

Phil 315 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy
Fall 2014

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Course Description:

This course introduces some key concepts, ideas, and frameworks commonly used in feminist philosophy. We will especially focus on classical texts in feminist ontology, ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, and political philosophy. The first part of the course focuses on the sex/gender distinction and the implications that follow from assuming a nature/culture divide. In the second part, we will be looking at the ways in which the body has been taken up by feminists, particularly in the performativity theory of gender and approaches to sexual violence and positive sexuality. The last part of the course considers feminism in a global context and seeks possibilities for alliances across difference by exploring the relation between identity and knowledge. Throughout the term, we will grapple with broad philosophical questions such as: **How is knowledge gendered? What does it mean to do philosophy as a 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.

Even though this was designed as an introductory course that aims to introduce some of the basic tenets of feminist philosophy, students should bear in mind that this is also an upper division course with an intensive reading schedule and a discussion-oriented format that requires students to assume an active role.

Learning Goals:

- 1) Re-reading the western philosophical tradition through a feminist lens.
- 2) Becoming fluent in various approaches to feminist philosophy and getting into the habit of reflecting critically on gender and sexuality.
- 3) Considering the relation between philosophy and politics, in parallel with the relation between theory and praxis.
- 4) Historically situating our conceptions of gender and sexuality and problematizing the divide between the personal and the political.
- 5) And, as always, becoming a better writer and a thoughtful thinker.

Course Materials:

All readings will be posted on Blackboard. Please print them out and bring them to class.

Most of the readings can be found in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* by Bailey and Cuomo, which is currently out of print. The acronym FPR indicates that the reading can be found in this reader (please see the class schedule). If you find a copy and would like to use it, you are most welcome to. Otherwise please find the electronic copy on Blackboard under Course Documents.

Assignments:

Presentation (20%)

Each student will lead the class discussion for 20-25 minutes in the beginning. The presentation dates will be assigned on the first day of class. Up to two people can sign up for the same day.

Discussion Board Posts (20%)

Students will post their questions the day before each session (Mondays and Wednesdays by 6PM) on Blackboard. Alternately, you can respond to others' questions. These posts will help guide our discussion.

Paper 1 (10%) : 2-3 pages, due October 21.

Paper 2 (15%) 3-4 pages, due November 11.

Paper 3 (20%) 4-5 pages, due December 9.

Each paper will grapple with questions and issues linked to the corresponding part of the course and synthesize the reading material appropriately and coherently. Papers are expected to demonstrate meaningful independent engagement with the readings, reflexive analysis, and argumentative skills.

Participation (15%)

This includes attendance (5%) and the *frequency* as well as the *quality* of in-class contributions, including group activities and performance in other assignments (10%).

Grading:

What kind of paper deserves an "A," "B," etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

A - excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B - good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C - OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D - poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F - failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Attendance Policy:

This class has mandatory attendance policy. Class discussion is an indispensable component which cannot be made up in the case of absence. You are allowed two 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 get a passing grade. Three times late equals an absence. If you are, however, late more than 15 minutes, you will be counted as absent.

A is an exceptional grade that requires exceptional performance. One is expected to have a (near) perfect attendance record and frequent helpful contribution to class discussion in order to get an A for participation.

Late Assignments:

You will lose 10% of the credit for a given assignment for each day that you fail to submit after the deadline.

Electronics:

No electronics. No exceptions. 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 that day.

Please come and talk to me for disability accommodations.

Academic Honesty:

If you are not doing the work yourself, it is plagiarism, cheating, or some other form of academic dishonesty. Any act of plagiarism will be reported to the university and will result in an automatic F. If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism or academic dishonesty in general, come and talk to me first so that we make sure that we are on the same page.

*** 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.

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).

Class Schedule:

Part 1: Feminism, Nature, Culture

W1: Introducing Feminism

Sept 30 – Bailey & Cuomo, “Preface,” “A Feminist Turn in Philosophy” (1-8) in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* (FPR). Introduction & overview of the course.

Oct 2 – Beauvoir, “Introduction” (FPR), “Biology”

W2: Sex/Gender

Oct 7 – Fausto-Sterling, “Should There Be Two Sexes?” (FPR)

Oct 9 – Frye, “Sexism,” “Oppression” (FPR)

W3: Sex/Gender, cont.

Oct 14 – Rubin, “Trafficking Women” (FPR)

Oct 16 – Butler, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”

Part 2: Gender and the Body

W4: Performing Gender

Oct 21 – Young, “Throwing Like a Girl” **Paper 1 Due**

Oct 23 – Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”

W5: Sexual Violence

Oct 28 - Cahill, “A phenomenology of fear: the threat of rape and feminine bodily comportment” (FPR)

Oct 30 – Collins, *Black Sexual Politics* (Introduction and Chapter 1)

W6: Positive Sexuality and the Body

Nov 4 - Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic,” “Poetry is not a Luxury,” Morales, “Radical Pleasure, Sex and the End of Victimhood”

Nov 6 – Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”

Part 3: Identity, Standpoint Epistemology, and Alliances Across Difference

W7: “Woman” in a Global Context

Nov 11 – Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” Hoodfar, “The Veil in their Minds and on Our Heads”

Paper 2 Due

Nov 13 – Anzaldua, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza/Toward a New Consciousness” (FPR), Lugones, “Heterosexism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System” (FPR)

W8: Feminist Epistemology: Reason and Emotion

Nov 18 – Bordo, “Introduction” to *Unbearable Weight*, Lloyd, “The Man of Reason”

Nov 20 - Grosz, “Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason,” Jaggar, “Love and Emotion in Feminist Epistemology” (FPR)

W9: Feminist Epistemology: Identity and Knowledge

Nov 25 – Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology” (FPR), Alcoff, “Epistemologies of Ignorance”

Nov 27 – NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

W10: Feminist Praxis and Alliances Across Difference

Dec 2 – Butler, “Introduction: Acting in Concert” in *Undoing Gender*; Alexander and Mohanty, “Cartographies of Knowledge and Power”

Dec 4 – Alexander, “Remembering *This Bridge Called My Back*, Remembering Ourselves,” Boggs, “These are Times to Grow Our Souls”

W11: Finals Week

Dec 9 – Paper 3 Due