

TOPICS IN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Course Description

If feminism is a political practice aimed at ending patriarchy, what is the point of feminist philosophy? This course provides an introduction to feminist philosophy by exploring how important theoretical questions around sex and gender bear on practical ethical and political debates. Throughout the course we will examine some central topics in feminist philosophy, including: theories of gender, intersectionality, and feminist critiques of capitalism and liberalism. Questions will include: how should we understand the category 'woman'? How does gender intersect with other axes of oppression? Is capitalism inherently patriarchal? What should a political critique of sexual desire look like?

Course Aims

- To provide students with an advanced understanding of core theories in feminist philosophy
- To enable students to formulate their own considered views on a range of topics in feminist philosophy.
- To lead students to critically reflect on the role of philosophy in feminist theory and practice

Learning Outcomes:

- To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the strengths, limitations, and ethical implications of a range of approaches within feminist philosophy.
- To produce philosophically-informed analyses of a range of concepts within feminist philosophy.
- To demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of navigating feminist theory and practice.

Course requirements

Participation: Students are expected to attend all sessions on time. You must come prepared, having done the required reading in advance of the class. You will be expected to participate actively in class discussion, so make sure you jot down some questions/responses as you do the reading.

Weekly reading responses: Each week, you will be expected to contribute a short written reading response to the online forum in advance of the class. This needn't be a long, polished piece of writing – you could explain what you found intriguing/puzzling about the reading, raise a question or two for discussion, explain where you agreed or disagreed with the author's argument, etc.

Assessment: The unit will be assessed on the basis of the reading responses to be posted each week (15%), and a summative essay due on the first day of term following the course (85%). You are strongly recommended to submit a formative essay for feedback after reading week.

SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS

Readings marked with a * are required readings. The rest are recommended.

1. Introduction: What is Feminism, what is 'Feminist Philosophy'?

*Finlayson, Lorna. *An introduction to feminism*. Cambridge University Press, 2016: Chapter 2 'Feminist Theory, Feminist Practice'

*Bauer, Nancy. *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, & Feminism*. Columbia University Press, 2001: 1. Is Feminist Philosophy a Contradiction in Terms?

2. Whose Story? Feminist History of Philosophy/History of Feminism

*Witt, Charlotte and Shapiro, Lisa, "Feminist History of Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

*Finlayson, Lorna. *An introduction to feminism*. Cambridge University Press, 2016: Chapter 5 'Whose Story?'

*Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House'. Available online: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/lordedismantle.html>

3. Intersectionality

*Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.

*Zack, Naomi. *Inclusive Feminism*. Rowman & Littlefield 2005: 1. Beyond Intersectionality.

Recommended video: [The urgency of intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984: 1. Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory

Carastathis, Anna. "The concept of intersectionality in feminist theory." *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 5 (2014): 304-314.

4. What is a 'Woman'?

*Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2009: Introduction.

*Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Taylor & Francis, 1999: Part 1.

SEP article on Sex & Gender: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/>

Recommended video: Butler, 'Your behavior creates your gender' [Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender](#)

5. The Social Construction of Gender, Race, Ethnicity

*Alcoff, L. (2006-01-28). Extracts from: Latinos, Asian Americans, and the Black-White Binary. In (Ed.), *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. : Oxford University Press

*Appiah, Anthony, 1996, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," in *Color Conscious*, Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

*Haslanger, Sally. "Gender and race:(What) are they?(What) do we want them to be?." *Noûs* 34, no. 1 (2000): 31-55.

6. Spheres of Exclusion/Inclusion: Trans

*Bettcher, Talia. "Feminist Perspectives on Trans Issues", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

*Bettcher, Talia. "Trapped in the wrong theory: Rethinking trans oppression and resistance." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2 (2014): 383-406.

*Jenkins, Katharine. "Amelioration and inclusion: Gender identity and the concept of woman." *Ethics* (2016): 394-421.

Rose, Jacqueline. "Who do you think you are?" London Review of Books 9 (2016): 3-13. 18 Dec. 2017. It is also well worth reading the conversation in the comments at the bottom of this article.

7. Feminism & Capitalism

*Angela Y. Davis, "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective," in Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (1981)

*Excerpts from Cudd, Ann E., and Nancy Holmstrom. *Capitalism, for and against: A feminist debate*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. Part 1: section 4 and Part 2

Holmstrom, Nancy. "Women's Work," the Family and Capitalism." *Science & Society*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1981, pp. 186–211. JSTOR, JSTOR

8. Feminism and Liberalism

*Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice, gender, and the family*. Vol. 171. New York: Basic books, 1989: Justice as Fairness, for Whom?

*Pateman, Carole, and Charles Wade Mills. *Contract and domination*. Polity, 2007.: 1. Contract and Social Change.

SEP article on Feminist Political Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-political/>

Hosein, Adam. "Freedom, Sex Roles, and Anti-Discrimination Law." *Law and Philosophy* 34.5 (2015): 485-517.

9. Feminist Approaches to Autonomy

*Mackenzie, C. and N. Stoljar (eds.), 2000, "Introduction: Refiguring Autonomy" in their *Relational Autonomy Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self*, New York: Oxford University Press.

*Christman, John. "Relational autonomy, liberal individualism, and the social constitution of selves." *Philosophical studies* 117, no. 1 (2004): 143-164.

Stoljar, Natalie. "Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism." *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 27-41.

10. Pornography & Sexuality

*MacKinnon, Catherine A. "Sexuality, pornography, and method:" Pleasure under Patriarchy." *Ethics* 2 (1989): 314-346.

*hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984: Ending Female Sexual Oppression.

*Srinivasan, Amia, 'Does anyone have the right to sex?', <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n06/amia-srinivasan/does-anyone-have-the-right-to-sex>