2/4	III - Identity and Difference Irigaray, from "The Question of the Other" (12); "Human Nature is Two" (6); "Sexual Difference is Universal" (6)
2/5	First Mid Paper Due at 23:59
Week 6	
2/9 Reflection Paper #2a Due	Wittig, "The Straight Mind" (12); "The Category of Sex" (8); "One is not Born a Woman" (12); <u>Recommended:</u> Rubin, "The Traffic in Women" (52)
2/11	Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (30)
Week 7	
2/16 Reflection Paper #2b Due	Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"; Cheryl L. West, "I Ain't the Right Kind of Feminist"; bell hooks, "Feminism: A Transformational Politics" (13); "Feminist Politicization: A Comment" (10); Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface" (4)
2/18 2/21 <i>Last Day to Withdraw</i> 2/22 <i>Spring Registration Begins</i>	Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" (11) Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity, ..etc." (22)
Week 8	
2/23 Reflection Paper #3a Due	Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" (24)

2/25	IV – How can we speak together? Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle: The Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism” (25)
Week 9 3/1 Reflection Paper #3b Due	Scott, “The Evidence of Experience” (16); Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!” (9)
3/3	Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception” (16); Anzaldua, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” (13)
Week 10 3/8	Moraga, Selections from “From a Long Line of Vendidas” (>52)
3/10	Narayan, “Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossing, and ‘Death by Culture’” (36)
Week 11 3/15	Final Papers due