

PHIL 643/CRN 16693  
Feminist Philosophy: Proseminar  
M/W: 12-1:50pm

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this course is twofold: 1) to give students an opportunity to reflect on what it means to study and practice philosophy as a woman, i.e. from a position of alterity in relation to the dominant traditions in Western philosophy and 2) to introduce students to basic texts and basic topics in feminist philosophy. By the end of the term students should be able to speak competently about important themes in feminist philosophy, such as identity, the self-other relation, sexuality, gendered embodiment, race, coloniality, agency and freedom; and about the contributions of a number of important thinkers in feminist philosophy. Students will gain exposure to feminist appropriations and criticisms of the Western philosophical tradition as well as debates within feminist thinking.

### **Description**

Feminist philosophy is philosophical thought that emerges out of and in relation to social movements for women's emancipation, thus it is a liberatory undertaking, interested in the amelioration of injustice in all forms. It works toward the recuperation of women's and feminist thought in the history of philosophy, an understanding of the human condition as it is lived by diverse women, an articulation of women's ways of knowing in relation to epistemologies that have implicitly or explicitly excluded them—whether based on sex, gender or other aspects of identity—and interrogating political and ethical practices from a feminist perspective. Though we commonly think of “feminist philosophy” as a recent development, scholars agree that philosophical work that exhibits a feminist sensibility has been a critical counter-voice to the mainstream Western tradition since its inception. Nevertheless, philosophy today remains the most male dominated field in the humanities. Yet feminist philosophers have been passionate in their claims that the discipline of philosophy prepares us to ask the questions we need to ask and address the problems that we confront—even as philosophy is transformed in the process. These are some of the questions we will explore in the course: How does feminist thinking both appropriate and change the practice of philosophy? What questions are opened up by feminist philosophical inquiry that are not opened by more traditional approaches? How does feminist philosophy invite us to challenge some of our most deeply held assumptions about knowledge, human nature, power, and political and ethical practices?

I employ a variety of strategies to engage students in classroom discussions and reflection about the topics for the course. In addition to listening to lectures, you can expect to participate in small group discussions in class, to be called on to explain key concepts to a group of your peers, to do short, in-class writings as a kick-off for discussion, and to actively respond to lectures. This term we will start each of two sessions/class with a student led discussion (the first 20 minutes of each session), this will generally be followed by a lecture, with more discussion at the end of the class period.

## **Course Requirements**

*Discussion Leadership:* Each graduate student taking the course for credit will take responsibility for leading a 20 minute discussion of the materials for **two sessions** over the course of the term. When more than one essay is assigned, discussions should be introduced in such a way that the themes of the essays are linked, and students are invited to respond to and discuss any of the readings for the day.

Paper Proposal: Due week 8. Guidelines will be handed out in class.

Final Paper: Due Wednesday of finals week.

## **Texts**

Readings will be available on the Canvas Site for the course.

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability please let me know right away what accommodations are needed.

**Course Calendar****Women and Philosophy**

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**Week 1**

M 9/28 No Class: Yom Kippur

W 9/30 Opening Lecture: Xanthippe and The Apology of Socrates

**Week 2**

M10/5 Tuana, "Reading Philosophy as a Woman" (11 pp)

Le Doeuff, selections from "First Notebook" (31 pp)

Alcoff, "Of Philosophy and Guerilla Wars" (9 pp)

Dotson, "How is this Paper Philosophy?" (26 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_**Knowing: Women and the Life of the Mind**

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W10/7 Rousseau Selections from "Sophie," in Emile (19 pp)

Wollstonecraft "Introduction," "Dedication" "Chapters 1,2" (47 pp)

Lugones "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (15 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_**Week 3**

M 10/12 Woolf A Room of One's Own (Ch. 1-2) (35 pp)

Frye "To Be and Be Seen: The Politics of Reality" (15 pp)

Anzaldúa "La Conciencia de la Mestiza" (14 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W10/14 Lloyd "The Man of Reason" (16 pp)

Fox Keller "Feminism and Science" (11 pp)

Bordo Selections from *Flight to Objectivity* (20pp)**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_**Week 4**

M10/19 Harding "'Strong Objectivity' and Socially Situated Knowledge"(18pp)

Code "Taking Subjectivity into Account" (20pp)

Haraway "Situated Knowledges" (21 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W10/21	Collins	“The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought”	(11pp)
	Ruddick	“Maternal Thinking”	(14 pp)
	Wittig	“The Straight Mind”	(12 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 5**

M10/26	Mills	“White Ignorance”	(22 pp)
	Fricker	“Testimonial Injustice,” “Hermeneutical Injustice”	(47pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

***Being: What is a Woman?***

W10/28	Gilman	“As to Humanness”	(17pp)
	Bederman	“Not to Sex—But to Race!” Charlotte Perkins Gilman, <i>Civilized Anglo-Saxon Womanhood, and the Return of the Primitive Rapist</i> ”	(48pp)
	Beauvoir	“Introduction” to <i>The Second Sex</i>	(15 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 6**

M11/2	Rubin,	“The Traffic in Women”	(26 pp)
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**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W11/4	Irigaray	Excerpts from “The Question of the Other”	(12 pp)
	Irigaray	“Human Nature is Two”	(6pp)
	Irigaray	“Sexual Difference is Universal”	(6pp)
	Wittig	“The Category of Sex”	(8 pp)
	Wittig	“One is Not Born a Woman”	(12 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 7**

M11/9	Mohanty	“Under Western Eyes”	(24 pp)
	Hooks	“Reconstructing Black Masculinity”	(16pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W11/11	MacKinnon	“Difference and Dominance”	(13 pp)
	Butler	“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”	(10 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 8**

M 11/16	Heinämaa	“Woman: Nature, Product, Style”	(15 pp)
	Young	“Throwing Like a Girl”	(18 pp)
	Scott,	“Experience”	(16 pp)
	Alcoff	“Phenomenology, Poststructuralism and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience”	(17 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

***Doing: Feminist Politics and Ethics***

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W11/18	Addams	“Women’s Conscience and Social Amelioration”	(12pp)
	Kittay	“Introduction” to <i>Love’s Labor</i>	(18pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 9**

M11/23	Bartky	“Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds”	(20 pp)
	Pateman	“Contracting In”	(18 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W 11/25	Davis	“Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist”	(29 pp)
	Crenshaw	“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity...etc.(22pp)	
	Ruíz	“Framing Intersectionality”	

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 10**

M 11/30	MacKinnon	“Genocide’s Sexuality”	(24 pp)
	Smith	“Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide”	(15 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_

W 12/2	Fraser,	“Multiculturalism, Antiessentialism, and Radical Democracy”	(9 pp)
	Nussbaum,	“Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings” from TF	(17 pp)

**Discussion Leadership** \_\_\_\_\_