

Introduction to Feminism

PHIL 220 Spring 2012 University of Mary Washington
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 Trinkle 238. M,W 10-11; TR 3:30-5 pm Phone: 654-1342
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In teaching women, we have two choices: to lend our weight to the forces that indoctrinate women to passivity, self-depreciation and a sense of powerlessness, in which case the issue of "taking women students seriously" is a moot one; or to consider what we have to work against, as well as with, in ourselves, in our students, in the content of the curriculum, in the structure of the institution, in the society at large. And this means, first of all, taking ourselves seriously.

Suppose we were to ask ourselves, simply: what does a woman need to know? Does she not, as a self-conscious, self-defining being, need a knowledge of her own history, her much politicized biology, an awareness of the creative work of women of the past, the skills and crafts and techniques and powers exercised by women in different times and cultures, a knowledge of women's rebellions and organized movements against our oppression and how they have been routed or diminished? Without such knowledge women live and have lived without context, vulnerable to the projections of male fantasy, male prescriptions for us, estranged from our own experience because our education has not reflected or echoed it. Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously" 1978

Rich's claims and questions, thirty-four years old now, seem to me to be just as valid today, and to deserve thoughtful consideration. Today, it is easier to see that it is not only women, but men too, who suffer from this lack of context. That is, it is easier today to see that the systematic ignorance about women produces a distortion of what reality, history and humanity are in general. Seeing that does nothing to change the fact that this ignorance produces a particularly destructive and harmful distortion for women, it just acknowledges that feminism is not a "special-interest," relevant "only" (?) to roughly half of humanity.

It is the goal of this course to work against, as well as with (as Rich says) one of the factors that maintains this ignorance and also makes it possible to undermine it: the discipline of philosophy and the history of philosophy. Specific historical developments within philosophy during the 19th and early 20th centuries -historical materialism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, phenomenology- have played a major role in shaping the consciousness of the significance of this ignorance. Appreciating these developments constitutes an effective -but by no means exhaustive- introduction to feminism.

This course offers an introduction to feminism understood primarily as a philosophical movement of the 20th century. Although we look at some of the history of the women's movement, the focus is to be an introduction to the feminist orientation *in philosophy*. Students will learn about historical predecessors of contemporary feminist theory; early philosophical formulations of feminist ideas and orientation; the rereading of the philosophical canon with the aid of feminist perspectives; and some of the variety of theoretical stances that have emerged in the past 35 years of feminist thinking and writing. Necessarily, students will

also learn some basics about the history and nature of Western philosophy, in order to appreciate how feminism has a place therein, and in order to appreciate the content of contemporary theories. Like all courses in Philosophy, PHIL 220 aims to cultivate students' interest and ability in noting, analyzing, and constructing arguments, and in communicating philosophical insights effectively. As this is a Speaking-intensive class, effective prepared oral communication will be emphasized: each student will make three prepared one-minute contributions and one extended one to the class during the semester; she will also report on her research project in the final part of the term.

Required texts for this course:

Nancy Tuana & Rosemarie Tong, Feminism and Philosophy

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex¹

Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur

Angela Davis, Women, Race and Class

Iris Young, On Female Body Experience

Schedule:

For the purpose of distributing due dates for work, each student will be considered a member of group A or group B. Watch for such entries as "A Abs1" or "B SC2" in the syllabus, referring to assignments of written work (Abs = abstracts) and spoken contribution (SC) for your half of the class.

Week 1 January 17

First day considerations: syllabus and details of the course; division into groups A and B. Some introduction to philosophy; some overview of the history of Western philosophy and its connections to feminism.

January 19

A Abs1 due: Melissa Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy" in Feminism and Philosophy (27-47). Discussion of essay and of Argument analysis.

View *Killing Us Softly 4*

Week 2 January 24

Discussion of *Killing Us Softly 4*. In preparation, either skim MacKinnon in FP or gather statistics via your own research on sexual violence. **B SC1**

Overview of 18th and 19th century / early feminist thought (attention to metaphysical and epistemological commitments underlying the political call). Abigail Adams; Mary Wollstonecraft; Sarah Grimke; Frederick Douglass; John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women

January 26

Angela Davis, Women, Race and Class

¹ Make sure you get the new translation, which is not available used. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (Knopf, 2010: New York).

Chap 2 “The Anti-slavery Movement and the Birth of Women’s Rights” (30-45) and Chap 3 “Class and Race in the Early Women’s Rights Campaign” (46-69) **B Abs1** (two students present)

Chap 4 “Racism in the Woman Suffrage Movement” (70-86) and Chap 5 “The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women” (87-98) **B Abs1** (two students present)

Week 3 January 31

Davis, Women, Race and Class:

Chap 6 “Education and Liberation: Black Women’s Perspective” (99-109) and Chap 7 “Woman Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism” (110-126)

B Abs 1 (two students present)

Chap 8 “Black Women and the Club Movement” (127-136) and Chap 9 “Working Women, Black Women and the History of the Suffrage Movement” (137-148) **B Abs1** (two students present)

Chap 10 “Communist Women” (149-155) and Chap 12 “Reproductive Rights” (202-220) **B Abs1** (two students present)

February 2

Clara Zetkin, Lenin. On Canvas **A SC1**

Week 4 February 7

Lecture on historical materialism

Read Karl **Marx**, Communist Manifesto. Part I **A Abs 2**. Part II **B Abs 2**. On Canvas.

February 9

Marx, "Estranged Labor" (from Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844) on Canvas. **A SC 2**.

Week 5 February 14 Frederick **Engels**, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State on Canvas **B SC 2**

February 16

Existentialism, Simone **de Beauvoir**, and the emergence of contemporary feminist philosophical thought. Read The Second Sex, Introduction (3-17) **A, B Abs 3** (Also read the Introduction by Thurman and the comments by the translators)

Week 6 February 21

The Second Sex Skim Volume I **Facts and Myths**. Part One: *Destiny* Chapters 1 (Biological Data), **A SC 3**. 2 (The Psychoanalytic Point of View), **B SC 3**. 3 (The Point of View of Historical Materialism).

February 23

Midterm exam

Week 7 February 28 Video: *Daughters of de Beauvoir*

March 1

Begin student presentations on The Second Sex. (Groups of three). The text is too much to read in its entirety; the idea of teamwork here is that we can all get a genuine, if second-hand, encounter with the text by relying on one another's teams, each of which will have a first-hand account with a substantial section. So you must provide the best "guided tour" of the chapter that you can: by choosing key pages and passages for all to see and consider, and by providing a thoughtful overarching comment on the significance of the material (and the variety of material) found in each chapter (since not everything can be commented on). These are "extended" SC's, not limited to one minute: each group will have 20-30 minutes.

Specifically: Your group will choose 3 key passages, on three different pages. Three only! Each of you in the group present your prepared comments on the significance of one of them: have the class see the passage; read it out loud, explicate it. To the degree possible, go for philosophical material rather than historical details; look for the philosophical point in the anecdotes, for example, rather than just pointing them out (or complaining about them). Your group must choose at least one passage that contains an argument –for the sake of argument analysis.

SC 4 First group: Part Two *History*. Ch 1, 2, (71-90), Ch 4 (104-125)

SC 4 Second group: Part Three *Myths*. Ch 1 (159-187), Ch 3 (261-265)

Week 8 March 13

SC 4 Third group: Volume II *Lived Experience*. Part One. *Formative Years*. Ch 1 Childhood (283-341) Focus on the first half, skim the second half for other points of interest.

SC 4 Fourth group: Part Two *Situation*. Ch 5 The Married Woman (439-544, 476-486, 519-523) Skim the rest for interest

SC 4 Fifth group: Ch II, The Mother (524-533, 556-569;) Skim the rest for other points of interest.

March 15

SC 4 Sixth group: Ch 10 Woman's Situation and Character (638-664)

SC4 Seventh group: Part Four *Toward Liberation*. Ch 14 The Independent Woman (721-751), Conclusion (753-766)

Week 9 March 20

Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur:

Preface, Chapters 1-3 and "Notes toward Chapter 4"

Ch 4 Higgamous-Hogamous (38-75) **A Abs4**

Ch 5 "Children! Every One of Them!" (76-90) **B Abs4**

March 22

The Mermaid and the Minotaur,

Ch 6 "Sometimes you Wonder if They're Human" (91-123) **A Abs5**

Ch 8 The Ruling of the World (160-197) **B Abs5**

Ch 10 At The Edge (229-277)

Week 10 March 27

From Feminism and Philosophy, Read:

- Sandra **Bartky**, "Developing a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness," **A Abs6**
- ~Sandra **Bartky**, "Michel Foucault and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." (Canvas) **B Abs6**

Research papers due March 26 via email (hard copy in class on March 27);
Research presentations begin.

March 29

Evelyn Fox Keller, Video Interview: *Gender and Science*

Team C) Reading: Evelyn Fox **Keller**, "Introduction" and "Gender and Science: An Update" pp 1-36 of Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death. (Canvas) **A Abs7**

Research presentations

Week 11 April 3

- Susan **Bordo**, "Reading the Slender Body" **B Abs7**
- ~Nancy **Hartsock**, "The Feminist Standpoint" **A Abs8**

April 5

~Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" **B Abs8**

-Marilyn **Frye**, "To Be and Be Seen: Politics of Reality" **A Abs9**

Research presentations

Week 12 April 10

- Iris **Young**, On Female Body Experience. *Lived Body vs Gender* **B Abs9**
- Throwing Like a Girl* **A Abs10**

Research presentations

April 12

Video: *The Codes of Gender*

Week 13 April 17

Women Recovering our Clothes **B Abs 10**

Pregnant Embodiment **A Abs 11**

Research presentations

April 19

Breasted Experience **B Abs 11**

Menstrual Meditations **A Abs 12**

Research presentations

Week 14 April 24

House and Home **B Abs 12**

Research presentations

April 26

Research presentations

36 points	Twelve 1 page abstracts on readings (Abs)
20 points	Research paper (15) and presentation (5)
15 points	Midterm exam
15 points	Final exam
<u>20 points</u>	Four prepared spoken contributions (SC)
106 points	total possible

Grades will be assigned by this scale: A=92-106; A-=90-91; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D+=67-69; D=60-66.

Advice:

1. Don't miss class. If you miss more than twice without an acceptable documented written justification, your course grade falls by a half grade for each such absence.
2. Participate in class discussions. Show up prepared and ready to engage.
3. Early submission of work is fine; late work is not accepted. Not accepted.
4. All written work is due **both electronically and hard-copy** by the due date. Getting your papers properly proofread and printed on time is your responsibility.
5. Use the Chicago Manual of Style for guidance on documentation; use footnotes in your papers, not endnotes.

Abstracts (2 pages maximum length).

Your abstracts should be four (at most five) paragraphs in length:

- 1) An introductory overview summary of the article in one paragraph: your account of the thesis or point of the article.
- 2) A summary of two (at most three) of the main discussions that move the article along. Your account of the most significant discussions through which the author pursues her point.
- 3) Assessment of how convincingly the article accomplished its purpose; support your assessment: give reasons, based on the two discussions you summarized.

All students will do twelve abstracts. Each is worth 3% (3 points). You will lose at least one point if it contains more than one typographical error. You will lose a point if it does not contain the elements described. They are due, printed, in class on the day the article is being discussed; they are also due by email before class.

Research Project for class presentation. Choose either of the following.

- a) Research into Feminism Elsewhere. Is feminism a Western phenomenon?
Maintaining our focus on philosophy/ theory primarily (rather than "just" political

activism), research the existence/ influence/ style/ agenda/ outlook of feminism-as-philosophy in another cultural context from that of Euro-America.

- b) The impact of feminism in an academic field other than Philosophy (e.g., Art History, Psychology, etc.) How has a feminist perspective come into the field? What effects has it had to date? Who have been the major players in this development?
- c) Research into early feminist thinkers. If you were intrigued by a pre-20th century feminist and want to learn more about her life and work, you can pursue that interest for your project.

All students will present their research in a five-minute speech during the last five weeks of the semester.

Regardless of your focus, this is to be academic scholarship, not based on Googling about. Go to the library. Spend a few sessions of a few hours at a time in the library finding books that bear on your topic. Take notes as you peruse these books, noting page numbers where you spot points of interest. Build this “file” of preliminary notes, so you can generate a draft bibliography to be turned in by **March 1**. No non-print sources at this stage; only published books and journal articles. Title the bibliography “Annotated Bibliography on X,” so that the topic of your research project is clear and unambiguous. This bibliography must have five different sources; for each source, write two or three sentences explaining the relevance of the source to your topic, and include at least one potentially useful quote from each source. Make sure your bibliographical entries are exact, according to the Chicago Manual of Style (which you can consult on the Library’s web page: “How do I cite sources?”). Even though it departs somewhat from the Library guide, I recommend you take advantage of what Word can do for you in this regard (see “References,” the set of functions for “Citations & Bibliography”). Use Word’s “Footnote” function to cite the page for the quotations in each of your entries, noting that footnotes and bibliographic entries do not have quite the same format. (Yes, this is repetitive. This part of the exercise is to ensure that you can execute correctly the citation mechanics for a research paper.) This annotated bibliography counts 25% of the grade of the paper. The research paper is to be five full pages in length (double-spaced, TNR 12-pt, pages numbered) with footnotes, plus the final bibliography. Due date: **March 26**.

Guidelines for Spoken Contributions: The intent is to ensure that you prepare short contributions to class; apart from *Second Sex*, they do not need to be tightly connected to the text for the day (but that would make sense to do) –i.e., your minute can be devoted to anything that is relevant to the class. “Prepared” means that you are not saying “like” and “um,” or trying to think of something to say, and that you deliver your remarks with clarity and deliberateness.

The University of Mary Washington operates at all times under an Honor System. Each student is expected to comply with the spirit of the system, which means (among other things) regular attendance in class, conscientious and timely completion of homework and reading assignments, honesty, and attentiveness to infractions of the Honor Policy.