Topics in Feminist Philosophy: Metaphysics and Epistemology
PHILOSOPHY M187 / GENDER STUDIES M110C
UCLA Summer 2019

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Course Description

This course examines gender and oppression, with a focus on metaphysics and epistemology. We will explore the following topics: the concept of ‘woman’, internalized oppression, structural oppression, feminist epistemology, epistemic injustice, intersectional feminism, transnational feminisms, and transfeminism.

Texts

All texts will be available on the course website.

Accessibility

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Graded Coursework:

Reading Quizzes

There will be very short reading quizzes several times throughout the course.

Short Essay
A short essay, 2 to 3 pages, double spaced, will be due the end of week 2 through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 3.

**Long Essay**
A longer term paper is required, of approximately 8 pages, double-spaced. A proposed paper topic is due week 3, a rough draft is due week 4, comments on another student’s paper are due week 5, and the final paper is due exam week.

**Participation Rubric**
- Full credit: Attends class regularly and *always or almost always contributes* to the discussion by raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, expanding the class' perspective, and appropriately challenging assumptions and perspectives.
- Attends class regularly and *sometimes contributes* to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.
- Attends class regularly but *rarely contributes* to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.
- Attends class regularly but *never contributes* to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.

**Final Grades**

Your course grade will be computed as follows:

- 20% Short Paper (2 to 3 pages)
- 5% Rough Draft (5 to 6 pages)
- 5% Peer Review
- 15% Reading Quizzes
- 10% Participation
- 45% Term paper (approximately 8 pages)

Final grades may be adjusted upward or downward by up to a third of a letter grade on the basis of class participation.

**Schedule of Readings**

Week 1:
1. Sara Ahmed, “Introduction” and “Feminism is Sensational” from Living a Feminist Life (2017)
(Optional) Sara Ahmed - “Complaint as Diversity Work” lecture:
https://youtu.be/JQ_1kFwkfVE

3. Introduction from The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir
4. Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: a Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily
Comportment, Mobility, and Spatiality” (1980)
5. Catherine MacKinnon, “Consciousness Raising” from Toward a Feminist Theory of the
State (1989)

Week 2: Social Construction and Gender
1. Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?”
in Resisting Reality, 221–47.
3. Katherine Jenkins, Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of
Woman
4. “Notes from the Resistance: Some Comments on Sally Haslanger’s Resisting Reality”
(2013) by Charles W. Mills
5. “Race, Intersectionality, and Method: a Reply to Critics” (2013) by Sally Haslanger

Week 3: Structural Oppression
3. Catharine MacKinnon, “Difference and Dominance: on Sex Discrimination” from
Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law (1987)
4. Kate Manne, selections from Down Girl, The Logic of Misogyny, 2018

Week 4: Feminist Epistemology & Epistemic Injustice
1. Elizabeth Anderson ‘Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense”
3. Patricia Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought” from Women,
Color” (2006).
5. Kate Manne, selections from Down Girl, The Logic of Misogyny, 2018

(Optional) Miranda Fricker – “Epistemic Injustice” lecture:
https://youtu.be/u8zoN6GghXk

Week 5: Black, Latinx, and Transnational Feminisms
1. Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” from This Bridge Called my
Back (1981)
2. Barbara Smith and Beverly Smith, “Across the Kitchen Table—A Sister to Sister Dialogue” from This Bridge Called my Back (1981)
5. Audre Lorde, selections from Sister Outsider

Week 6: Gender, Identity, and Transfeminisms
2. Iris Marion Young, “Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections of Social Structure and Subjectivity” from On Female Body Experience (2005)

Grading Rubric for Term Papers

(A, A- ) Excellent essay

• Writing is straightforward and easy to read.
• Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost.
• Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it.
• Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension of arguments to the reader.
• Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed.
• Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.

(B+, B, B- ) Good essay
• Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult.
• Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost.
• Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic.
• Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader.
• Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.

(C+, C, C-) Adequate essay

• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical.
• Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost.
• Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant.
• Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader.
• Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.

(D+ or lower) Inadequate essay

• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author’s meaning.
• Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another.
• Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the themes of the course.
• Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed.
• Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.

(F) Failing essay

• Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.
This course satisfies the UCLA diversity requirement.  
(https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Academics/Diversity-Requirement)

Academic Integrity
Be familiar with and abide by UCLA’s policies regarding academic and intellectual integrity: http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity In accordance with these policies, any suspected plagiarism will be forwarded to the Dean of Students. Do not plagiarize. Cite all of your sources.

Thanks to Lauren Schaeffer and Eric Tracey for ideas for this syllabus.