

Feminist Philosophy

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PH3217

Tues 9am, AS7-0106, Fall 2023

Office hours: Tues 11:30am-12:30pm and by appt, AS3 05-04

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 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 colonialism?

Throughout this course, students will explore some answers to these questions. We will begin with five weeks on gender: what gender oppression and gender privilege are, how gender properties are socially constructed, what gender is, and more. The next two weeks will focus on topics related to race: how race intersects with gender, what race is, and so on. In the week after that, we will discuss feminist theories of disability. Finally, in the last three weeks, we will focus on feminism in southeast Asia in particular: feminism and colonialism, 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.
 - See the course website for the rubric which I use to grade participation.
2. Final paper (100 points).
 - Due date: Oct 31 at 11:59pm.
 - Must be in the range 1000-1500 words.
 - Closer to the due date, a detailed description of this assignment will be posted to the course website.

3. Oral presentation (100 points).
 - Due dates: Nov 13 at 9am-5pm, and Nov 14 at 9am-2pm.
 - Must respond to comments on your final paper, by talking with me.
 - Closer to the due date, I will discuss the requirements for this oral presentation in detail.

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. Canvas course website: <https://canvas.nus.edu.sg/courses/47418>
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 here:

<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/student-accessibility-unit>

Schedule

The readings are drawn from several sources: articles, websites, and selections from books. All readings are required. And all are posted on the course's Canvas website.

In the schedule below, I list the requirements for each week. The requirements include attending lectures, doing some reading, submitting a paper, and giving an oral presentation to me. Bolded text indicates an assignment which will be graded, like a paper or a presentation. Note that the readings, for any given week, should be completed before the lecture in that week.

Announcements about changes in the readings—if they occur—will be made in class, and only later added to the syllabus. You are responsible for knowing about those changes.

Week 1: Introduction to Feminist Philosophy

Aug 15

- Lecture.

Readings

- “Logic for Justice,” Chapters 1 and 2 (Wilhelm).
- “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression” (hooks).

Week 2: Oppression and Privilege

Aug 22

- Lecture.

Readings

- “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression” (hooks).

Week 3: Oppression and Privilege

Aug 29

- Lecture.

Readings

- “The Politics of Reality,” pp. 1-16 (Frye).
- “Five Faces of Oppression” (Young).

Week 4: Gender as a Social Phenomenon

Sept 5

- Lecture.

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 5: Genderspace

Sept 12

- Lecture.

Readings

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

Week 6: What is Gender?

Sept 19

- Lecture.

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 7: What is Race?

Oct 3

- Lecture.

Readings

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

Week 8: Intersectionality

Oct 10

- Lecture.

Readings

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

Week 9: Disability

Oct 17

- Lecture.

Readings

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

Week 10: Feminism and Colonialism

Oct 24

- Lecture.

Readings

- “Decolonizing Universalism” pp. 21-49 (Khader).

Week 11: Military Conscription

Oct 31

- Lecture.
- **Final paper due by 11:59pm.**

Readings

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

Week 12: Feminism and Buddhism

Nov 7

- Lecture.

Readings

- “Kamma, No-Self, and Social Construction” (Hu).

Week 13: Oral Presentation (no lecture)

Nov 13

- **Oral presentations, 9am-5pm.**

Nov 14

- **Oral presentations, 9am-2pm.**