

PHIL 43338  
Feminism and Philosophy  
Professor: Sara Bernstein

MW 12:30-1:45pm, Malloy 215

This course will examine numerous timely topics related to feminism from a contemporary analytic philosophical perspective, including the nature of biological sex and gender, gender equality, misogyny, implicit bias, epistemic harm, objectification, intersectionality, and sexual consent. Readings will be drawn from philosophy, fiction, history, and contemporary media.

Textbooks: Kate Manne, *Down Girl*  
Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*

All other course texts will be posted and linked on Sakai.

Assessment:

- 30% class participation
- 10% 20 minute presentation on a course topic
- 30% medium paper
- 30% final long paper

### **Tentative Schedule**

Jan 16: Introduction

Background reading:

- Mari Mikkola, "Dehumanization" (Chapter 6 of *The Wrong of Injustice: Dehumanization and its Role in Feminist Philosophy*)
- Song: Rachel Lark, "Women are People"

### Sexism, Oppression, and Misogyny

Jan 21: Class cancelled for MLK Day events.

Background reading on oppression:

- bell hooks, "Feminism: a Movement to End Sexist Oppression"
- Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"

Jan 23: Misogyny

- Kate Manne, "Threatening Women" (Chapter 1 from *Down Girl*)
- Kate Manne, "Discriminating Sexism" (Chapter 3 from *Down Girl*, pp 78-84)

## Bodies

Jan 28: Fat Phobia (Guest lecturer: Louise Williams)

- Roxane Gay, "Reaching for Catharsis: Getting Fat Right (Or Wrong) and Diana Spechler's *Skinny*" (from *Bad Feminist*)
- Michael Hobbes, "Everything You Know About Obesity is Wrong" (*Huffington Post* September 19 2018)

Jan 30: Orthorexia (Guest lecturer: Louise Williams)

- Christina van Dyke, "Eat Y'self Fitter: Orthorexia, Health, and Gender"
- "Aww! These Women Spent Their Entire Work Lunch Trading Excuses for Why They Were So Hungry", (*Reductress.com*, February 2018)
- Song: Rachel Lark, "I Wanna Lose Five Pounds"

Feb 4: Body Norms and "Femininity"

- Sandra Lee Bartky, "Skin Deep: Femininity as a Disciplinary Regime"
- Sara Protasi, "The Perfect Bikini Body: Can We All Really Have It? Loving Gaze as an Antioppressive Beauty Ideal"
- Soofiya Andry, "Deviant Bodies"

Feb 6: Regulating and Medicalizing Women's Bodies

- Kim Brooks, "America is Blaming Pregnant Women for their Own Deaths" (*New York Times*, November 2018)
- Serena Williams, "What my life-threatening experience taught me about giving birth" (*CNN*, February 2018)
- Margaret Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale" (Excerpt)

## Race, Gender, and Intersectionality

Feb 11: Racist Beliefs

- Rima Basu, "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs"
- Roxane Gay, "The Racism We All Carry" (from *Bad Feminist*)

Feb 13: Experiencing Racism

- Aness Webster, "Racism and Shame"
- Erin Beeghly, "What is a Stereotype? What is Stereotyping?"

## Feb 18: Intersectionality: The Concept

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics"

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The Urgency of Intersectionality" (Video)

Optional: Sara Bernstein, "The Metaphysics of Intersectionality"

## Feb 20: Intersectionality in Practice

- Trina Grillo, "Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master's House"

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "We Should All Be Feminists" (excerpts)

- Hope Reese, "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: I Became Black in America" (*JSTOR Daily*, August 2018)

- "Wow! This Working-Class Mom Is Forced to Have It All" (Reductress.com, April 2017)

## Feb 25: Feminist Solidarity

- bell hooks, "Holding My Sister's Hand"

- Roxane Gay, "How to be Friends with Another Woman" (from *Bad Feminist*)

## Feb 27: Gender, Oppression, and Sexual Identity

- Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"

- Matthew Andler, "What is Sexual Identity?"

## Sexual Consent

### Mar 4: Consent (I)

- Tom Dougherty, "Affirmative Consent and Due Diligence"

- Tom Dougherty, "Sex, Lies, and Consent"

- Song: Rachel Lark, "For the Boys"

### Mar 6: Recap / Open discussion before spring break

### Mar 18: Consent (II)

- Rebecca Kukla, "That's What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation"

- Optional: John Danaher, "Could there ever be an app for that? Consent Apps and the Problem of Sexual Assault"

#### Mar 20: Consent (III)

- Kristen Roupenian, "Cat Person" (*New Yorker*, December 2018)
- Aaron Yarmel, "Bad Sex (and what to do instead)" (*Medium*, April 2018)

#### Mar 25: Sexual Entitlement

- Jia Tolentino, "The Rage of the Incels" (*New Yorker*, May 2018)
- Amia Srinivasan, "Does anyone have the right to sex?" (*London Review of Books*, March 2018)
- Erin Tatum, "This is Why Being a Nice Guy Just Isn't Enough" (*Everyday Feminism*, April 2015)
- Extra Credit TV Episode: Black Mirror, "USS Callister"

### Rape Culture, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence

#### Mar 27: Sexual Assault in Society

- Kate Manne, "Exonerating Men" and "Suspecting Victims" (Chapters 6 and 7 of *Down Girl*)
- Jill Christman, "Slaughterhouse Island" (From *Not that Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture*, ed. Roxane Gay)
- Extra credit movie: *The Hunting Ground*

#### Apr 1: Sexual Harassment

- Aubrey Hirsch, "Fragments" (From *Not that Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture*, ed. Roxane Gay)
- Jodi Kantor and Meghan Twohey, "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades" (*New York Times*, October 2017)
- Susan Fowler, "Reflecting On One Very, Very Strange Year At Uber" (Blog post, February 2017)

### Implicit Bias and Epistemic Harm

#### Apr 3: Implicit Bias

- Meredith Meyer, Andrei Cimpian, & Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Women are underrepresented in fields where success is thought to require brilliance"
- Curt Rice, "How blind auditions help orchestras to eliminate gender bias" (*The Guardian*, October 2013)

Apr 8: Doubting Women

- Rebecca Solnit, "Cassandra Among the Creeps" (Harper's Magazine, October 2014)
- Video: "Key moments from Christine Blasey Ford's testimony" (BBC, September 27 2018)

Apr 10: Epistemic Harm (I) (Guest Lecturer: Char Brecevic)

- Miranda Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice"

Apr 15: Epistemic Harm (II) (Guest Lecturer: Char Brecevic)

- Kirstie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing"

Apr 17: Topic TBA (Guest Lecturer: Char Brecevic)

- Reading TBA

Apr 22: Easter Break: no class

What the Future Should Look Like

Apr 24: Gendered Speech

- Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, "She/ He/ Ze/ They"
- Arwa Mahdawi, "Allow me to womansplain the problem with gendered language" (*The Guardian*, April 2019)
- "Why My Husband is Such a BoyBoss", (Reductress.com, October 2018)

Apr 29: Feminism and the Future

- Kate Manne, "The Giving She" (Conclusion of *Down Girl*)

May 1: Wrap-up.

Some notes concerning...

**Course content:** Some of the texts in this class contain content that people might find uncomfortable, offensive, or triggering. Some of the articles and stories are sexually explicit; many include descriptions, more or less graphic, of various kinds of abuse (both physical and psychological), rape and other forms of sexual assault, harassment, or degradation. These issues also come up topically in some of the philosophical readings. Please feel free to discuss concerns about this content with me.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is representing another person's work as one's own. Outside works must be clearly cited or placed in quotes. Any cheating will be handled according to the university's policy on academic dishonesty. Please see the Honor Code for more information.

**Extra Credit:** There will be a few extra credit opportunities.

**Syllabus Changes:** It is possible that topics will be added, removed, or changed on the syllabus. If this happens, it will be announced in class and over email. Please check your email before every class.

Ways to reach me:

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