

Philosophy 275: Feminist Philosophy

9:45-11:15am M-F, Phillips 220

Summer Session I

This course fulfills the PH and US general education requirements.

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Office hours: 11:30-12:30 TR, and by appointment

Course Description

When people identify as "feminists," there seems to be a belief, or set of beliefs, that we suppose they adhere to; perhaps the belief that "men and women are equal," or the belief that "women ought to have the same rights as men." Such beliefs seem straightforwardly true, but it is not entirely clear what the beliefs amount to. What does it mean to say that men and women are equal? What does this equality amount to? Furthermore, what are the rights that women and men are supposed to have? What principles ground these rights? As we will see in this course, "feminists" offer a number of answers to these questions, not all of which are compatible with each other. As it turns out, there are a number of (often conflicting) feminist philosophies, each of which offers different answers to these questions.

This course will be dedicated to understanding some of the predominant positions in feminist philosophy, the ways in which these positions differ from one another, and which of these positions (if any) result in plausible moral and political conclusions. Questions to be explored are: the role of justice within the family, the value or disvalue of traditionally feminine virtues and activities, the moral ambiguity of "equality," what gender is, the moral status of pornography and sexual objectification, and the relationship that may exist between feminism, sexual orientation, and anti-racism.

Expectations for Students

Course Material: You must purchase two books for this course:

1. *Theorizing Feminisms*, edited by Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, (Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. *The Politics of Reality*, by Marilyn Frye, (Crossing Press, 1983).

All of the other readings for the course will be provided to you on the Sakai site for this course.

Preparation: Ideally, each class will be a structured conversation about the reading assigned for that day. Some of the readings may be quite short, but they will nonetheless be difficult - perhaps much more difficult than readings in your other classes. This course neither assumes nor requires any philosophical background or expertise, however I do expect you to have read the

material carefully, and to come to class with *questions* about the material, as well as objections that you may have to the author's assumptions or conclusions. This leads to the next expectation – participation.

Participation: You will be expected to participate in the conversation that we will have that day about the material. Raise questions, objections, and try your best to articulate any confusion that you may have. Not only do we want to know what it is that the authors we are reading think, we want to engage with them: we want to know whether what they are saying is true, and if it isn't, what exactly they have gotten wrong. Conversing with your fellow classmates is essential to this process of engagement with the material.

One crucial dimension of the quality of your participation is the level of respectfulness that you demonstrate towards others in the class. Make sure you don't speak over someone else, be sure to let others express their thoughts, and be a charitable interpreter of your classmates' comments and questions. If something sounds wrong to you, ask yourself whether you've understood the point and ask the speaker for clarification.

Given the recent public scrutiny that has re-emerged about "feminism", I encourage you to bring to class issues that you think are relevant to the material. This need not be anything "high brow": there are interesting and difficult philosophical questions that can be raised by, for example, a public figure's public endorsement of "feminism", or an advertisement that you have recently seen.

Late Assignments: You can submit any work done outside of class late without penalty, *as long as you ask me, in email or in person, for an extension*. You do not have to explain to me why you need an extension, but you need to ask for one. Late work submitted with explicit acknowledgement of an extension is likely to receive a grade only; comments will be minimal, if at all present. Late work submitted without explicit acknowledgment of an extension will not be graded except under extraordinary circumstances.

Work that is done in class (including quizzes and group work) cannot be made up for, outside of class, again except under extraordinary circumstances.

Honor Code: Your full observance of the UNC Honour Code is expected. Please familiarize yourself with the section on Academic Dishonesty in The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, accessible here:

<http://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>

Accommodations: The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. In

the first instance please visit their website <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu. Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

Expectations for Instructor

Availability: I am more than happy to talk outside of class about course material. I also recognize that many students are not comfortable speaking up in larger groups. If this is the case, please feel free to come by my office hours, or schedule a time with me to meet if those times do not work with your schedule. I am usually available via email, and will oftentimes respond in a timely fashion – this frequently can mean ‘within a few hours,’ but any response within 24 hours is considered timely. In other words, do not count on my responding to an important question via email, for instance, at 10pm the night before a paper is due.

Grading: I adhere to a strict policy of blind grading. This means that (except for a few exceptions), the work that you hand it should have only your PID number.

What constitutes good writing for a philosophy course may be unlike writing for many other kinds of disciplines. Given this, I will dedicate class time to making sure that you have a good sense of what it is that I will be looking for in your papers.

I rely on the standards set by the registrar in assigning letter grades to work. You can find the explanation of letter grades here:

<http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>

Scale:

F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
≤59	60	64	68	70	74	78	80	84	88	90	94	98

Feedback: I will provide prompt and constructive feedback on the written assignments for the course. One goal of the course will be to improve your philosophical writing, and this will be done by taking into consideration and responding to the comments, both written and oral, that I will provide.

Non-Discrimination Policy: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to equality of educational opportunity. The University does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of race, color, gender, age, national origin, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Syllabus Changes: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as appropriate, with the expectation that I will notify you via Sakai as soon as is possible.

Course Requirements (with descriptions following)

1. *Three* short quizzes, each worth 5% , **15% total**
2. Participation, including in-class written responses, **10%**
3. *Two* weekly blog posts, **10%**
4. *One* 900-1,500-word paper, **15%**
5. *One* 2,100-3,000-word paper, **25%**
6. Final exam, **25%**

Three short quizzes

Each quiz is designed to test your comprehension of the material in the readings of the unit (whether we discuss that material in class, or not), and will consist of multiple choice questions and/or short answer questions.

Participation

As mentioned above, participation is a very important part of this class. There are several aspects on which you will be graded: attendance, participation in class, use of my office hours, and, most importantly, the respect you demonstrate towards all other members of the course. One skill you will develop in this course is the ability and discipline to think seriously about a position, even if you disagree with it, without generating hostility that may inhibit dialogue and understanding.

In-class responses (As part of your Participation grade)

At various times throughout the course, you will be asked to write a response to a question that will be posed at the beginning of class. The question will be in regards to the reading assigned for that day.

Blog Posts

Each week, you will be responsible for posting two blog posts. Each blog post must be approximately 100 words in length (for reference, this paragraph is about 150 words). A successful blog post will briefly introduce some aspect of the reading that was interesting, confusing, straightforwardly false, obviously true – basically, anything that made you think! The first post every week should be on some aspect of the reading, and will be **due by 10pm on the Tuesday of that week**. The second post should introduce a real-world example of something to which one of the week's readings speaks. For instance, if something in the reading speaks to the content of a TV commercial, or the lyrics of a song, or an encounter you experienced or witnessed – that is great Second Post Material. The second post will be **due by 10pm on the Friday of that week**. Here is an example:

Week 2 (5/18-5/22)

- **First Post** (Due: 10pm on 5/19)
 - 100-word post about reading from Beauvoir (5/18) or Nussbaum (5/19).
- **Second Post** (Due 10pm on 5/22)
 - 100-word post applying any of Beauvuir, Nussbaum, Okin, Young, Addams, or Grant to some current event or first-hand experience. (Please,

do try to give yourself enough time to think about the readings, observe the world around you, and come up with an actual post. Obviously I won't know if you *really* have a friend named Alex, or if Alex was *really* being super sexist. However, you will gain much more out of this exercise if you make a good-faith effort to interpret your experience through the lens of the readings.)

Two papers

You will write two papers, each which will be written in 12-pt font, double-spaced, with 1" margins, to be submitted via Sakai in DOC/DOCX format. The first will be 900-1,500 words long (~3-5 pages), and the second will be 2,100-3,000 words long (~7-10 pages). You will be evaluated on more than just mere comprehension of the material: you will be expected to critically engage and analyze the arguments we have discussed. I will say much more about how to write these papers successfully as the deadlines approach.

Final exam

The final exam will be comprehensive, and will consist of short-answer questions and short essay-length questions. Ideally, you will feel that the exam is an opportunity for you to apply and demonstrate the knowledge that you have gained throughout the course.

Schedule

Given time constraints, this schedule is subject to change. I will announce all changes in advance on the Sakai site for the course, as well as keep an up-to-date schedule there.

All of these readings will be either in the two texts you must purchase for the course, on Sakai, or online (I will provide the link).

Unit 1		
Week 1	Introduction to the course 5/13 (W)	Read: 1) Syllabus and Schedule
	5/14 (R)	Read: Mill, <i>The Subjection of Women</i> (excerpt from H&H)
	5/15 (F)	Read: Friedan, <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> , Chapter 1 (Sakai)
Week 2	5/18 (M)	Read: Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , Introduction (Sakai) Look: http://pinterest.com/socimages/women-vs-people/
	5/19 (T)	Read:

		<p>Nussbaum, “Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings” (H&H)</p> <p>Letter to the Editor: “How Africa Understands Female Circumcision” http://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/24/opinion/1-how-africa-understands-female-circumcision-114993.html</p>
	5/20 (W)	<p>Read:</p> <p>Okin, “Justice and Gender” (Sakai)</p>
UNIT II		
	5/21 (R) *FIRST QUIZ (UNIT I)	<p>Read:</p> <p>Young, “Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics” (H&H)</p>
	5/22 (F)	<p>Read:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Addams, “Women and Public Housekeeping” (H&H) 2) Grant, “Why Men Need Women,” <i>New York Times</i> (Sakai)
Week 3	5/26 (T)	<p>Read:</p> <p>Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” (H&H)</p>
	5/27 (W)	<p>Read:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections” (H&H)
	5/28 (R)	<p>Read:</p> <p>Ruddick, “Notes Toward a Feminist Maternal Peace Politics” (H&H)</p>
	5/29 (F)	<p>Read:</p> <p>Gilligan, “Moral Orientation and Moral Development” (H&H)</p>

UNIT III		
Week 4	6/1 (M) FIRST PAPER DUE	Read: In-Class Documentary: <i>Miss Representation</i>
	6/2 (T) *SECOND QUIZ (UNIT II)	Read: Mackinnon, “Difference and Dominance: On Sex Discrimination” (H&H)
	6/3 (W)	Read: Mackinnon, “Desire and Power” and “Sex and Violence: A Perspective” (H&H) Cochrane, “How Female Corpses Became a Fashion Trend” http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2014/jan/09/female-corpses-fashion-trend-marc-jacobs-miley-cyrus [Optional] “The People Who Make Brutal Video Game Porn” http://kotaku.com/the-people-who-make-brutal-video-game-porn-1690892332
	6/4 (R)	Read: Frye, “Oppression” (PR)
	6/5 (F)	Read: Frye, “On Anger” (PR)
UNIT IV		
Week 5	6/8 (M) * THIRD QUIZ (UNIT III)	Read: Frye, “Willful Virgin or Do You Have to Be a Lesbian to Be a Feminist?” (H&H)
	6/9 (T)	Read: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” (H&H) 2) Walker, “The Only Reason You Want to Go to Heaven Is That You Have Been Driven Out of Your Mind (Off Your Land and Out of Your Lover’s Arms)” (H&H) Watch: “Hard Out Here” by Lily Allen; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0CazRHB0so

	6/10 (W)	Read: Frye, “On Being White” (PR)
	6/11 (R)	Read: Grillo, “Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House” (H&H)
	6/12 (F)	Read: Frye, “In & Out of Harm’s Way” (PR)
	6/15 (M) FINAL CLASS ** PAPER 2 DUE	Read: Frye, “Sexism” (PR)
6/17 (W) FINAL EXAM @ 8-11am		

h/t to Vida Yao, for the wonderful syllabus! All credit goes to her. ☺