

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY
PHI 246: FEMINIST PHILOSOPHIES
Department of Philosophy
Women's and Gender Studies Program
FALL 2014

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I. **COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES:**

This course introduces students to some of the most basic tools of feminist philosophy. A significant amount of feminist philosophy applies traditional Western philosophical methods, concepts, and approaches to feminist topics. Western academic philosophy offers many helpful conceptual tools for scrutinizing beliefs about identity, sexuality, work, violence, resistance, knowledge, politics, ethics, and reality! As a research program feminist philosophy has a number of distinct projects including (1) uncovering the gendered, raced, Western/colonial, heteronormative, or able-bodied presuppositions embedded in the Western academic philosophical canon; (2) raising new questions from the standpoint of marginalized groups; and (3) transforming the discipline by introducing new approaches to traditional questions in ethics, politics, metaphysics and epistemology.

This course is aimed at two student populations: philosophy students with limited exposure to feminism and gender studies, and women's and gender studies students with limited exposure to philosophy. Feminist Philosophies introduces both groups to many of the basic theoretical concepts and arguments feminists have developed in response to the forms of oppression that are both the subject of feminist scholarship and that animate feminist activism

This course counts for the WGS Minor: The minor in Women's and Gender Studies enhances any undergraduate major by integrating a working knowledge of gender issues with the student's field(s) of study. The **21 credit hours required for the minor** are drawn from diverse academic disciplines. For more information please contact our WGS advisor Dr. Stacia Kock, skock@ilstu.edu. Or, visit our webpage: <http://wgs.illinoisstate.edu/academics/undergrad/>

II. REQUIRED READINGS: There are no textbooks for this class that you need to buy. All course materials can be downloaded from ReggieNet. Please note that many readings have similar titles and sometimes there are more than one reading by the same author. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU DOWNLOAD THE CORRECT READINGS!!!!!!

HOW TO GET TO REGGIENET: For problems with ReggieNet please call the ISU Help Desk: 438-HELP. If readings are missing, please contact me directly.

- Point your browser [Firefox works best for ReggieNet] to the Illinois State University homepage: <http://illinoisstate.edu/>
- Click on “My Illinois State” [bottom left].
- Click on the “Central Login” button in top left corner, and type in your ULID and password.
- Click on the “Academics” tab at the top of the page.
- Under the “Course Manager” heading you’ll see “ReggieNet.” Click on that. Your courses will be listed at the bottom. Click on [PHI 246 001 - Feminist Philosophies](#) **MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE LOOKING UNDER THE FALL 2014 TAB!**
- Click on “Resources and Material” on the left-hand side of the page. The menu below will appear with all of the course resources. Resources are organized in folders. Powerpoints will be posted *after* each class.

Location: PHI 246 001 FA2013 - Feminist Philosophies Resources

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III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

QUALITY CLASS PARTICIPATION and ATTENDANCE: Attendance and active participation in class discussion is crucial to your success in meeting the formal course requirements. You are expected to have read all assigned readings *before* you attend class. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to ask informed questions.

Lectures are designed to assist students in three ways: (1) situating each reading historically, (2) learning to read philosophical material carefully, and (3) cultivating writing skills necessary to summarize arguments in your own words. The course encourages the development of critical thinking skills through regular writing assignments and class discussions. You will be responsible for the material presented during the lectures.

Attendance: You are permitted **three** unexcused absences. After your third absence your participation grade will be dropped by one letter. For example, if you are absent four times, then your participation grade will drop to a B. Five absences earn you a C, six a D, and so on. I

will keep track of attendance with a daily sign in sheet at the beginning of class, so please sign for each class period. **IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN SEVEN UNEXCUSED ABSENCES YOU CANNOT PASS THIS CLASS.**

B. WRITTEN WORK: Written work for this class will consist of two take-home papers and short arguments summaries called “microessays.” **YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL WRITTEN WORK TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THIS CLASS. STUDENTS WHO DO NOT COMPLETE ALL THE WORK CANNOT EXPECT TO PASS THIS CLASS.**

Thought Papers: These assignments are shaped by a series of questions to guided discussion on a particular topic. This writing exercise is designed to encourage students to make connections between articles in a unit and common themes across topical units. There will be a mid-term and final thought paper.

Microessays: These one-page single-spaced summaries are argument-focused abstracts of assigned readings. They are designed to encourage you to read philosophical texts carefully with an eye toward putting the author’s argument into your own words. We will be working on this skill throughout the semester. *Microessays require very careful readings of particular texts. They take at least EIGHT hours to write well. Please plan accordingly.*

C. EVALUATIONS: Your final letter grade will be based on the following.

Three Microessays (15% each)	45%
Two Papers (25% each)	50%
Participation and Attendance(5%)	05%

The following describes the meaning of letter grades for written assignments:

"A": The student easily integrates all parts of the question into a precise, accurate, well-organized, and well-argued discussion. Answers demonstrate a working knowledge or understanding of the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The student has the ability to put relevant ideas into her or his own words. Answers are well supported with relevant evidence. The student is attentive to spelling and grammar and uses correct citations.

"B": The student answers the question with a good understanding of the material by drawing on relevant data for support, but is either missing some important aspect of the answer, or has arguments that are not fully developed. Some supporting information may not be complete or relevant. The answer demonstrates some ability to put ideas into his or her own words. The student has a few errors in spelling and grammar and mostly use correct citations.

"C": The student’s answer does not show a distinct understanding of the material; It only reiterates lectures, discussions, readings. Most supporting information is not

relevant to the question, but is a random recitation of ideas from class notes. There is no organization of material independently of lecture notes. Some errors in principle or fact. No argument development. The student has serious errors in grammar, citations, and spelling.

"D": The student's answer shows only vague familiarity with lecture notes, and readings, and no general understanding of question. Serious errors in principle and fact. Little or nothing to organize. Ideas are presented randomly and unclearly. In some cases irrelevant information is presented as an answer to the question. The student's grammar and citation style and spelling are poor.

"F" The student's answer is a clueless attempt to make something up that sounds like class lectures, or expounds on a topic distantly related to the question. Poor organization, citations, grammar and spelling.

D. LATE WORK: All assignments must be turned at the end of class on due date. Early work is always accepted. I will accept late work, but I reserve the right to deduct points for work handed in after the due date. I will be flexible about due dates in cases of illness, childcare issues, or family emergencies, but I would appreciate you letting me know about these issues in advance if possible.

E. READING/ASSIGNMENTS Readings are to be prepared *in advance* of class lectures and discussions. We will be working closely with the readings during our class time, so it is imperative that you come prepared and ready to ask questions. ***Philosophical material is very time consuming and requires students to read selections more than once.*** Your first reading should be a comprehensive reading that charts the author's general argument structure. The second reading should be done with attention to filling in the details of the author's position.

Lectures will frequently cover material not covered in the assigned readings, and for which you will be held responsible. Students are expected to exhibit a *reflective* understanding of the readings in class discussions and in written work. These means you have made a good faith effort to understand the material and think about how it is related to the content of the class.

F. CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Students are expected to behave in a manner consistent with being in a professional environment. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged in a respectful manner. Open hostility, rudeness, and incivility are discouraged and will result in appropriate action. Mechanical disruptions (cell phones, pagers, electronic games, music players, etc.) are extremely distracting. Students acting in a disruptive or uncivil manner may be dismissed from the class for the remainder of the class period. If necessary, referrals may also be made to Community Rights & Responsibilities for violations of the Code of Student Conduct. Please keep the following in mind.

- **Talking to classmates during class**, even if it's related to the class, disrupts the learning environment. If you have questions about something someone said please raise your hand and ask them.
- **Inform the instructor when you may have to arrive late or leave early.** If you arrive late to class, please sit down quietly near the entrance. If you have to leave early, please sit near the exit so that your departure does not disturb the class.
- **Zero Tolerance cell phone policy.** Turn off your cell phone. Please do not text or answer emails during class. THIS IS VERY DISRUPTIVE to my lecturing and to our discussions!!!! Students texting or emailing during class will be asked to either surrender their phone for the class period or leave.
- **Do not make audio or video recordings of class discussions or lectures** without permission of the instructor or the office of disability concerns.
- **Support your fellow students through the learning process.** Make an effort to get to know your classmates, and help them out when you can. Share notes, share resources. Get to know at least three people you can rely on for notes if you miss the class.

G. ACCOMODATIONS and RESOURCES:

Sexual Assault Survivor's Resources: The University is committed to both supporting students' well being and safety and acting to ensure the safety of our campus community. All university faculty and staff are mandated by Federal law to report acts of sexual violence/assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual harassment so the University can respond and investigate. Only Student Counseling Services staff and the university psychiatrist are not required to report. Victims of such incidents are free to choose their level of involvement in University and/or police investigations. There is an extensive network of support resources for survivors of such incidents; talking with someone about what happened aids recovery and adjustment.

- ✓ Reporting options: ISU Police 911 or (309) 438-8631.
- ✓ Non-criminal reporting options: Equal Opportunity Office (309) 438-3383. Or, EqualOpportunity.IllinoisState.edu
- ✓ Sexual Assault Prevention and Survivor Services (Student Counseling Services): (309) 438-3655 or counseling.illinoisstate.edu (free and confidential)

Students with Disabilities: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns in 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TTY). If you need materials translated into the braille alphabet please contact me immediately so we can make arrangements through disability concerns. They often need two weeks advanced notice.

Students with Children: Children are welcome in class if they are not disruptive and can sit quietly. Keep in mind some of the material in this class is not for G audiences.

Mental Health and Well-Being: Life at college can get very complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at counseling.illinoisstate.edu or by calling (309) 438-3655.

Absences Due to Student Bereavement. Students who experience the death of an immediate family member or relative as defined in the University Student Bereavement Policy will be excused from class for funeral leave, subsequent bereavement, and/or travel considerations. More information is available in the Student Bereavement Policy at <http://www.policy.illinoisstate.edu/2-1-27.shtml>

H. TIPS FOR READING PHILOSOPHY: Research shows that the more different ways you present information to the brain the easier it is to learn: hear it, see it, say it, write it, practice it, highlight it, quiz it, etc. The most common problems with reading involve short attention spans. Reading scholarly material takes training and practice. It is a lot like jogging. At first you won't be able to run 5 miles, but if you run a bit each day, you'll soon reach your goal. If you will read through regularly, following the instructions below, what is initially frustrating and hard work, becomes enjoyable and exhilarating.

- **Plan to read in your prime study time.** If you are tired or distracted, you will have difficulty concentrating on these texts. Set a specific number of pages to read within a specific amount of time and organize your work into short tasks for high concentration.
- **As you read the material, highlight, circle, or draw arrows to identify key terms, central themes and their supporting premises, and connections between ideas.** If you own the book, you can also take notes in the margins, or electronically in a pdf reader format or use post it notes. This will enable you to concentrate and stay focused while reading. The process of reading and deciding if the material is important enough to be underlined increases memory for that material.
- **When you have finished reading ask yourself THREE questions:** (1) What is the central thesis that the author is trying to argue for here, and (2) What are the main ideas, arguments, and concepts that s/he uses to convince me of her or his thesis? (3) How do these ideas fit together? Doing this is essential to understanding what you've read. Review the highlighted sections of the article to assist you in this process. Also write down any questions you have or claims you don't understand. These can be brought up in discussion to insure that you understand the readings. Think about how the issues and themes of this article fit in with the class material.

This course requires that you read everything, including this syllabus, very carefully!! Once you have finished reading this syllabus, please send me an e-mail saying "Have a great semester!" This way I know how many careful readers I have in the class.

- **Additional Online Philosophical Resources:** Like all disciplines, philosophy uses terms of art, concepts and ideas with which you might not be familiar. Here are a few online resources that you may turn to for guidance. Many have very good articles on feminist philosophy.
 - **PhilPapers [Feminist Philosophy]:** <http://philpapers.org/browse/feminist-philosophy/>
 - **The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy:** <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>
 - **The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:** <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
 - **Tips for Writing Philosophy:** <http://www.philosophypages.com/sy.htm#wri>
 - **Philosophical Terms Dictionary:** <http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/index.htm>
 - **Being a Woman in Philosophy Blog:**
<http://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/page/2/>

I. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: CHEATING and PLAGIARISM: Academic Integrity is expected in all classroom endeavors. Plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Student Code of Conduct which is available:

<http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/students/get-help/crr/code-of-conduct.shtml>

Students who violate university policy on academic honesty can expect me to pursue such matters to the full extent of ISU conduct codes (up to and including seeking expulsion from the university). Any work submitted with evidence of cheating or plagiarism will automatically receive a failing grade for the assignment. The *ISU Faculty Disciplinary guide* offers the following examples of plagiarism. This is a partial list:

- Turning in someone else's work as your own
- Copying materials without footnoting/citing
- Making up sources on a bibliography
- Fake an illness to avoid a test or assignment due date
- Submit the same paper to another class without permission
- Purchasing term papers or other work and turning it in as your own
- Sabotage someone else's work
- Failing to report grade errors
- Collaborating on assignments without instructor's permission
- Engaging in bribery or blackmail
- Hiring a ghost writer
- Using papers found on the Internet as your own work
- Altering or forging an official university document

It is your responsibility to understand how to cite scholarly material properly. If you don't, please read the materials on ISU's Center for Teaching and Learning Website:
<http://english.illinoisstate.edu/kalmbach/351/oldwebs/Morton/DeprtInfo/Plag.html>

For the purposes of this class you don't need to use full citations for assigned readings, just for readings that you bring in from outside class. Please cite assigned readings thus: Frye defines oppression as "a system of barriers that reduce and immobilize" (Frye 1983, 8).

J. TENTATIVE COURSE READING SCHEDULE: Below is a list of reading units. The pace of the class will drive the time we spend on each of them and at times I may change the order of the readings. I reserve the option to adjust the syllabus to meet the needs of the class.

READING SCHEDULE

WHAT IS FEMINISM? WHAT IS FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY? The myths about feminism circulate faster than their actual historical definitions. What does it mean to be a feminist? Is there a common core of feminist issues? If all women have different racial, class, and sexual identities, then is it possible to have a core set of political goals?

- Hooks, Introduction: "Come Closer to Feminism"
- Hooks, "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory"
- Spelman, "The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought" [Selection]
- Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge Called My Back"
- Sojourner Truth, "Aren't I a Woman?"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE OPPRESSED? TO HAVE PRIVILEGE? One of the fundamental claims of feminist philosophy is that members of particular groups are oppressed not as individuals, but as members of particular groups, and that the harms of oppression are morally wrong. For this conversation to be productive we need to think carefully about the differences between oppression and harm. How are systems of oppression tied to privilege? What is the difference between privilege and advantage? What are the barriers to understanding privilege? Can members of privileged groups use their privilege for good, or is privilege toxic by nature?

- Frye, "Oppression"
Video: "A Traffic Accident in Buffalo" [in class viewing, clip]
- Microessay Workshop; Re-read Frye [read microessay handouts].
- Bartky, "Psychological Oppression"
- McIntosh, "White Privilege, Male Privilege"
- Bailey, "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression'"
- Lorde, "The Master's Tools"

BODIES AT THE INTERSECTIONS: How do members of oppressed groups learn how to move through the world in safe or resistant ways? Which bodies are more vulnerable to violence? How

do raced and gendered bodies move through the world? How do systems of oppression/privilege affect the way gendered and raced bodies move through the world?

- Wright, "The Ethics of Living under Jim Crow"
- Yancy, "The Elevator Effect: Black Bodies, White Bodies"
- Young, "The Breasted Experience: The Look, The Feeling"
- Cahill, "Phenomenology of Fear: Rape and Feminine..."
- Card, "Rape as a Terrorist Institution"
- Smith, "Not an Indian Tradition"

THEORIZING INTERSECTIONS: Given the diversity of women's and men's experiences across race, gender, sexual orientation, class/caste and ability, how should we think about political identities and the issues that shape them? Intersectionality is the view that race and gender rely on one another for their meaning. How can we make philosophical sense of intersectionality? What does it mean to start inquiry in the intersections of marginalized lives?

- African American Policy Forum: "A Primer on Intersectionality"
- Roberts, "Racism, Patriarchy, and the Meaning of Motherhood"
- Ross, "The Color of Choice: White Supremacy and Reproductive Justice"
- Collins, "It's All in the Family"

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT EMOTIONS? Why have philosophers, with a few exceptions [e.g. Hume] not thought seriously about emotions? Since emotions are attributed to women in the reason/emotion dichotomy, feminist philosophers have turned their attention to how emotions operate politically. Shame and anger are two popular topics in these discussions. Why should philosophers examine emotions? How might a philosophical account of shame and anger help us in our liberatory struggles?

- Frye, "A Note on Anger"
- Hooks, "Killing Rage"
- Lugones, "Hard-to-Handle Anger"
- Bartky, "Shame and Gender"
- Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence..."
- Feder, "Tilting the Ethical Lens: Shame, Disgust and the Body in Question."

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SOLIDARITY: Audre Lorde encouraged those of us passionate about justice, to use our differences as a source of strength. Given the power of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and colonialism how might we learn to work together to combat the most basic day-to-day injustices? What are the barriers we face? What keeps us from doing this work? What might some strategies be for forging solidarity across difference?

- Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"
- Frye, "In and Out of Harms Way"

- Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World' Traveling and Loving Perception"
- Ortega, "Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant, White Feminism and Women of Color"
- Uma Narayan, "Working Together Across Difference"