

Feminist Philosophy – PHIL 115
Hilde Lindemann

The Course:

Starting from the idea that morality is a social practice whose participants occupy unequal positions of social power, in this advanced course in feminist ethics we will look carefully at how attention (and inattention) to gender, an unjust power system, has inflected moral theory. We begin with P.F. Strawson's classic "Freedom and Resentment," followed by essays by Gary Watson, Paul Benson, Harry Frankfurt, Margaret Urban Walker, Eva Feder Kittay, and others. And because gender always interacts with other power systems, we'll read Patricia Hill Collins's book on the intersection of race and gender.

This class offers you the opportunity to refine a skill you have been developing since you were a young child: that of moral reflection. You will learn how to argue effectively for your own views and how, with the help of your classmates, to be critical of your own opinions. This can be done only with practice, which is why the course is oriented around discussion. You will be expected to take an active role in these discussions, but if you are to derive any benefit from them, you **MUST DO THE READING**. Otherwise you waste your classmates' time and your own. You must also, of course, do the writing!

Required Texts:

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, rev. 10th anniversary edition. On Canvas: Strawson, Watson, Frankfurt, Benson "Feminist Second Thoughts," Benson "Self Worth," Walker, Ruddick, Kittay, and "What Child?"

Grades:

You will be asked to write three papers. Two will be short critiques (3-4 pages) of some aspect of one of the articles or book we'll be reading; these are worth up to 25 points apiece. In the third (8-10 pages), you will be asked to identify an ethical issue arising from any social phenomenon that interests you (examples: same-sex marriage, date rape, religious fundamentalism, fashion, sex work) and then argue for your own view, using gender as a category of ethical analysis. You must consider a reasonable objection to your position and respond to it carefully. The final paper is worth up to 50 points, which is why I want you to turn it in early. I'll read and give you feedback on it as promptly as I can, so that if you don't like the grade you got, you can revise the paper according to my feedback and turn it in again. If the paper is better for the revision (and they always are), I'll throw away the first grade and give you the second one instead.

Ordinary forms of politeness will be observed. you are expected to arrive on time, not to slip out early, not to text, surf the Web, check Facebook, or look at your emails in class. Cheating is, of course, not tolerated in any form. Please let me know via email if you will not be in class on a given day.

The points for these papers translate into the final grade for the course as follows:

100-93 = 4.0

92-88 = 3.5

87-83 = 3.0

82-78 = 2.5

77-73 = 2.0

72-68 = 1.5

67-63 = 1.0

Class Calendar

T, Jan. 7 I lay out themes in feminist ethics and introduce Strawson

Th, Jan. 9 Strawson

T, Jan. 14 Watson

Th, Jan. 16 Reading and writing day. Class does not meet.

T, Jan. 21 First paper due, on Frankfurt

Th, Jan. 23 Benson "Feminist Second Thoughts"

T, Jan. 28 Ruddick

Th, Jan. 30 Walker

(T, Feb. 4) Hilde is in The Netherlands this week, so class does not meet.

(Th., Feb. 6) Class does not meet. Make-up class scheduled for Jan. 26: Benson "Self Worth"

T, Feb. 11 Second paper due, on Kittay

Th, Feb. 13 What Child?

T, Feb. 18 Collins Chap. 1

Th, Feb. 20 Collins Chap. 2

T, Feb. 25 Collins Chap. 3

Th, Feb 27 Collins Chap. 4 Final papers due electronically (hlinde@msu.edu) by 5:00 pm

T, Mar. 4 Collins Chap. 5

Th, Mar. 6 Collins Chap. 6

T, Mar. 11 Collins Chap. 7

Th, Mar. 13 Collins Chap. 8