

**PHI 217: Seminar in Political Philosophy, Fall 2013, Justice and Gender**

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**SmartSite URL:** <https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/xls-portal/site/politicalphilseminar>

**SYLLABUS**

**Course description:**

An exploration of the adequacy of liberal theories of justice to address issues of gender and sexual equality.

**Requirements:**

1. Each student must write a weekly précis of the primary reading assignments or as indicated on the schedule. There will be eight of these. Instructions are appended below. (No précis is required for the first class.)
2. Each student must prepare a “talking point” (i.e., a substantive critical question or remark) on the reading for which he or she did not write a précis.
3. Each student must meet with me no later than week seven to select a research topic for the seminar. These meetings will take approximately one-half hour. This project will culminate in a term paper.
4. Each student must provide me with a working bibliography and an outline of his/her research project by week eight.
5. Each student must meet with me during week nine to discuss the status of his/her research paper.
6. Students will write a term paper of about 15 pages in length. Papers are due on final exam week. I make it a policy to not give incompletes.

**Texts:**

- Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (NY: Basic Books, 1991)
- Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge UP, 2001).
- John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited.” (on SmartSite).
- Susan Brison, “Justice and Gender-Based Violence.” Forthcoming, Fall 2013, special issue on violence, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, ed. Vittorio Buffachi, pp. 260-276. (on SmartSite).
- Pauline Kleingeld and Joel Anderson, “Justice as a Family Value”. Forthcoming in *Hypatia* (on SmartSite).
- *United States v. Windsor* (on SmartSite).

**Schedule:**

**Sept. 26:** Okin, Chapters 1 and 2. No précis due.

**Oct. 3:** Okin, chapters 3 and 4.

**Oct 10:** Okin, chapters 5 and 6.

**Oct. 17:** Okin, chapters 7 and 8; Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited.” Précis on Okin or Rawls.

**Oct. 24:** *United States v. Windsor*, [http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010-2019/2012/2012\\_12\\_307](http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010-2019/2012/2012_12_307); Kleingeld and Anderson, “Justice as a Family Value.” Précis on Kleingeld and Anderson.

**Oct. 31:** Brison, “Justice and Gender-Based Violence.” Professor Brison (Dartmouth College) will be our guest participant.

**Nov. 7:** Nussbaum, Introduction and chapter one, sections I and II.

**Nov. 14:** Nussbaum, chapter one, sections III – VIII; Anita Superson, “The Right to Bodily Autonomy and the Abortion Controversy.” Professor Anita Superson (University of Kentucky) will be our guest participant.

**Nov. 21:** Nussbaum, chapter two.

**Dec. 5:** Nussbaum, chapter three, sections VII and VIII; chapter four, sections II – VI; optional sections VII and VIII.

**Monday, December 16: Term papers due**

**Additional readings for future?**

Martha Minow and Mary Lyndon Shanley, “Relational Rights and Responsibilities: Revisioning the Family in Liberal Political Theory and Law,” *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 1, *The Family and Feminist Theory* (Winter, 1996), pp. 4-29.

*Feminism and Families*, edited by Hilde Lindemann Nelson (Routledge, 1997). Chapter 1, “Families and Feminist Theory: Some past and present issues,” by S.M. Okin.

“Rethinking the Family” (a review of Okin’s book), Will Kymlicka, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter, 1991), pp. 77-97.

Roy W. Perrett, “Libertarianism, Feminism, and Relative Identity,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* (December 2000) Volume 34, Issue 4, pp 383-395.

## Précis Guidelines

The précis should convey an outline of your thoughts about the reading in which you state the author's project and thesis, the key points you take her to be making, what you think of her argument thus far, and what questions the topic prompts you to ask. The point is not to produce a page by page, exegetical summary of the work. The point is for you to write, in your own words, what you think is going on in the paper.

Thus, a good précis and presentation should not summarize an entire paper, restate every point of transition in the author's paper, or consist of a series of quotations from the piece you are addressing. The précis and presentation should focus on the crux of the argument, highlights, and critical analysis. Hone in on the most salient parts of the paper.

Many students are hesitant about detracting from what they regard as the more important scholarship of the author by interjecting their own tentative views. That's understandable and, to a degree, admirable. Certainly it is a virtue to know when to offer a critical assessment, and when to keep quiet. Philosophy calls for a delicate balance of chutzpah and humility. Frankly, the older I get and the longer I am around good philosophers, the more I appreciate the humility and the more I cringe at the brashness. Nonetheless, you have to be willing to jump in and test the water, even if it's cold. This isn't a discipline that rewards passivity, nor one at which you'll improve by osmosis. It is always a good idea to make some notes about what puzzles you in a paper, and about the questions you anticipate someone else (your fellow students, the teacher) will want answered about the paper. During a presentation, it is *your* job to make sense of the work (or to explain why sense cannot be made of it). Merely restating what Author X has said won't prepare you for this task.