

## **Contemporary Ethical Theories – Feminist Ethics**

Philosophy 467 – Fall 2012

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

### **SEMINAR OBJECTIVES:**

I have chosen readings for this seminar with the aim of bringing you up to date on the most important current work in feminist ethics broadly understood. I will begin the semester by reviewing for you the history of the recent feminist ethics movement in philosophy, and then we will plunge into contemporary debates. The course includes influential books on meta-ethics, the ethics of embodiment, and virtue theory. Also included are articles by major authors on some “hot” topics, including oppression, self-respect, and affect. The course is designed to familiarize you with a wide range of topics, and it seeks to prepare you to pursue diverse research projects.

### **READINGS:**

We will read three books that are on order at the book store: *Moral Understandings* by Margaret Urban Walker (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), *Self-Transformations* by Cressida J. Heyes, and *Burdened Virtues* by Lisa Tessman. The articles for the seminar will be posted on our website. I’ve chosen these articles to give you access to a wider range of theorizing in feminist ethics than reading another book would have provided.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

#### **Paper or Exams:**

Since Incompletes are a serious problem, I give students a choice about the major course requirement. You may either take a midterm and a final exam (each exam will be 2 and a half hours long and closed book), or you may write a term paper on a topic worked out in consultation with me (8000 words). The exam option is intended for students who would like to gain familiarity with the field of feminist ethics but who do not expect to use this material in their future scholarship. No reading or research beyond the course assignments is required for the exams. The term paper option is intended for students whose principal scholarship is in moral, social, and/or political philosophy and who anticipate that the feminist ethics literature might figure in their future scholarship. Considerable research beyond the course readings is required for term papers. Additional information on the term paper option (together with suggestions for writing good presentation and term papers) is posted in the Assignments section of the website.

I’ll ask you to choose between these options early in the term. You will not be permitted to change your decision after the midterm. No midterm makeup will be given. If you miss the midterm for any reason, you’ve opted to write a term paper. A makeup final will be given only in the event of severe and documented illness or injury. This really is the no-incomplete option. If you decide to write a term paper, you must consult me about your project no later than week 8. The average of your exam grades or your

grade on your term paper will constitute 50% of your course grade.

### **Class Presentations:**

You will be required to write two short papers and to present one of them in class (each no more than 5 double-spaced typed pages). These papers should be critical analyses of assigned readings. Details of this assignment are posted under Assignments on the Blackboard website for this course. The average of your grades on your two short papers will constitute 25% of your course grade. During weeks 2-7, I'll require students to revise and resubmit their papers based on comments they receive from me and from other students. Your revised paper is due at the beginning of class one week after I return it to you. We will work out the scheduling of these papers at the end of the first class session. You should plan to write one paper in the first half of the course – that is, before the midterm – and one in the second half of the course. In order to make ample time for discussion and lecture material, I will schedule in-class presentations throughout the semester and try to have only one presentation per class session. You might want to make use of your papers to help you develop a term paper topic.

### **Class Participation:**

Since this is a seminar, class participation is expected and will constitute 25% of your course grade. It is crucial that you demonstrate your in-depth understanding of the assigned readings through regular contributions to class discussion.

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS:**

Week 1, Aug. 28, **Please read “Feminist Ethics,” which is posted on the blackboard website.**

Introduction –

Course Requirements

Survey of Trends in Feminist Ethics and Discussion of “Feminist Ethics”

Class Presentation Schedule

Week 2, Sept. 4, *Moral Understandings*, Chapters 1-2

Week 3, Sept. 11, *Moral Understandings*, Chapters 3-5

Week 4, Sept. 18, *Moral Understandings*, Chapters 6-8

Week 5, Sept. 25, *Moral Understandings*, Chapters 9-10 and Epilogue

Week 6, Oct. 2, *Self-Transformations*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

**Term Paper Consultations** – To avoid panic about term paper projects as the semester draws to a close, please make an appointment to see me about your topic **before or during Week 8.**

Week 7, Oct. 16, *Self-Transformations*, Chapters 3-5 and Conclusion

**Midterm Exam** – If some students choose the exam option, the midterm will be given at a mutually convenient time later this week.

Week 8, Oct. 23, Two Accounts of Oppression

Ann Cudd, "Oppression by Choice." *Journal of Social Philosophy* (1994): 22-44

And

Iris Young, a selection from *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (TBA)

Week 9, Oct. 30, *Burdened Virtues*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Week 10, Nov. 6, *Burdened Virtues*, Chapters 3-4

Week 11, Nov. 13, *Burdened Virtues*, Chapters 5-6 and Conclusion

Week 12, Nov. 20, Self-respect and Arrogance

Robin Dillon, "Kant on Arrogance and Self-Respect," in Cheshire Calhoun, ed., *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 191-216

And

Robin Dillon, "Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political," *Ethics* 107 (January 1997): 226-249

Week 13, Nov. 27, Affect, Self-knowledge, and Agency

Karen Jones, "How to Change the Past," in Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins, ed., *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency* (Routledge, 2008): 269-288

And

Cheshire Calhoun, "Losing One's Self," in Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins, ed., *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency* (Routledge, 2008): 192-211

Week 14, Dec. 4, We'll use this session for a purpose of our choosing – e.g., term paper presentations or additional readings on a topic or by an author of mutual interest.

**Term Papers Due by Arrangement**

**Final Exam** – Any students who have chosen the exam option will take the final at a mutually convenient time before the end of exam week.