

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

PHILOSOPHIES OF FEMINISM PHIL 206 / WS 206 / POLS 212 SPRING 2012

http://faculty.washington.edu/aw26/Courses/PhilFeminism2012/Phil206_PhilFem_2012.shtml

Instructor: Professor Alison Wylie
Class meetings: T/Th 1:30-2:50
Electrical Engineering 125

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Course description and goals

This course is an introduction to feminist philosophies. We will explore key theoretical concepts and philosophical arguments developed by feminists in response to the forms of oppression that they address as scholars and activists. We focus, in particular, on four clusters of philosophical assumptions that are articulated in very different ways by feminists and that underpin a broad spectrum of feminist perspectives: conceptions of oppression, accounts of gender identity and sex/gender systems, theories of knowledge, and questions of justice. Here are some questions to keep in mind throughout the quarter:

- What philosophical assumptions are made by the diverse feminist authors we discuss? How do they conceptualize sex/gender identity and identity-based inequities? What counts as knowledge in their analysis, and what is their vision of social justice?
- How does feminist theory relate to other critical, identity-based traditions of activism and scholarship? For example, how do feminist perspectives draw on and enrich or, in what ways are they different from and in tension with critical race theory or class-based analyses?
- What are the implications of (different) feminist philosophies for practice: in everyday life (your's for example); in scholarship (in a field you're studying); in activist work (in areas you care about or in the context of a service learning placement)?
- Why does (or should) philosophy matter to feminism, and feminism to philosophy?

The primary goal of this course is to get at the philosophical commitments that underpin feminist analysis, activism and scholarship. We hope you will come away from this course with the following:

- A working knowledge of a spectrum of feminisms, characterized by different philosophical stances on the four sets of issues we will consider: assumptions about sex/gender identity, identity-based oppression, situated knowledge, and ideals of social justice;
- Analytic skills that put you in a position to recognize when key assumptions are at work in a particular debate and to apply them to real world issues, conflicts, and positions;
- An articulation of your own position on various feminist issues that includes a rationale developed in terms of these underlying concepts and philosophies.

Required Readings

- Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo (editors), *Feminist Philosophy Reader*. McGraw Hill, 2008. (FPR)
- Joni Seager, *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*. Penguin Books, 2008. (Penguin Atlas)
- Additional readings are available through Electronic Reserves (ERes):
<https://eres.lib.washington.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search>

Course Requirements

Participation

10% of the final grade

Attendance and active participation in class discussion will be crucial to your success in meeting the formal course requirements on which you will be graded. You are expected to have read all assignments before you attend the course lectures and to come to discussion sections with informed questions about the readings. Contributions to section discussion will be the primary basis for this aspect of your grade. If you choose a **service learning option** (details follow on the next page), your service experience will be a valuable resource in class discussion.

Reading response posts

20% of the final grade

You are required to post a short reading response on your discussion section's GoPost **four times** during quarter: everyone should post an initial reading response in the second week of the quarter (topic to be specified in class), and the instructor for your section will set up a rotation for the rest of the quarter. These posts should each be brief and to the point, **one to two paragraphs long (150-200 words)**, and must be posted by **1:30 on the day of the first lecture** in the week they are due.

Make your reading responses analytic rather than descriptive. Choose one of the readings assigned in the week your response is due and identify a particular issue that it raises for you: e.g., concepts you find unclear or problematic; arguments you want to assess more systematically; questions about the real-world implications of the philosophical positions represented. If you chose a service learning option (see below) you are encouraged to draw on your service experience for these posts.

Short essays

30% of the final grade

Two short two-page (500 word) essays are required in which you put the philosophical concepts discussed in the readings to work in analysis of concrete examples of feminist activism or scholarship. The specifics of these assignments will be outlined in class, but here are the broad outlines.

Essay I: Concept Application

Choose an example of debate about, or representation of sex/gender identity in the media, or in the context of your service learning assignment, and develop an analysis of what it presupposes philosophically, drawing on concepts discussed in the first two sections of the course.

Due Friday, April 27

Essay II: Event or Service Learning Commentary

Event commentary: one option for this second essay is to choose an event on campus in which feminist issues are central and develop an analysis of how the positions and arguments presented relate to a selection of the readings discussed through the quarter. The course website offers a list of event calendars that include feminist speakers and topics; do please help us expand this list. Confirm your choice of an event with your section instructor.

Service learning commentary: the second option is to use draw on your service learning experience as an anchor for this essay. Select a key feminist concept, analysis, or position discussed in the course of the quarter and use this as a lens for analyzing some aspect of the work you're involved in through your service learning placement.

Due Friday, May 25

In-class quizzes and writing assignments

10% of the final grade

Throughout the quarter we will schedule short in-class writing assignments and concept definition quizzes on current readings and topics of discussion. These will not be announced in advance and cannot be made up.

Final Exam

30% of the final grade

A final exam has been scheduled for this class at the end of the exam week. It will include a mix of short answer concept definition questions and longer synthetic essay questions. Questions will be chosen from a study sheet circulated at the end of the quarter, and the exam will include at least one essay question that will give you the opportunity to draw on your service learning experience if you choose this option.

Friday, June 8, 2:30-4:20 pm, EEB 125

Service Learning

In the first week of class you will have the opportunity to sign up for a service learning placement. This is optional, but will be a valuable resource for class discussion and the basis for assignment options throughout the course. Here is an overview of what service learning involves; see the course requirements for details of assignments for which you can draw on your service learning experience.

What is service learning?

Service-learning provides students a unique opportunity to connect coursework with life experience through public service. Offered as an integral part of many University of Washington courses, service-learning provides students an opportunity to experience theories traditionally studied within classrooms come to life, through serving with community-based organizations. Choosing to engage in service-learning is a way to demonstrate your commitment to your community and your ability to link your academic studies to practical, real-world experiences. The Carlson Leadership and Public Service Center, located in 171 Mary Gates Hall, facilitates contacts with community-based organizations and will help you to coordinate your service-learning opportunity.

How Do I Sign Up?

Instructions for how to browse a list of organizations and service-learning positions matched with this course will be presented the first day of classes. You can also visit the Carlson Center web site at www.depts.washington.edu/leader and follow the link to SPRING 2012 Service-Learning. You can log in using your UW Net ID to browse positions starting on Monday, March 26th; the Carlson Center will send you an email if browsing is available before this time. For this class, **service-learning registration opens on Thursday, March 29th at 8 am and closes on Monday, April 2nd at noon.**

Orientation

All students are expected to complete an orientation with their registered service-learning organization as soon as possible after registering for service-learning (unless otherwise noted in the description). Please be proactive in contacting your organization (after your service-learning registration is confirmed) by phone and e-mail to either 1) schedule an orientation or 2) confirm your attendance at an already scheduled orientation session. It is expected that all service-learning students will have completed an orientation and begun their service-learning experience no later than April 9th.

Resources

Carlson Center staff are available between the hours of 9:00 am-5:00 pm Monday-Friday to assist you. Feel free to e-mail, serve@u.washington.edu with any questions you may have, or to call the office at (206) 543-4282 if you are unable to come to Mary Gates Hall 171.

Course policies and guidelines

Electronic media: you may use a computer or other electronic device in class **only** for taking notes.

Deadlines: all written assignments must be submitted online (through your section's GoPost or Drop Box) by 5:00 pm on the day they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted except in documented cases of medical emergency or personal/family crisis.

Incompletes: these will be granted subject to the UW policy outlined in the guidelines that follow this syllabus. To be considered for an incomplete in this course you must submit a written petition to your discussion section instructor by **May 24th** documenting the circumstances and outlining a detailed plan for completing the course requirements.

Academic conduct and policies: be sure to read the guidelines appended to this syllabus. Please note that plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what counts as plagiarism, or have any other questions about these standards of conduct and academic integrity, contact your section instructor.

PHILOSOPHY OF FEMINISM
Philosophy 206 / Women's Studies 206 / Political Science 212

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. DEFINING FEMINISM AND OPPRESSION

March 27: Introduction to the course and to Service Learning options.

March 29: *What is Feminism?*

Chris Beasley. 1999. "Debates Within Feminism About Feminism," and "Feminism as a Continuum."
In *What is Feminism?* pp. 25-35, 38-41. ERes

Sally Roesch Wagner. 2001. *Sisters in Spirit: Hadenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists: "The Untold Story,"* pp.37-51. ERes

Alison Wylie. 1997. "Good Science, Bad Science, or Science as Usual?" In *Women in Human Evolution*, edited by Lori D. Hager. New York: Routledge, pp. 29-35 (first section only). ERes

April 3: *Conceptualizing Oppression*

Sandra Lee Bartky. 1990. "On Psychological Oppression" FPR

Marilyn Frye. 1983. "Oppression" FPR

Audre Lorde. 1984. "The Masters' Tools Will Never Dismantle the Masters' House" FPR

Penguin Atlas: review sections on "Women in the World," "To Have and Have Not"

April 5: *class canceled*

The American Philosophical Association (Pacific Division) meets in Seattle, April 4-7. Details of events relevant to this class will be posted on the course website. The Thursday lecture and Friday sections are canceled this week.

April 10: *Privilege and World Travelling*

Peggy McIntosh. 1988. "White Privilege and Male Privilege" FPR

María Lugones. 1987. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" FPR

II. THEORIZING SEX/GENDER

April 12: *"One is not born...a woman..."*

Simone de Beauvoir. 1952. "Introduction to *The Second Sex*" FPR

Gayle Rubin. 1975. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" FPR

Cordelia Fine. 2010. *Delusions of Gender*. New York: WW Norton, chapters 1 and 2. ERes

April 17: *Intersectionality*

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" FPR

Combahee River Collective. 1983. "A Black Feminist Statement." In *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave*, edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith. Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, pp. 13-22.

April 19: *Gender Performance*

Judith Butler. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" FPR

Ann Fausto-Sterling. 2000. "Should There Only Be Two Sexes?" FPR (original is on ERes)

Ann Fausto-Sterling. 1993. "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough." *The Sciences* March/April: 20-24. ERes

Penguin Atlas: review section on "Body Politics"

April 24: Queer Identities

- Judith Halberstam. 1998. "Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum" FPR
Chris Cuomo. 2008. "Claiming the Right to Be Queer." In *The Feminist Reader*, edited by Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 241-248.

April 26: Sex/Gender Politics in Context

- Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí. 1997. "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects" FPR
Aileen Moreton-Robinson. 2000. "Tiddas Speakin' Strong: Indigenous Women's Self-Presentation within White Australian Feminism" FPR
Alison Bailey. 1998. "Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character" FPR

April 27: first short essay due

III. SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

May 1: Epistemic Advantages

- Linda Martín Alcoff. 2010. "Sotomayor's Reasoning." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48: 122-138. ERes
Uma Narayan. 1988. "Working Together Across Difference: Some Considerations on Emotions and Political Practice," *Hypatia* 3.2: 31-47. ERes

May 3: Standpoint Politics

- Derrick Bell. 1992. "Rules of Racial Standing." In *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. New York: Basic Books, 109-126. ERes
Miranda Fricker. 2006. "Powerlessness and Social Interpretation." *Episteme* 3.1: 96-108. ERes

May 8: Strong Objectivity

- Patricia Hill Collins. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems* 33(6): S14-S32. ERes
Sandra Harding. 1993. "Rethinking 'Strong Objectivity' and Socially Situated Knowledge." In *Feminist Epistemologies*, edited by Potter and Alcoff. New York: Routledge, pp. 49-82. ERes

May 10: Feminist Analyses of Science

- Nancy Tuana. 2004. "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance." *Hypatia* 19.1: 194-232. ERes
Alison Wylie. 1997. "Good Science, Bad Science, or Science as Usual?" In *Women in Human Evolution*, edited by Lori D. Hager. New York: Routledge, pp. 35-55 (last sections). ERes

IV. QUESTIONS OF CARE AND JUSTICE

May 15: Feminist Ethics of Care

- Carol Gilligan. 1987. "Moral Orientation and Moral Development" FPR
Seyla Benhabib. 1992. "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Moral Theory" FPR
Penguin Atlas: review section on "Power"

May 17: Autonomy and Care

- Marilyn Friedman. 2000. "Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women" FPR
Virginia Held. 1993. "Taking Care: Care as Practice and Value" FPR

May 22: *Dependency, Care, and Disability*

Eva Feder Kittay. 1985. "Act, Dependency Work, and Gender Equality" FPR
Susan Wendell. 1989. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability." *Hypatia* 4.2: 104-124. ERes
Penguin Atlas: review sections on "Households" and "Birthrights"

May 24: *Domestic Care Work*

Joan Tronto. 2002. "The 'Nanny' Question in Feminism." *Hypatia* 17.2: 35-51.
Cordelia Fine. 2010. *Delusions of Gender*. New York: WW Norton, chapters 5 and 7. ERes
Penguin Atlas: review section on "Work"

May 25: event commentary essay due

May 29: *Care Work in Global Perspective*

Iris Marion Young. 1987. "Difference and Social Policy: Reflections in the Context of Social Movements" FPR
Ofelia Schutte. 2002. "Feminism and Globalization Processes in Latin America" FPR

May 31: *Oppression Revisited*

Iris Marion Young. 1990. "Five Faces of Oppression." *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. ERes

June 8: Final Exam – 2:30-4:20, EEB 125