

Feminist Theory
PHIL 317G / WOMN 380D
Feminist Theory
Spring 2011
Meets T/Th, 10:05 – 11:30 AM in RC 121

Prof. Lisa Tessman
Office: Library Tower 1215
Office hours: Wed 9:00-11:00 or by appointment.
Office phone: 777-2269
Email: ltessman@binghamton.edu

Text: *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, edited by Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo. McGraw-Hill, 2007. ISBN: 978-0073407395.

Course Description:

This course will examine a range of feminist theories developed over the past several decades. We will consider the concepts of sex and gender; the relation of gender to other social, political and economic structures; the phenomenon of oppression and different approaches for resisting oppression; issues of sexuality; feminist ethical and political theories; transnational feminisms; and feminist theories about knowledge.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize students with some of the major authors, issues, and methodologies in Feminist Theory.
- To have students develop their own critical thinking about the texts as well as about the topics discussed.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills, such as: 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.

Course Requirements and Grading:

1) Attendance is required unless you are ill. Students are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in all class 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; since you will still be completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day, please get in touch with another student to find out what you missed. Four or more missed classes (unexcused) will result automatically in a failing grade.

2) Preparation and participation (worth 20% of the final grade). Prepare for each class meeting by completing the assigned reading, taking careful notes, and jotting down any questions that you may have. Preparation for class should enable active participation in class.

Especially if you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in classes, you might want to spend some time in advance jotting down what you would like to say in class. Since I do expect for every student to regularly contribute ideas to discussions, I also expect that everyone in the class will facilitate this for each other by making the classroom a place for disagreement, but not for disrespect. Excellent participation involves consistent, thoughtful contributions to discussions: expressing your understanding of the material, developing and thinking critically about your own positions, and listening carefully and respectfully to others. *No electronic distractions in class, please.* Students may use laptops for taking notes or doing in-class writing exercises, but will lose this privilege if the laptop is used for any other purpose.

3) Discussion question (worth 10% of the final grade). Each student will write and present a discussion question for one class meeting. The question should be expressed in 300-500 words, with a hard copy brought to class; it should be based on one or more of the readings for that day. The student is also responsible for facilitating 15-20 minutes of discussion based on the question. I will model a discussion question for the first day on which we discuss readings.

4) Two papers (each worth 25% of the final grade). Each student will write two papers, each 1,400-1,600 words in length (please include a word count at the top of the first page). Students will devise their own paper topics, which must be based exclusively on the reading material assigned in the course. Each paper will be developed in stages: when the first draft is due there will be a revising workshop in class, and when the second (final) draft is due, students will present their papers in class. Each paper must be submitted via turnitin.com *before class time* on the day that the paper is due. A full letter grade will be deducted from the paper grade for each day that the final draft or any of the preliminary drafts are late.

5) Final Exam (worth 20% of the final grade). The final exam consists of short (125-150 word) answers to questions about specific readings.

Plagiarism: I follow the Philosophy Department policy on plagiarism (see separate sheet). Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1

Tues., Jan. 25
Introductions.

Oppression and Resistance

Thur., Jan. 27
Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"
Sandra Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression"

Week 2

Tues., Feb. 1
Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"
Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"

Thur., Feb. 3
María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception"

Sex and Gender

Week 3

Tues., Feb. 8
bell hooks, "Reconstructing Black Masculinity"
Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Should There Be Only Two Sexes?"

Sexualities

Thur., Feb. 10
Catherine Mackinnon, "Sexuality"
Ann Ferguson, "Sex War: The Debate Between Radical and Libertarian Feminists"

Week 4

Tues., Feb. 15
Chris Cuomo, "Claiming the Right to be Queer"
Evelynn M. Hammonds, "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence"

Race and Racism

Thur., Feb. 17
Class meets without me.
Video: Kimberlee Crenshaw, "On Gendered Violence and Racialized Prisons"; available on youtube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1v9E83yTNA>> (you can skip the first 8 minutes, which is just introductory stuff).

Week 5

Tues., Feb. 22
Elizabeth Spelman, "Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought"

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

Thur., Feb. 24

Alison Bailey, "Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character"

Paper #1

Week 6

Tues., March 1

Paper #1: first draft due, revising workshop in class.

Thur., March 3

Paper #1: final draft due, presentations in class.

Postcolonial and Transnational Feminisms

Week 7

Tues., March 8

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity"

Thur., March 10

Angela Davis, "The Prison Industrial Complex"

Feminist Ethical Theory

Week 8

Tues., March 15

Carol Gilligan, "Moral Orientation and Moral Development"

Thur., March 17

Sarah Hoagland, "Separating from Heterosexualism"

Week 9

Tues., March 29

Margaret Urban Walker, "Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics"

Claudia Card, "The Moral Powers of Victims"

Feminist Political Philosophies

Thur., March 31

Eva Feder Kittay, "Taking Dependency Seriously: The Family and Medical Leave Act, Dependency Work, and Gender Equality"

Week 10

Tues., April 5

Susan Okin, "Vulnerability by Marriage"

Thur., April 7

Iris Marion Young, "Difference and Social Policy: Reflections in the Context of Social Movements"

Feminist Epistemologies

Week 11

Tues., April 12

Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology"

Uma Narayan, "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist"

Thur., April 14

Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance"

Feminist Ontologies

Week 12

Tues., April 26

Susan Wendell, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability"

Thur., April 28

Gloria Anzaldúa, "*La Conciencia de la Mestiza* / Towards a New Consciousness"

Reading Groups:

Week 13

Tues., May 3

Selections from *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, Special Issue: Feminist Legacies/Feminist Futures: The 25th Anniversary Issue (Fall 2010, Vol. 25, Issue 4).

Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hypa.2010.25.issue-4/issuetoc>

Each reading group should read the Introduction, and choose any two essays to read and discuss.

Thur., May 5

Selections from *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, Special Issue: Feminist Legacies/Feminist Futures: The 25th Anniversary Issue (Fall 2010, Vol. 25, Issue 4).

Each reading group should choose two or three additional essays to read and discuss.

Paper #2

Week 14

Tues., May 10

Paper #2: first draft due, revising workshop in class.

Thur., May 12

Paper #2: final draft due, presentations in class.