

PHIU9FS Feminist Philosophy

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Course Description

Feminist philosophy critically examines philosophical concepts, questions and theories from a feminist perspective with the aim to end all sexist oppression. This course provides a contemporary introduction to feminist philosophy, covering some of the most important questions: What is gender? What is sex? How are women objectified? What is bad about pornography? What is consent? What is the difference between sexism and misogyny? Are cultural traditions compatible with feminism? Is capitalism good for the liberation of women? The course covers feminist approaches to four areas of philosophy: ethics, epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of language. It will equip you with the ability to engage critically in each of these questions and demonstrate how philosophy as a discipline could be a tool to make the world a better, less oppressive place.

Schedule

Lectures Recordings released on Wednesdays (Week 1-6, 8-11)

Seminars Fridays 1-3 pm (Week 2-6, 8-12)

Assessment

| Assignment | Description of Assignment | % | Due |
|-------------------|--|---------|------------------------------------|
| Essay | Written essay of max 2500 words (excl. Bibliography) | 50 % | March 11 th @12 noon |
| Take home Exam | Two 1000 words essay | 50 % | TBA |

COURSE OUTLINE

SESSION 1: What is feminist philosophy and what is it for? (25/1/2024)

We will begin by reading one of the most classic and still central texts, talking about the fundamental aim of feminist philosophy: ending the oppression of women. We will address the question: what is feminist philosophy? We will consider three potential answers: 1. feminist philosophy is philosophy that is useful for ending the oppression of women; 2. feminist philosophy is philosophy that constitutes feminist action; 3. feminist philosophy is contradiction in terms.

Required:

- Finlayson, L. 2016, "Feminist theory, feminist practice", in her *An Introduction to Feminism* (Cambridge: CUP), pp. 4-14.
- Beauvoir, Simone de, [1949] 1989, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley. Introduction (16 pages) New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Recommended:

- Bauer, N. 2001, “Is Feminist Philosophy a Contradiction in Terms?”, in her *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, & Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 19-45.
- Alcoff & Eva Feder Kittay (2007), “Introduction: Defining Feminist Philosophy”, in *The Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), pp. 1-13.
- Frye. M. 1983, “Oppression”, in her *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (New York: Crossing Press), pp. 1-16.
- Young, I. M. 2014. *Five faces of oppression*. Rethinking Power, 174-195.

SESSION 2: Feminist Metaphysics 1: What is a woman? (1/2/2024)

Feminist metaphysics investigates the basic structure of social reality and of what there is from a feminist perspective. We will look at the meaning of Beauvoir’s expression that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” and recent debates on the social construction of gender.

Required:

- Jenkins. K. 2016. “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*”, *Ethics* 126, pp. 394-421.

Recommended:

- Butler. J. 1999. “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”, in her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge).
- Mikkola.M. 2017. “Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/>

SESSION 3: Feminist Metaphysics 2: Transfeminism (8/2/2024)

We will continue our examination of the idea of the social construction of gender, focusing on trans issues. Is there a self prior to the institution of gender identity? Is sex itself socially constructed like gender? How should we understand queer/non-binary gender identities?

Required:

- Dembroff, R. 2020. “Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as Critical Gender Kind”, *Philosophers’ Imprint*, 20 (9):1-23.

Recommended:

- Koyama, Emi. 2003, “The transfeminist manifesto”, in *bütün a wave: Reclaiming feminism for the 21st century*, Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (eds.), Boston: Northeastern University Press, pp. 244–259. (10Pages)
- Bettcher, T. M. 2009. Trans identities and first-person authority. *You’ve changed: sex reassignment and personal identity*, 1, 98-120. (19 Pages)
- Heyes, Cressida, 2003, “Feminist solidarity after queer theory: The case of transgender”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28 (4): 1093–1120.

SESSION 4: Feminist Epistemology 1: Epistemic Injustice (15/2/2024)

Knowledge is integral to the sustaining as well as dismantling systems of oppression. How is knowledge produced and distributed? We will consider a specific form of injustice identified by feminist philosophers as epistemic injustice in relation to the production and distribution of knowledge. Why is it epistemic and why is it a form of justice?

Required:

- Fricker, M. 2007 Chapter 1 & 7, *Epistemic Injustice: power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press.

Recommended:

- Bysko, M., 2021, What Makes Epistemic injustice and “Injustice”?, *Journal of Social hilosophy*, 52(1), pp.114-131
- McKinnon, Rachel., 2016. Epistemic Injustice, *Philosophy Compass*, 11: 437-446.
- Mikkola, Mari, 2007, *Gender Sceptics and Feminist Politics*.
- Stoljar, Natalie, 2011, *Different Women*. Gender and the realism-nominalism debate. In *Feminist Metaphysics*.

SESSION 5: Feminist Epistemology 2: Standpoint Theory (22/2/2024)

Standpoint theory

SESSION 6: Feminist Epistemology 3: Intersectionality (29/2/2024)

But how many standpoints are there, and what happens if they merge, or even clash? This week, we will look at how standpoints of gender, race and class may intersect, and what this means for feminist theory.

Reading week

SESSION 7: Feminist Philosophy of Language 1: Silencing and Pornography (14/3/2024)

Feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin have famously argued that women as a group are reduced to the status of mere tools as a result of men’s consumption of pornography. We will study how feminist philosophers of language appeal to the speech act theory to show that pornography subordinates and silences women.

Required

- Mikkola, Mari (2019): *Pornography: A Philosophical Introduction*. Chapter 2. Oxford University Press

Recommended:

- Langton, Rae, 1993, “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 22(4): 293–330.
- Saul, Jennifer, 2006, “Pornography, Speech Acts and Context”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 106(2): 61–80. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9264.2006.00146.x (19 Pages)
- Mikkola, M. 2011. Illocution, silencing and the act of refusal. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 92(3),415-437.

SESSION 8: Feminist Philosophy of Language 2: Consent (21/3/2024)

What is consent in sexual relations? We will discuss the feminist perspective that when it comes to sex, consent might be ambiguous and cannot be a sufficient criterion.

Required:

- Srinivasan, Amia, 2021 “On not sleeping with your students.” in *The Right to Sex*. Bloombury.

Recommended:

- Kukla, Quill, 2021 “A nonideal theory of sexual consent.” *Ethics*, 131(2), 270-302.

- Anderson, E. (2019): Women in Philosophy: The limits of Consent in Sexual Ethics. URL: <https://blog.apaonline.org/2019/04/24/women-in-philosophy-the-limits-of-consent-in-sexual-ethics/>
- McGregor, J., 1996, “Why When She Says No She Doesn’t Mean Maybe and Doesn’t Mean Yes: A Critical Reconstruction of Consent, Sex, and the Law”, *Legal Theory*, 2: 175–208.

SESSION 9: Feminist Ethics 1: Sexism and Misogyny (28/3/2024)

What is sexism? What is misogyny? What is the difference between the two? How do these things relate to patriarchy? We will critically examine the naïve conception of misogyny as a mere psychological phenomena and situate it socially in the system of patriarchy.

Required:

- Manne, Kate. 2016, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (London: Penguin Random House), selections from chapters 1-3, pp. 31-34, 41-54, 62-105.

Recommended:

- Frye, M. 1983, “Sexism”, in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, pp. 17-40.
- bell hooks 2000. “Men: Comrades in Struggle”, in her *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (2nd ed.), pp. 68-83.

SESSION 10: Feminist Ethics 2: Cultural Traditions (4/4/2024)

Is feminism compatible with cultural traditions? Most cultures are suffused with practices and ideologies that facilitate the oppression of women in various ways. Many cultural traditions are in this way potentially anti-feminist. Can feminism co-exist with cultural traditions?

Required:

- Jennifer M. Saul (2003), “Feminism and ‘Respect for Cultures’”, in *Feminism: Issues & Arguments* (Oxford: OUP), pp. 261-292.

Recommended:

- Volpp, L. 2000. “Blaming culture for bad behaviour”, *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* 12, pp. 89-116.
- Okin, S. 1994. “Gender Inequality and Cultural Differences”, *Political Theory* 22, pp. 5-24.
- Mohanty, Chandra. 1988. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, *Feminist Review* 30, pp. 61-88.
- Jaggard, Alison. 2005. “‘Saving Amina’: Global Justice for Women and Intercultural

SESSION 11: Feminist Ethics 3: Capitalism, Prostitution and Feminism (11/4/2024)

Is feminism compatible with capitalism? Is capitalism good for the liberation of women? Should sexual labour be up for sell?

Required:

- Srinivasan, Amia. 2021 “Sex, Carceralism, Capitalism.” in *The Right to Sex*. Bloombury.

Recommended:

- Satz, Debra. 2010. “Markets in Women’s Sexual Labour”, in her *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Oxford: OUP), pp. 135-154.

- Fraser, Nancy. 2012, “Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History: An Introduction”, HALSHS-00725055. Available at: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00725055/document>
- Aschoff, N. 2019. “Why Feminism and Capitalism Can’t Coexist”, *Jacobin* (24 September edition). Available at: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/09/capitalism-socialist-feminism-inequality-sexism>
- Shrage, Laurie. 2016. “Feminist Perspectives on Sex Markets”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-sex-markets/>
- Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto.