

Las Positas College  
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## Course Outline for PHIL 5

### FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Effective: Fall 2008

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

PHIL 5 — FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY — 3.00 units

Introduction to feminist philosophical perspectives on such issues as gender, art, sexuality, knowledge, power, identity, popular culture, religion, ethics, and war. Emphasis placed on critical analysis as well as application to contemporary problems facing women today.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

#### Discipline:

	<u>MIN</u>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. demonstrate an understanding of the central questions and formative figures of feminist philosophy;
2. critique philosophical arguments in the domain of feminist philosophy;
3. apply theories discussed in class to personal, social, and global problems facing women today;
4. show connections between the field of feminist philosophy and other fields of inquiry such as humanities, religion, art, sociology, psychology, and the sciences;
5. synthesize personal experience, individual research, and course information into a cogent and defensible philosophical view;
6. actively explain that view to others in both written and spoken form;
7. work with others in a group environment to problem-solve philosophical issues related to feminism.

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. Definitions and historical overview
  1. Feminist beginnings in the ancient world
  2. First-wave feminism
  3. Second-wave feminism
  4. The concept of the third wave
- B. Theories of gender and identity
  1. Essentialism
  2. Non-essentialism
  3. Constructivism
  4. Process theory
  5. Psychoanalytic approaches
  6. Conceptual dualisms in gender roles
- C. Theories of sex and sexuality
  1. Sexuality and the exploitation of women
  2. Gender discrimination and sexual roles
  3. Objectifying and conceptualizing bodies
- D. Feminist Epistemology
  1. Traditional views on the acquisition of knowledge
  2. Feminist revisions to male-based systems
- E. Critiques of power
  1. Political oppression and political agendas
  2. Privacy, identity, and reproductive rights
  3. Family dynamics and power structures
  4. Hegemony in the workplace
  5. Bias in the definition and treatment of insanity
- F. Critiques of art and culture
  1. Women as depicted in art and literature
  2. Women as depicted in popular media

3. Video games, the internet, and other new media
- G. Critiques of race and race relations
  1. Critiques of racial theory as a model for the analysis of gender
  2. Causal links between racial ideologies and gender oppression
- H. Critiques of religion
  1. Gender and depictions of the Divine
  2. Religion and the justification of gender hierarchies
  3. Religion seen as an ally and opponent of women's equality
- I. Feminist Ethics
  1. Feminist critiques of abstract ethical frameworks
  2. New perspectives and the "ethics of care"
- J. Feminist responses to global problems
  1. New and traditional critiques of capitalism
  2. Feminist positions on world poverty
  3. Globalization and identity politics
  4. Feminist contributions to environmental philosophy
  5. War and gender
- K. Postmodern feminism
  1. Postmodern challenges to identity and ethics
  2. Postmodern feminists critiques of traditional feminist ideas

## VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. **Discussion** -
- C. **Student Presentations** -
- D. Final research and analysis project
- E. Course text readings
- F. Brief written assignments
- G. Multi-media presentations & analysis

## VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Lecture
  1. "Carroll Gilligan's response to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development"
  2. "Key arguments in Martha Nussbaum's essay The Feminist Critique of Liberalism"
- B. Group discussion
  1. If Kohlberg is correct about the psychology of moral development, do you think that Kohlberg or Gilligan's philosophical conclusions from those facts are more valid?
  2. Has Nussbaum sacrificed anything essential to feminism by arguing that enlightened liberalism offers the most defensible form of feminism?
- C. Student presentations
  1. New research in moral development: implications for the Kohlberg/Gilligan debate
  2. Liberalist policies in our community: do Nussbaum's arguments apply?
- D. Multi-media presentations & analysis
  1. Watch documentary film, *Morality: The Process of Moral Development*, followed by in-class group analysis of the implications for Gilligan's philosophy of the "ethics of care."
  2. View an excerpt from ABC's *Nightline* entitled, *On the Edge: America's Working Poor*, followed by in-class group analysis of the implications of this film on Nussbaum's critique of the feminist objections to liberalism.
- E. Course text readings
  1. Read excerpt from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* from class reader, and be prepared to discuss the central issues in class.
  2. Read chapter 2 entitled *The Feminist Critique of Liberalism* from Martha Nussbaum's book *Sex and Social Justice* and be prepared for class discussion.
- F. Brief written assignments
  1. Thinking back on your own experience, write a 2-page paper that uses your own moral development to argue for or against Gilligan's philosophical thesis.
  2. Use your own experiences to form an argument that supports or challenges Nussbaum's claim that feminism does not violate enlightenment ideals when those ideals are properly understood.
- G. Final research and analysis project
  1. Look back at the issues in feminist philosophy that we have covered over the course of this class. Choose one topic that is of special interest to you and compose a 5-7 page paper that contrasts the arguments and perspective of two philosophers on that topic. Drawing from research and your own ideas, make a cogent argument for which philosopher's arguments hold more validity for society as it exists today.

## VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**
  1. Papers
  2. Oral Presentation
  3. Group Projects
  4. Class Participation
  5. Final Performance
- B. **Frequency**
  1. Group discussions will occur weekly throughout the course.
  2. Student presentations will be given 1-4 times throughout the course.
  3. Multi-media presentations and analyses will occur on average 3-6 times per course.
  4. Brief written assignments will occur on average every other week.
  5. The final research and analysis project will be submitted at the end of the term.

## IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Bordo, Susan *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture.*, SUNY University Press, 1987.
2. Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* ., Routledge, 1993.
3. De Beauvoir, Simone *The Second Sex.*, Vintage Books, 1989.
4. Kittay, Eva Feder and Linda Alcoff *Feminist Philosophy.* 1st ed., Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006.
5. Lloyd, Genevieve. *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy.* ., University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
6. Nussbaum, Martha. *Sex and Social Justice.* ., Oxford University Press., 1999.
7. Nye, Andrea *Feminism and Modern Philosophy.* . 1st ed., Routledge, 2004.

## X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS:

