

Feminist Philosophy

Isaac Wilhelm (iwillhelm@nus.edu.sg, isaacwilhelm.com)

PH3217

Fri 3pm, Spring 2022

Office hours: Tues 5:30-7:30pm and by appt.

Course Description

What sorts of things are genders? How is gender related to our social practices? What is it to be a woman, or a man, or a trans woman, or a trans man, or bigender, or agender, or genderfluid, or any of the other genders which there are? Similarly, what sorts of things are races, and what is it to be one race rather than another? How do different social properties, like gender and race, interact? What specific sorts of oppression do certain people—with certain genders, or races, or other social properties—face? And how should all these questions inform our pursuit of social justice: for example, in disability activism, and in opposing sexual violence?

Throughout this course, students will explore some answers to these questions. We will begin with five weeks on gender: what oppression and privilege are, how gender properties are socially constructed, what gender is, and more. The next three weeks will focus on topics related to race: how race intersects with gender, what race is, and so on. For two weeks after that, we will discuss feminist theories of some other related topics: disability, and sexual ethics. In the last two weeks, we will focus on feminism in southeast Asia in particular: feminist theories of military conscription, and the relationship between Daoism and standpoint epistemology.

We will discuss difficult, sensitive topics in this course. Some of you may have strong political views about some of the topics. And some topics may, for some of you, be extremely personally significant. So when engaging in discussions, keep that in mind. Everyone should treat everyone else with thoughtfulness, kindness, and respect.

Course Requirements

1. Participation (100 points).
 - Students are expected to ask questions, attend all lectures, and occasionally work together in small groups.
 - Each student is required to attend office hours at least once. Email me if you are busy during my scheduled office hours, and we will find a different time to meet.
 - See the course website for the rubric which I use to grade participation.
2. Final paper, first draft (100 points).
 - Due date: Mar 25 at 11:59pm.
 - Must be in the range 1500-2000 words.
 - Closer to the due date, a detailed description of this assignment will be posted to

- the course website.
3. Final paper, final draft (100 points).
 - Due date: April 13 at 11:59pm.
 - Must be in the range 3000-3500 words.
 - Must be an expanded version of your first draft, one which takes account of my comments.
 - Closer to the due date, a detailed description of this assignment will be posted to the course website.

For information about various course policies—for instance, the late assignment policy, the grade appeals policy, and the make-up work policy—see the course websites.

1. LumiNUS course website: <https://luminus.nus.edu.sg/modules/908e4f69-538f-401c-a7cb-8c73d3e6d2bb>
2. My course website: isaacwilhelm.com/teaching.htm

Learning outcomes

By this course's conclusion, you should be able to

- present some basic ideas of feminist philosophy,
- defend those ideas against standard criticisms,
- identify forms of oppression, and privilege, that often get overlooked,
- write clear, coherent papers that argue for a particular thesis, and
- discuss difficult, politically charged topics respectfully.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Please adhere to the NUS policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe: they include an automatic failing grade for the course, and possibly worse. A comprehensive overview of these policies can be found at <https://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/programmes/plagiarism.html>.

Accessibility

This class should be a great, fun, and educational experience for everyone. And of course, everyone deserves equal access to all educational opportunities at NUS. Those with disabilities are encouraged to speak with me if that would be helpful, and to avail themselves of the services provided by the Disability Support Office: <https://nus.edu.sg/osa/student-services/disability-support>.

Schedule

The readings are drawn from several sources: handouts that I have written, articles, websites, and selections from books. All readings are required. They are all posted on the course's LumiNUS website.

In the schedule below, I list the requirements and readings for each week. For the requirements, I list the due dates. Bolded text indicates something which you will need to submit for a grade, like a paper. Note that the readings, for any given week, should be completed before the lecture in that week.

This schedule is preliminary, and subject to change. Announcements about changes in the readings—whenever they occur—will be made in class, and only later added to the syllabus. You are responsible for knowing about those changes, if you miss class.

Week 1: Introduction to Feminist Philosophy

Requirements

- Lecture: Jan 14.

Readings

- Handout: arguments.

Week 2: Oppression and Privilege

Requirements

- Lecture: Jan 21.

Readings

- “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression” (hooks).
- “The Politics of Reality,” pp. 1-16 (Frye).
- “Five Faces of Oppression” (Young).

Week 3: Gender as a Social Phenomenon

Requirements

- Lecture: Jan 28.

Readings

- “Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender,” sections 1 and 2 (Mikkola).
 - See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/>
- “The Second Sex,” Introduction (de Beauvoir).
- “Ain’t I a Woman?” (Truth).

Week 4: Non-Binary Genders

Requirements

- Lecture: Feb 4.

Readings

- “Trans 101” (Bettcher).
- “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies” (Stryker).

Week 5: What is Gender?

Requirements

- Lecture: Feb 11.

Readings

- “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” (Haslanger).
- “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman” (Jenkins).

Week 6: What is Race?

Requirements

- Lecture: Feb 18.

Readings

- “Racial Realism I: Are Biological Races Real?” (Spencer).
- “Cultural Constructionism” (Jeffers).

Week 7: Intersectionality

Requirements

- Lecture: Mar 4.

Readings

- “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (Crenshaw).

Week 8: Intersectionality

Requirements

- Lecture: Mar 11.

Readings

- “From Patriarchy to Intersectionality” (Patil).
- “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex” (Crenshaw).

Week 9: Disability

Requirements

- Lecture: Mar 18.

Readings

- “The Minority Body” pp. 9-53 (Barnes).

Week 10: Sexual Ethics and Sexual Violence

Requirements

- Lecture: Mar 25.
- **Final paper (first draft) due: Mar 25, 11:59pm.**

Readings

- “Beyond Yes or No: Consent as a Sexual Process” (Bussel).
- “Surveying Rape: Feminist social science and the ontological politics of sexual assault” (Rutherford).

Week 11: Military Conscription

Requirements

- Lecture: April 1.

Readings

- “The Spread of Feminism and the Silence of Gendered Militarism in the Neoliberal Era” (Choo).

Week 12: Daoism and Standpoint Epistemology

Requirements

- Lecture: April 8.

Readings

- “What Would Zhuangzi Say to Harding? A Daoist Critique of Feminist Standpoint Epistemology” (Jiang).

Week 13: Final Paper

Requirements

- **Final paper (final draft) due: April 13, 11:59pm.**