

# Embodied Epistemologies

## PHI 8710-002

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### Course Description

This course will explore some of the many epistemological approaches emerging from or responding to various forms of oppression. One of our primary foci will be on the link between embodiment and subjectivity; gendered, raced, sexualized, dis/abled and specied embodiment; the exclusions and effacements in theory and in life occurring based on such “marked” embodiment; ecologically-situated embodiment; and the politics of embodiment. The course will address the way identities (whether chosen or ascriptive) and embodied experience affect ways of knowing. We’ll scrutinize various feminist accounts of objectivity, truth, and knowledge with an eye toward the political. In addition to feminist standpoint epistemology, we’ll look at epistemologies of ignorance, and epistemologies of resistance. Students interested in embodied epistemologies as developed in feminism, phenomenology, queer theory, critical race theory, animality studies and posthumanism, and environmental theory (including and especially environmental justice) will find that their interests richly intersect in the material being offered through this course.

### Required Texts

Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds. 1993. *Feminist Epistemologies*. Routledge. (FE)

Jose Medina. 2012. *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*. Oxford University Press.

Stacy Alaimo. 2010. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press.

### Requirements

Students are required to complete all reading for the class and encouraged to read beyond the assigned reading. In addition, active participation in class discussion and attendance at all class meetings is required and one précis (20%). The course grade will be based on this as well as the successful completion of (1) a term paper (approximately 20 pages in length) with proposal due March 19; rough draft due April 9; presentation with draft to commentator April 30 (60%); and (2) one book review (1500 words) scheduled throughout the term (20%).

### Calendar

#### *Introduction to feminist epistemologies*

**January 15:** Elizabeth Anderson, “Feminist Epistemology” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-epistemology/>; Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter “Introduction: When Feminisms Intersect Epistemology” (FE 1-15); Lorraine Code’s “Is the sex of the knower epistemologically significant?” (On electronic reserve, pp. 1-26); Lorraine Code “Taking Subjectivity into Account” (FE 15-49);

#### *Standpoint*

**January 22:** Nancy Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism.” In *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*. Ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka.

(Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1983); Sandra Harding, "From Feminist Empiricism to Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies" (On Electronic reserve, pp. 136-161); Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: 'What is Strong Objectivity'" (FE 49-82);

**January 29:** Sandra Harding, "Other 'other's and fractured identities: Issues for Epistemologists (On electronic reserve, from *The Science Question in Feminism*, pp. 163-196); Alison Wylie, "Why Standpoint Matters?" (electronic reserve)

**February 5:** Bat-Ami Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," FE 83-100); Alison Bailey, "Locating Traitorous Identities"; Uma Narayan "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist" (On electronic reserve); Plumwood, "The Ecological Crisis of Reason" (electronic)

**February 12:** Lynn Hankinson Nelson, "Epistemological Communities," (FE 121-160); Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason," (FE 187-216); Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff, "Are 'Old Wives' Tales' Justified?" (FE 217-244); Jen McWeeny, "Topographies of Flesh: Women, Nonhuman Animals, and the Embodiment of Connection and Difference" *Hypatia* 29.2

### ***Epistemologies of Ignorance***

**February 19:** selections from *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*: Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, "Introduction"; Charles Mills, "White Ignorance"; Linda Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types"

**February 26:** Susan Wendell, "The Cognitive and Social Authority of Medicine," from *The Rejected Body*; Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance" (electronic reserve)

### **March 5: Spring break**

### ***Epistemologies of the Ecological Body***

**March 12:** Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (1-84)

**March 19: Proposals Due;** Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (85-158); Grasswick, "Climate Change Science and Responsible Trust" *Hypatia* 29.3 (electronic)

**March 26:** Code, "Ecological Thinking: Subversions and transformations" (25-63) (electronic); Plumwood, "The Blindspots of Centrism and Human Self-enclosure" from *Environmental Culture*; Mallory, *The Politics of Embodiment: Feminist Phenomenology, Effacements of Nature, and Political Subjectivity* (unpublished ms); LaDelle McWhorter, "Enemy of the Species" (on reserve)

### ***Epistemology of Resistance***

**April 2:** (optional) Anderson, "The Epistemology of Democracy" (electronic reserve); (required) José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* (1-118)

**April 9: Rough Drafts Due;** José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* (119-249)

**April 23:** José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* (250-315); Scholz, selections from *Political solidarity*

**April 30: Final Conference Presentations with commentary**

**Book Review List (a nonexhaustive list of suggested books for review)**

Stacy Alaimo, Susan Hekman, Michael Hames-Garcia, eds., *Material Feminisms*

Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities*

Liz Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*

Lorraine Code, *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*

Bruce Erickson and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*

Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*

Sandra Harding, *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?*

Nancy Hartsock, *Feminist Standpoint Revisited*

Sarah Jaquette-Ray, *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture*

Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*

Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*

Alexis Shotwell, *Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding*

Noel Sturgeon, *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural*

Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*

Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*

George Yancy's *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*

Call for papers

# ***Embodied Epistemologies***

A one day conference held at Villanova University  
April 30, 2014: 2:30-5:00 pm (time may be adjusted to accommodate all speakers)

Possible topics include:

- New directions in standpoint theory
- Challenges to standpoint theory
- Feminist empiricism and standards of objectivity
- Science, objectivity, and politics
- Emotion and knowledge
- Epistemologies of ignorance
- Disability and ignorance
- Epistemic resources of dissent
- Epistemic privilege and moral privilege
- Politics of knowing
- More-than-human Epistemic Agents
- Posthuman environmental epistemologies
- Intersectional knowing

Papers on any topic related to the theme welcome.

Presenters will have 15 minutes to present their papers. While traditional reading of paper is allowed, the organizers encourage multimedia presentations. Papers will be followed by a 15 minute discussion period. Every session is a plenary.