

Feminist Ethics
PHIL 605C
Fall 2010

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“Feminist ethics is not about women but *about ethics*” – Margaret Walker.

Texts:

All books are available at the bookstore and are on reserve at the library. Please buy the five monographs that we will be reading. All other readings are on electronic reserves.

Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor*. 1999. Routledge. ISBN#: 0-415-90413-7.

Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*. 2003. Oxford University Press. ISBN#: 978-0195138511.

Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Being Yourself: Essays on Identity, Action, and Social Life*. 2004. Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN#: 0-7425-1478-1.

Anita Allen, *Why Privacy Isn't Everything: Feminist Reflections on Personal Accountability*. 2003. Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN#: 0-7425-1409-9.

Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair*. 2006. Cambridge University Press. ISBN#: 0-521-00925-1.

Course Description:

What is feminist ethics? You might think that we would have to get straight on how to answer this question before beginning the course, but actually we will not address this question until the very last class (when you will be in a better position to answer it). The first three weeks will be a crash-course on feminist work from the late 1970s to the early 90s that is particularly relevant for the more recent work in feminist ethics that we will be reading. After that, we will simply read five book-length works by feminist ethicists, from the past decade or so. In some cases, we will have to ask what makes these works feminist, and what their relationship is to ethical theory that is not explicitly feminist; part of our task will be to develop a sense of what sorts of ethical theories are interesting from the point of view of feminism. We might also consider how the more recent works in (“analytic”/“Anglo-American”?) feminist ethics have lost the radical edge that was found in earlier work, and what the implications of this change are.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize students with some recent work in feminist ethics as well as some earlier work in feminist ethics and social and political thought that serves as background for the more recent work.
- To have students develop their own original, critical thinking about each of the covered topics in feminist ethics and, more broadly, about the field of ethics.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills as part of their training to become professional philosophers; these skills include understanding difficult texts; analyzing, constructing, and responding critically to arguments; engaging in conceptual thinking; developing, articulating, and defending their own positions both verbally and in writing; thinking in complex and original, but still disciplined, ways.

- To advance students in their ability to write papers that will be accepted for philosophical conferences and/or publication. Students in this course will get practice in writing a book review and a conference paper.

Course Requirements:

Class preparation and participation: Students are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in ALL seminar meetings. Please avoid scheduling travel, appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. However, **IF YOU ARE ILL PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS** (or to my office). Do email me before class time if you are ill and will be missing class.

Book projects: Each student will “specialize” in one of the five monographs. This involves giving a presentation on the book and writing a book review (with a 1,500 word limit). The book review is due one week after the last discussion of that book. We will divide up the books trying to take everyone’s preferences into account.

Seminar paper: A seminar paper with a strict 3,000 word limit is required. Seminar papers are expected to draw on at least two of the books that have been assigned and, when appropriate, additional material. I encourage each of you to meet with me a few weeks before the paper is due to start discussing your paper topic, and to continue to consult with me throughout the writing process, to whatever extent this is helpful to you. The 3,000 word limit is specified for a reason: this is the length permitted for papers to be submitted to the 2011 conference of the Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory (FEAST), to which I hope you will all submit papers (I will distribute a call for submissions; my guess is that papers will be due in February). And, incidentally, submissions to the American Philosophical Association conferences also have a 3,000 word limit, and you are all encouraged to submit your papers there as well.

Grading:

One third of the grade is based on the book presentation and book review; two thirds of the grade is based on the seminar paper. Inadequate class preparation/participation may have implications for the final grade. Please give serious attention to the quality of your participation in discussions; high quality participation (and/or a high level of improvement in participation) can raise the final grade, and inadequate (or inadequate effort at improving) participation can lower the final grade.

NO INCOMPLETES WILL BE GIVEN UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Schedule

Mon., Aug. 30

Introductions

PART I: BACKGROUND FROM DECADES PAST.

A little background in care ethics

Mon., Sept. 13

Carol Gilligan, "Images of Relationship" in *In a Different Voice*, 1982. Pgs. 24-63.

Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking" in *Rethinking the Family*, eds. Barrie Thorne and Marilyn Yalom, 1982. Pgs. 76-94.

Carol Gilligan, "Moral Orientation and Moral Development," in *Women and Moral Theory*, eds. Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers, 1987. Pgs. 19-33.

A little background in feminist social/political theory, mostly about oppression

Mon., Sept. 20

Alison Jaggar, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," in *Feminism and Philosophy*, eds. Mary Vetterling-Braggin, Frederick Elliston & Jane English, 1977. Pgs. 5-21.

Sandra Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression" in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, 1990. Pgs. 22-32. [originally published in 1979.]

Marilyn Frye, "Oppression" in *The Politics of Reality*, 1983. Pgs. 1-16.

Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. 1990. Pgs. 39-65.

A little background in feminist methodology and about "intersectionality"

Mon., Sept. 27

Carol Gould, "The Woman Question: Philosophy of Liberation and the Liberation of Philosophy," in *Women and Philosophy*, eds. Carol Gould and Marx Wartofsky, 1976. Pgs. 5-44.

Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" in *Discovering Reality*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, 1983. Pgs. 283-310.

The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 1981. Pgs. 210-218. [written in 1977].

María Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'", *Women's Studies International Forum* 6 (6) 1983. Pgs. 573-581.

María Lugones, "On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism," in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card, 1991. Pgs. 35-44.

PART II: FIVE RECENT MONOGRAPHS IN FEMINIST ETHICS.

Mon., Oct. 4

Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor* (1999), Introduction and Part I.

Mon., Oct. 11

Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor*, Part II and Part III.

Mon., Oct. 18

Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics* (2003), Part I.

Mon., Oct. 25

Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*, Part II and Part III.

Mon., Nov. 1

Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Being Yourself: Essays on Identity, Action, and Social Life* (2004), preface and chapters 2, 3, 5, 7 & 8.

Mon., Nov. 8

Anita Allen, *Why Privacy Isn't Everything* (2003), introduction and chapters 1 & 2.

Mon., Nov. 15

Anita Allen, *Why Privacy Isn't Everything* (2003), chapters 3 & 4, and conclusion.

Mon., Nov. 22

Margaret Urban Walker, 2001. "Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics." In *Feminists Doing Ethics*, eds. Peggy DesAutels and Joanne Waugh. Pgs 3-14.

Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair* (2006), chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Mon., Nov. 29

Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair*, chapters 4, 5 & 6.

PART III: WHAT IS FEMINIST ETHICS?

Mon., Dec. 6

Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Contexts*, chapters 8 (pgs. 117-120) and 13 (pgs. 207-221).

Cheshire Calhoun, "Introduction" to *Setting the Moral Compass*. Pgs. 3-19; also read the first few pages of Claudia Card's "Genocide and Social Death" in this volume, namely the section entitled "What is Feminist about Analyzing Genocide?" pgs. 161-163.

Lisa Tessman, "Introduction" to *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal*. Pgs. xiii-xxvi.