

HOOD COLLEGE
PHILOSOPHY and WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM
PLWS 203: Philosophical Issues in Feminism

Term Date: Spring 2014
Class Time: MW 11:30-12:45 p.m.
Class Location: Alumnae Hall 309
Office Hours: MTW 2:30-4 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Katy Fulfer
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Phone: (301) 696-3211

DESCRIPTION

Academic Catalog: An examination of some of the primary philosophical issues of concern to feminist thinkers. This course will consider various feminist perspectives on issues in the areas of ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, human nature and politics. It will also consider some objections to feminist perspectives. While a majority of the readings will cover issues discussed by contemporary thinkers, a few historically significant feminist philosophers will often be included. Practical social and political issues, as well as theoretical topics will be covered. Representative issues include sex, gender, reproduction, embodiment, emotion, family and motherhood.

Expanded Course Description: This course will survey a number of philosophical issues of concern to contemporary feminist thinkers in different areas of philosophy. The guiding theme for our course will be embodiment. Put generally, how do women's embodied, lived experiences shape or change philosophical questions and methods? We will study philosophical conceptions of oppression and of gender, including applied topics such as how pornography contributes (or not) to gender oppression and how to understand women's agency in transnational contexts. We will also look at core debates in ethics, political philosophy, epistemology, and philosophy of language. In each debate we examine, we will see how understanding embodiment and histories of privilege and oppression is crucial for an adequate philosophical analysis. Most units in the course will follow from Jennifer Saul's introductory text *Feminism: Issues and Arguments*. This textbook will provide a broad overview of feminist contributions in a particular debate. We will follow chapters of broad overview with articles that engage in a narrower, deeper examination of an aspect of the debate. Students will thus have a general understanding of problems in feminist philosophy, and also engage in focused analysis of particular problems.

Note: PLWS 203 fulfills the "Philosophical Inquiry" CORE requirement. Please see the [College Catalog](#) for more information.

LEARNING GOALS

With diligent work throughout the course, students will develop capabilities to accomplish the following:

- (1) Understand philosophical definitions of oppression, woman, gender, intersectionality and other concepts;
- (2) Have a working knowledge of important debates in feminist philosophy;
- (3) Investigate in detail core problems within the important debates;

- (4) Practice identifying and evaluating philosophical debates within feminist philosophy;
- (5) Construct original arguments about the student's view on debates within feminist philosophy.

Learning Methods

The following strategies will help students facilitate learning outcomes:

- (1) Check the course blackboard site and Hood email every two days for announcements.
- (2) Read assigned material carefully before class.
- (3) Review assigned material after class, using class discussion to reinforce key points.
- (4) Attend class regularly. Even when I am lecturing, your learning requires active attention.
- (5) Listen carefully and contribute to class activities and discussion. Bring your iPad to each class.
- (6) If you are having difficulty with the material, visit my office hours and discuss the material with me.

TEXTS

Required: Jennifer Mather Saul. 2003. *Feminism: Issues and Arguments*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Other articles will be accessible online through university resources.

Recommended: Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. *They Say, I Say* (2nd Edition). New York: Norton.

ASSIGNMENTS

- In-Class Nearpod Quizzes 20%
- Oppression Essay 10%
- Mid-Term Exam (Take-Home) 15%
- Debate 35%
 - In class: 10% (shared)
 - Paper: 15% (individual)
 - Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Final Exam 20%

IN-CLASS NEARPOD QUIZZES (20%) *Supports learning goals (1)-(3)*

This class will make use of an internet-based application called “NearPod” which can be downloaded for free on your iPad or smartphone, or accessed through www.nearpod.com.

Reading comprehension quizzes will be inserted into the Nearpod presentations used in class. Your grade for this assignment will be based on your score from all the quizzes given over the course of the semester, averaged with attendance. Thus, you get points for correct answers, but you also get participation points for being in class and taking the quizzes. Expect a quiz every day in class. These quizzes cannot be made up.

OPPRESSION ESSAY (10%) *Supports learning goals (1)-(3)*

Students will analyze a case of oppression using Iris Marion Young's essay "The Five Faces of Oppression" as a guide. An assignment sheet will be provided on the first day of class. **Late papers** will receive a penalty of -3% per day from the value of the assignment (including weekends and holidays). I will not accept this assignment after February 19. After that point, the grade becomes a 0.

MID-TERM EXAM (Take-home) (15%) *Supports learning goals (1)-(4)*

The mid-term exam will be in an essay format. Students will have one week to complete the exam. It will be composed of three questions. Answering questions successfully will require students to comprehend course material, relate articles to other articles, and defend a particular point of view. Answers should be typed and submitted online. **Late exams** will receive a penalty of -3% per day from the value of the assignment (including weekends and holidays). I will not accept papers after March 10 (any exam not received by March 10 will receive a 0). I prefer to grade anonymously. More directions to facilitate online, anonymous submission will be provided in class.

DEBATE PROJECT

There will be two debates in this course. Students will each be in the jury for one debate, and one an argument team for the other debate.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (10%) *Supports learning goals (1)-(4)*

Students will work in small groups to prepare the most convincing argument they can for the position assigned to them. Teams will be graded on the strength of the arguments presented, and how well they deal with course material.

Debate 1 Question: Does pornography harmfully objectify women?

Debate 2 Question: Can feminists ever support the use of cosmetic surgery?

ESSAY (15%) *Supports learning goals (3)-(5)*

Students will write a 1000-1500 word essay on the subject matter of their debate topic. The particular thesis of the essay will be up to the student. **Late papers** will receive a penalty of -3% per day from the value of the assignment (including weekends and holidays). I will not accept papers after the last day of class.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (10%) *Supports learning goals (2)-(3)*

Students will be expected to complete an annotated bibliography with 4 entries in preparation for the debate project. An annotated bibliography includes bibliographic references and short abstracts summarizing the main arguments in the source material. Two of these entries may be from primary sources included in the reading schedule. Please note that the Saul text is not a primary source reading. The remaining two entries will come from the students' research of scholarly material. An example of an annotated bibliography will be made available on blackboard.

Evaluation for Essays:

Your papers will be assessed for content and structure. These two aspects are mutually-supporting. Good content relies on good structure for the point of the paper to be adequately relayed to the reader.

- *Structure*
[ORG] Does the author have a plan for the paper at the outset and does the author follow that plan? Does the paper have an explicit overall direction?
[CLR]: Is the author’s position clear and is the paper clearly written overall? Could another student at the same level who is not enrolled in the course understand the paper?
- *Content*
[CON]: Does the author use convincing evidence to support his or her position? Do the claims made in different parts of the paper follow from one another and are they consistent?
[UND]: How well does the author understand and make appropriate use of the material relevant to the paper that was discussed in class and is on our reading list? How well does s/he understand the complexity of the issues involved?
[LIM]: To what extent is s/he aware of the possible limitations or difficulties with that position?

FINAL EXAM (In-class) (20%) *Supports learning goals (1)-(5)*

The final exam will take place during the university scheduled exam period and will cover material from after the mid-term recess. It will be composed of two sections: short answer and essay questions. The short answer section will ask students to define key concepts, summarize an author’s main arguments, or answer brief questions in 3 to 6 sentences each. This section of the test will be worth 50 points. The essay question section will be worth 50 points. More information will be provided in late April. In addition, students will be provided a list of possible essay questions on the last day of class. Students must come to class or have a valid excuse to receive the questions.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Date	Unit	Reading	Assignment
W Jan. 22	Philosophy and Feminist Philosophies	Syllabus	
M Jan. 27	Oppression and Privilege	Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” (26pp.)	
W Jan. 29		Young, continued.	
M Feb. 3	Intersectionality and Essentialism	Saul Chapter 7 (33pp.)	
W Feb. 5		Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!” (9pp.)	Oppression Essay Due
M Feb 10.	Conceptualizing Gender	Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (13pp.)	
W Feb. 12		Haslanger, “Gender and Race” (24pp.)	
M Feb. 17		Scheman, “Queering the Center by Centering the Queer” (38pp.)	
W Feb. 19	Work and Mothering	Saul Chapter 1 (40pp.)	

M Feb. 24		Pande, "Commercial Surrogacy in India: Manufacturing a Perfect Mother-Worker" (24pp.)	
W Feb. 26	Feminist Epistemologies	Saul Chapter 8 (28pp.)	Mid-Term Exam Questions Distributed
M March 3		Fricker, "Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege" (20pp.)	
W March 5		Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology" (34pp.)	Mid-Term Exam Due
March 10-12	Midterm Recess		
M March 17	Pornography and Objectification	Saul Chapter 3 (36pp.)	
W March 19		Green, "Pornographies" (25pp.)	
M March 24		Marino, "The Ethics of Sexual Objectification" (20pp.)	
W March 26		Review Green, Marino, and Saul Chapter 3	Debate 1: Does pornography harmfully objectify women?
M March 31	Feminine Beauty Norms	Saul Chapter 5 (30pp.)	
W April 2		Heyes, "Diagnosing Culture" (21pp.)	
M April 7		Prosser, <i>Second Skins</i> , pp. 80-90 (11pp.)	Annotated Bibliographies Due
W April 9		Review Heyes and Saul Chapter 5	Debate 2: Can feminists support cosmetic surgery?
M April 14	From Oppressive to Liberatory Language	Saul Chapter 6 (28pp.)	
W April 16		Clare, "Freaks and Queers" (35pp.)	
M April 21	Problems for Transnational Feminist Projects	Saul Chapter 9 (31pp.)	
W April 23		Narayan, "Through the Looking-Glass Darkly" (38pp.)	Debate Essays due
M April 28	Overcoming Sexism in Academic Philosophy	Tarver, "The Dismissal of Feminist Philosophy and Hostility to Women in the Profession" (5pp.)	

W April 30	Catch-Up/Snow Day/Review		
TBA	Test 2		

POLICIES

RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

Class discussion and disagreement are encouraged within the context of a respectful classroom environment. Hateful speech will not be tolerated. Also be careful to be sensitive of others. Be aware that some topics may trigger painful experiences for some members of class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please review the *College Catalog* regarding the [Academic Honor Code](#). If you witness an act of academic dishonesty, it is your responsibility, and your right, to report it to the Honor Council.

EMAIL/VOICEMAIL POLICY

I will respond to all emails within 48 hours (unless I give you advance notice otherwise). If you email me and do not receive a response within 48 hours, please re-send your email. I check my phone messages each time I am in my office.

ELECTRONICS IN CLASS

iPads will be used regularly in this class. The use of electronic devices such as tablets or laptop computers can facilitate student learning. However, when not used for class purposes these devices can also be distracting. If you are caught using an electronic device for non-class purposes, I will tell you to put away the device, close your laptop, or confiscate the device until the end of class.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with physical or learning challenges will be accommodated as necessary to meet the goals of the course. Please inform me of your accommodation request and provide me with the required documentation by February 3, 2014 so appropriate arrangements can be made.

HOLIDAYS/ATHLETIC OR ACADEMIC EVENTS

You must inform me by February 3, 2014 of any course dates that conflict with a religious or cultural holiday that you observe. If you are a student athlete or must miss class for an academic event, please inform me as soon as you know the dates you will miss.

GRADES

The following criteria is listed in the [College Catalog](#): Hood's faculty uses the following general criteria in determining grades. Demonstration of the ability to write and speak standard English is included in the grade evaluation of every course. The criteria upon which students will be evaluated is included on every course syllabus.

A, A- (90–100) indicates general excellence; the student displays initiative, independence and often originality in the course.

B+, B, B- (80–89) indicates an unquestioned grasp of the subject's fundamental facts and principles, an understanding of their significance and an ability to use them effectively; work is

logically organized and technically correct; the student often shows initiative and independent work.

C+, C, C- (70–79) indicates the student has a fairly accurate knowledge of the subject's fundamental facts and principles and is able to apply them reasonably well; work is fairly logical in organization and technique but it is incomplete; there is evidence of growth in handling the coursework.

D+, D, D- (60–69) indicates work is of inferior quality yet deserving of credit; there is some acquaintance with basic facts and principles but work is poorly organized and technically faulty; the student frequently fails to complete assignments.

F (0–59) indicates work shows no grasp of basic facts and principles and is not deserving of credit; it is poorly organized and technically faulty; the student frequently fails to complete assignments.

Each grade received at Hood on the A-F grading scale has a corresponding grade point:

A= 4.00 (100-93)	A-= 3.67 (92-90)	B+= 3.33 (89-87)
B= 3.00 (86-83)	B-= 2.67 (82-80)	C+= 2.33 (79-77)
C= 2.00 (76-73)	C-= 1.67 (72-70)	D+= 1.33 (69-67)
D= 1.00 (66-63)	D-= 0.67 (62-60)	F= 0.00 (59-0)

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Elizabeth. 1995. "Feminist epistemology: An interpretation and a defence." *Hypatia* 10(3): 50-84.

Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory." *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519-31.

Clare, Eli. 1999. "Freaks and queers." in *Exile and pride: Disability, queerness, and liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. 67-101.

Fricker, Miranda. 1999. "Epistemic oppression and epistemic privilege." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 25s: 191-210.

Green, Leslie. 2000. "Pornographies." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8(1): 27–52.

Heyes, Cressida J. 1999. "Diagnosing culture: Body dysmorphic disorder and cosmetic surgery." *Body & Society* 15(4): 73-93.

Haslanger, Sally. 2000. "Gender and race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?" *Noûs* 34(1): 31-55.

Lugones, Maria and Spelman, Elizabeth. 1983. "Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for 'The woman's voice.'" *Women's Studies International Forum* 6(6): 573-81.

Marino, Patricia. 2008. "The ethics of sexual objectification: Autonomy and consent." *Inquiry* 51(4): 345-64.

Narayn, Uma. 1997. "Through the looking-glass darkly: Emissaries, mirrors, and authentic insiders as preoccupations," in *Dislocating cultures*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 119-57.

Pande, Amrita. 2010. "Commercial surrogacy in India: Manufacturing a perfect mother-worker." *Signs* 35(4): 969-92.

Prosser, Jay. 1998. *Second skins: The body narratives of transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press. (excerpt: pp. 80-90).

Saul, Jennifer Mather. 2003. *Feminism: Issues and arguments*. New York: Oxford University.

Scheman, Naomi. 1996. "Queering the center by centering the queer: Reflections on transsexuals and secular Jews," in *Feminists rethink the self*, Diana Tietjens Meyers (ed.), Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 124–162.

Tarver, Eric C. 2013. "The dismissal of feminist philosophy and hostility to women in the profession," in *APA Newsletter on feminism and philosophy* 12(2): 8-12.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990/2011. "Five faces of oppression," in *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 39-65.