
Spring 2016
MW 2:30 – 4:10

PHIL382R/WGSS 385R

Feminist Philosophy

Instructor: Erin Tarver
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Office: Humanities 204
Office Hours: TTH 3:30 – 5:00 (and by appt.)

Overview

This class is an examination of philosophical arguments about the key theoretical concepts underpinning feminist action and thought, including the nature of gender and/or sex, the meaning of oppression, the relationship between gender, race, sexuality, and class, feminist epistemology, and the meaning of feminist politics. We will also investigate feminist philosophical responses to contemporary problems, applying theory to practice.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will articulate an understanding of the major developments in feminist theoretical approaches to questions of gender, oppression, and identity.
- Students will articulate an understanding of the unique contributions of women across a variety of backgrounds and cultures to feminist theory in particular, and the discipline of philosophy more broadly.
- Students will conduct upper-level academic research related to women and/or sex/gender.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between feminist theory and activism, and/or feminist theory and ethical living.

Grade Breakdown

Reading Quizzes (lowest 1 dropped)	15%
Argument Papers	20%
Discussion Facilitation	5%
Exams (2)	30%
Feminist Philosophy Paper OR Feminist Praxis Project	25%
Participation	5%

Grading Scale

93-100: A
90-92: A-
87-89: B+
83-86: B
80-82: B-
77-79: C+
73-76: C
70-72: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
< 60: F

Materials

Many readings (marked with ‘R’) will come from *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* (ed. Bailey & Cuomo), but there are no required textbooks for this course. Readings will be available on Blackboard or via the library website. Please PRINT copies of these readings to use in class.

Milestones

2/29

Two Argument Papers Complete

3/2

Midterm Exam

3/21

Paper/Project Proposals Due

4/18

Paper Workshop Drafts Due

4/25

Final Paper/Projects Dues

5/2

Final Exam

Assignment Descriptions

Reading Quizzes: You will have assigned reading for every class meeting (see Schedule), which you should complete prior to coming to class. Throughout the semester, there will be quizzes and in-class writing assignments that will draw on that day's reading, and may also include material from previous class notes and discussion. Quizzes and in-class writing assignments will not be announced ahead of time. I will drop the lowest two grades from your overall quiz/reading question average.

Exams: There will be two exams in this class: a mid-term and a final. All exams are cumulative.

Argument Papers: Students must complete FOUR one-page argument papers over the course of the semester, two of which must be completed prior to the midterm. ONE of the papers submitted prior to the midterm may be revised for re-grading, provided that it is re-submitted within a week of receiving an initial grade and comments. The goal of this assignment is to develop your ability to express and engage with philosophical ideas in a concise, written form; as such, NO secondary source use is permitted. In each paper you will develop ONE argument in response to an argument found in the assigned reading. Your papers will be scored on the basis of clarity, argumentative effectiveness, and the extent to which they demonstrate accurate understanding of the text at hand. Further instructions are available on Blackboard and will be distributed in class.

Discussion Facilitation: In pairs, students will be responsible for leading our class discussion **two times** during the semester, having met outside of class to prepare. With your partner, you will formulate philosophical questions that lead the class to analyze the key philosophical ideas in the assigned reading. Each of the philosophical questions you raise must be related to **central concerns** in the assigned reading. **At no point is your group to lecture the class or spend lots of time summarizing/regurgitating what the author says. You can setup questions briefly by looking at specific passages with the class, but this should not be done in a didactic way. Summarizing and lecturing the class will result in a low grade.** The goal is to figure out the most interesting philosophical questions that we can discuss in light of the reading, and to sustain a focused conversation with these questions for the length of the class. Further instructions are available on Blackboard and will be distributed in class. **You must sign up for your discussion facilitation dates by 1/20.**

Feminist Philosophical Essay OR Praxis Project: This is the major final project that you will complete this semester, which may take one of two forms: either a Praxis Project, which puts a theoretical text or texts to work in a service learning and/or activist project, or a significant argumentative term/research paper that articulates and defends a position on the value of a specific theoretical text or texts for feminist theory and/or ethics and/or philosophy.

- **Praxis Project:** *Must be accompanied by a 3-4 page paper* explaining the connections between your project and the text or texts you draw on, a summary of your methodology in choosing and completing this project, relevant secondary literature for such a project, and the conclusions you have drawn as a result. You should also submit documentation of the work you have done (the format will vary depending on the project), and give a short presentation on your work, which may be scheduled inside or outside of class, depending on student preference, and whether the project would be enhanced by exposure to a wider audience.
- **Philosophy Essay:** 7-9 pages. Must be an argumentative/thesis-driven paper concerned with at least one of the major texts and ideas we encounter in this course. It should also employ significant outside research, citing at least 5 outside sources. Papers should follow the Chicago style manual.

Participation: Philosophy is fundamentally conversational. Thus, regular, engaged participation in our ongoing conversation is a required element of this class. Participation in this class requires, minimally, that you do the following:

- Come to class regularly, and do not miss more than 2 classes for any reason.
- Refrain from using cell phones or other electronic devices in class unless given explicit permission to do so.
- Regularly (either in class or on our class Facebook page) contribute to the conversation by:
 - o Asking questions
 - o Making comments informed by the text (and citing it when you can)
 - o LISTENING to your classmates and responding to them

- Taking care not to dominate the conversation
 - Bring your book/materials to class
 - Be on time
 - Actively participate in small group activities
- Please note that **students who never speak up in our large-group discussions will earn, at most, a C for their participation.**

Schedule

1/13: Intro, What is Feminism?

1/18: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—No Class

Women, Sex, and Gender in the History of Philosophy

1/20: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Mill, *On the Subjection of Women* [excerpts]

1/25: Cooper, “Woman versus The Indian”

1/27: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, “Introduction” (R)

2/1: Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (R)

2/3: Frye, “Oppression” and Lorde, excerpts from *Sister Outsider*

2/8: Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (R)

2/10: Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (excerpts) (R)

2/15: Fine, *Delusions of Gender* (excerpts)

2/17: McKinnon, “Stereotype Threat and Attributional Ambiguity for Trans Women”

Feminist Epistemology

2/22: Alcoff, “How is Epistemology Political?” (R)

2/24: Code, “Taking Subjectivity into Account” (R)

2/29: Fricker, excerpts from *Epistemic Injustice*, Implicit Bias Tests

3/2: MIDTERM

3/7 – 3/11: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

3/14: Harding, “‘Strong Objectivity’ and Socially Situated Knowledge” (R)

3/16: Collins, “Black Feminist Epistemology”

Feminist Ethical and Political Thought

3/21: Gilligan, “Moral Orientation and Moral Development” (R) **Paper/Project Proposals Due***

3/23: Benhabib, “The Generalized and Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Moral Theory” (R)

3/28: Friedman, “Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women,” (R) and Mainardi, “The Politics of Housework”

3/30: Young, “Five Faces of Oppression”

4/4: Collins, “Prisons for Our Bodies, Closets for Our Minds”

4/6: Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts” (R)

Feminist Responses to Contemporary Problems—Topics to be Chosen by Students

4/11: TBD

4/13: TBD

4/18: TBD / **Paper/Project Workshop and Discussion**

4/20: TBD

4/25: Wrap-up Discussion—FINAL PAPERS/PROJECTS DUE

5/2: FINAL EXAM, 2-5 PM

* Students who wish to participate in the WGSS Symposium on 4/8 will need to have a brief abstract and draft PowerPoint presentation prepared to send to Dr. Del Rey by 3/25. Your paper proposal is sufficient as an abstract. **Students who participate in the WGSS Symposium will earn up to 5 bonus points on their final paper/project grade.**

Class Policies

Email Policy

I strive to stay in touch with you outside of class hours, and will generally attempt to answer messages within 24 hours. Please note, however, that I will not respond to questions sent the evening before a scheduled test or exam. Additionally, I **do not discuss grades via email**. Please make an appointment to see me if you would like to discuss any course grades.

Make-Up Work

Students may make up missed work on two (and only two) conditions: documented illness (a note from student health services or other physician good for the day in question), or official college trips (i.e., athletics trips, etc.) for which you have given me advanced notice. I **do not** allow students to make up work because of family vacations, etc., and college policy forbids rescheduling exams for such reasons. This means that you would be wise to be judicious with your absences; in the event that you must miss class for personal reasons, know that the lowest quiz grade is dropped.

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty is extremely important, and so violations of the Oxford College Honor Code will not be tolerated. I will not hesitate to report any such violations to the Honor Council. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook, and online: http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot

Disability Access

I encourage any students with disabilities that may impact their access to or performance in any component of this course to register with Oxford College's ADSR, and to let me know about necessary accommodations as soon as possible. Additionally, please be aware that my office is located on the second floor of a building without disability access. I will, accordingly, be happy to make arrangements to meet with any student on the first floor of Humanities Hall, should this be necessary.