PHIL 0208: Feminist Philosophy
Spring 2021

Instructor: Arianna Falbo
  ● Pronouns: she/her or they/them
Email: arianna_falbo@brown.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays from 1:00-3:00.
  ● First hour (1:00-2:00) is by appointment. Please sign up for an appointment using the Canvas Calendar. The second hour (2:00-3:00) is drop-in.

Course Description:

Feminist philosophy can be understood as a tradition of thought, which has at its core a commitment to the critique of gender oppression. This course uses the tools of analytic philosophy to investigate a diverse range of feminist theories, methods, debates, and topics, including: oppression, intersectionality, sexism and misogyny, the nature of sex, gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation, the relationship between social identity and knowledge, silencing, consent, sexual agency, reproductive rights, the moral status of abortion, and more. The course will culminate by discussing the (ir)rationality of having faith in humanity when confronted with long-standing and systemic forms of oppression.

The course is composed of the following five units (each of which lasts approximately 2 weeks):

  ● Unit 1: Frameworks, Methods, and Theory
  ● Unit 2: Social Metaphysics
  ● Unit 3: Feminist Epistemology
  ● Unit 4: Feminist Philosophy of Language
  ● Unit 5: Feminist Issues in Moral and Political Philosophy

Course Readings:

All course readings will be available electronically through Canvas in a folder under the "Files" tab.

Office Hours

  ● I have office hours on Wednesday from 1:00-3:00 (ET). Office hours is a time for you to drop-by and ask me anything related to the course, from small logistical questions to deep philosophical puzzlements, and everything in between. Please don't feel as though you need to have all of your ideas worked out prior to coming to office hours - this is precisely what office hours are designed to help with. I strongly encourage you to visit me during my office hours: one of my most favourite things to do is to chat about philosophy with students!
Learning Goals

● After successfully completing this course students will develop the skills needed to:
  ○ clearly and confidently express philosophical ideas in both written and verbal forms;
  ○ identify the strengths and weaknesses of arguments and pose potential objections
    and criticism of them;
  ○ understand core concepts and issues on a diverse range of topics and debates in
    feminist philosophy;
  ○ be a respectful interlocutor and how to engage in productive, collaborative, and
    rigorous discussions on controversial and sensitive topics;
  ○ charitably interpret multiple sides of controversial debates;
  ○ and to write a succinct, clear, and probing philosophical paper on the basis of the
    class readings and discussion.

Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

● Participation: 5%
● Discussion Board Contributions: 15%
● Real World Reflective Project: 20% due
● Discussion Notes: 15% (x3 each worth 5%)
● Final Paper Topic Proposal and Outline: 10%
● Final Paper: 35%

Course Assignments:

● Participation and Attendance: 5%
  ○ Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. Failure to attend more than half of the
    class sessions will result in one's receiving no credit for the course. However, merely
    attending (though appreciated!) is not sufficient to earn participation marks. Success
    in this course is greatly a function of one's not only attending class, but also being an
    active and engaged participant. Students should come to class having carefully done
    the reading beforehand and ready to discuss the day's material. If you regularly come
    to class, ask questions, and engage helpfully with the comments of your peers, then
    you will easily get full credit.

● Weekly Discussion Board Contributions: 15%
  ○ Students will be responsible for posting very brief (100-200 word) posts on the
    online discussion board at least once a week prior to class. The format of these posts is
    very flexible and open-ended. Students might want to raise a few questions, summarize
    an important aspect of the text, raise a confusion or point of clarification, develop
    a criticism, connect the reading to a personal experience or to a concrete real
life example, or to engage and respond to a classmate's post. *Students can miss up to 1 post without penalty, after which there will be a 1% deduction per post missed.*

- **Reflective Project: 20%**
  - Students will submit a 1000-1300 word reflective project. The goal of this assignment is to bridge theory and practice by critically reflecting upon some aspect of the course material and linking it to a personal lived experience or some concrete current issue or real-world example. The format for this assignment is *highly flexible* and students should use this as an opportunity to be creative and to explore a topic that interests them. More information concerning the format of this assignment will be provided on Canvas under “Assignments.”

- **Discussion Notes - 15%**
  - Students will have to write three 2-page (~500 word) discussion notes (worth 5% each). This assignment will serve as practice for writing the longer final paper. Students should use these short assignments as a means to explore possible final paper topics, and they may choose to expand upon one of their discussion notes and develop it for their final paper project. There are two options for such notes:
    1. A discussion note may be a *précis* of some of the materials read for class. A précis might focus on a single selection or on an issue or argument discussed in one of the class readings. It should clearly present the gist of the selection, issue, or argument. In addition, it should add some original comment, question, or objection. A précis should be handed in *before* the meeting of class where the relevant reading is discussed.
    2. A discussion note may present a *reaction* to some of the discussion in class. A reactive note might press for clarification of a point raised in discussion or in the related readings. It might develop a counterexample or other kind of objection. Or, it might provide support for a thesis or argument. A reactive note should clearly present the gist of the thesis, issue, or argument and then present a novel insight. It should be submitted soon after the relevant discussion has taken place (within a week following).

- **Final Paper Proposal - 10%**
  - For the final paper students must come up with a topic of their own. Students are required to submit a detailed paper proposal. Proposals should include an explicit statement of the paper's thesis and a tentative sketch of the overall line of argument. All students are required to have their paper topics approved by the instructor (in office hours, or via email). The instructor will return the paper proposal to all students with substantive feedback, which students are to incorporate when writing their final paper. Further instructions, including a template for the paper proposal, will be provided on Canvas under “Assignments.”
Note: the last day of class will be dedicated to a final paper brainstorming workshop. Students will each briefly discuss their paper project (most likely in small breakout groups depending upon the final class numbers) and receive verbal feedback from their peers.

- **Final Paper - 35%**
  - Students must submit a 6-8 page final paper on a topic of their choosing. This paper should clearly engage with a topic or debate in the course materials, and should advance a positive argument.

- **Late Assignments:**
  - Without a prior excuse or extension, late work will not be accepted without documentation (e.g., a medical note, or a note from a Dean). Please let me know as soon as possible if you require an extension or any other accommodation. If you need an extension to complete your assignments, if you feel as though you might be falling behind, or anything else. We’re in this together and I’m always willing to work out a plan with students to ensure their success in the course.

**Course Policies**

- **Accessibility and Accommodations**
  - Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class, during office hours, or over email. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the office of the Dean of the College. Students seeking psychological support should contact Counseling and Psychological Services.

- **Academic Honesty**
  - Plagiarism is a serious academic office, and it will not be tolerated. Canvas automatically checks assignments for plagiarism. It is your responsibility as a student to understand and know Brown University’s Academic Code of Conduct. Plagiarizing is seriously not cool, please just don’t do it.

- **Classroom Decorum**
  - Some material in this course has content that is controversial, sensitive, and may be deeply personal to members of this class. Understandably, it is plausible that disagreement will manifest in class discussion. It is expected that students come to class with an open mind and a respectful willingness to engage in discourse on challenging philosophical issues. Philosophy is hard! We can all try to make it easier by learning together and striving to cultivate a welcoming space where everyone feels respected and encouraged to participate in the discussion. Also, please keep in mind that even if you have no emotional or personal connection to the particular issue,
others in the class may. It is perfectly fine to disagree with views expressed (either in the readings or by other students), but target the argument you disagree with, not the person.

- Important note: there is an absolute zero tolerance policy concerning any form of bigotry or deliberate forms of disrespect or antagonism in class discussions.

- **Time Commitment**
  - In addition to the 3 hours you will spend in class every week, you should count on devoting 4 hours to doing the readings and posting in the online discussion boards each week. Research, reading, writing toward the reflective project should take around 15-20 hours. Researching and writing your final paper proposal should take around 10 hours. And please budget an additional 30-35 hours for researching and writing the final paper.
  - By the way: thanks so much for reading thus far into the syllabus: you’re awesome! Once you’re done reading please email me a picture of a cute animal, or a joke, a cool meme, or anything else fun and you will receive a 1% bonus credit for your efforts! Please include “PHIL 0208: Syllabus Bonus Credit” in the subject line of the email.

**CONTENT WARNING:**

- Many of the readings and lectures in this course will discuss topics that might give rise to strong or potentially harmful emotional responses or discomfort. Some of the course readings discuss real life cases of sexual harassment, rape, and murder, as well as acts of gendered and racialized violence. While I believe that oftentimes we should learn to live with this discomfort, for it can be a helpful and important aid in cultivating understanding (for some people), if at any time you feel too uncomfortable to engage in class discussion, or unable to complete any course readings or assignments, please contact me and we can work together to ensure your success in the class.

**Reading Schedule**

Note: The reading schedule is subject to revisions depending upon how quickly or slowly we move through the material, and the flow of the class discussion on various topics.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Frameworks and Method</strong> January 21</td>
<td>Introduction to Oppression</td>
<td>Frye (1998): &quot;Oppression&quot;</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>References/Notes</td>
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<td>January 26</td>
<td>Structural Oppression</td>
<td>Young (1990): “Five Faces of Oppression”</td>
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<td>February 2</td>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td>Crenshaw (1989): &quot;Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex&quot;</td>
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<td>Crenshaw (2016) <a href="#">Ted Talk</a></td>
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<td>Cooper (2020): &quot;Why Are Black Women and Girls Still an Afterthought in Our Outrage Over Police Violence?&quot;</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>Sexism and Misogyny</td>
<td>Manne (2018) <em>Down Girl</em></td>
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<td>Chapter One: &quot;Threatening women&quot;</td>
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<td>Chapter Two: &quot;Ameliorating misogyny&quot;</td>
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<td>Dembrowff (2019): &quot;Trans Women are Victims of Misogyny Too&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>Unit 2: Social Metaphysics</strong></td>
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<td>Haslanger (2000): “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?”</td>
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<td>February 9</td>
<td>Last chance to hand in Discussion Note #1</td>
<td>Social Position Accounts of Race and Gender</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading/Resource</td>
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| February 11| Gender Identity               | Jenkins (2016): “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman”  
| February 16| No class - enjoy the long weekend! |                                                                 |
| Unit 3: Feminist Epistemology | Standpoint and Knowledge from the Margins | Collins (1986): "Learning from the Outsider Within"  
Optional: hooks (1989): "Choosing the Margins as a Space of Radical Openness" |
<p>| March 2    | Epistemic Injustice           | Fricker (2007): &quot;Testimonial Injustice&quot;                                           |</p>
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| March 4    | **Silencing**                              | Dotson (2011): “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing”  
Optional: Berenstain (2016): "Epistemic Exploitation" |
| March 9    | **Gaslighting**                            | Kate Abramson (2014): “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting”  
Barnes (2020): “Women’s Pain and the Hysteria Accusation” (available as an audio recording)  
Optional: Solnit (2008): "Men Explain Things to me” |
| **Unit 4: Feminist Philosophy of Language** | **Hermeneutics and Controlling Images**  | Collins (2000): “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images”  
| March 11   | **Reflective Project Due**                 |                                                                         |
| March 16   | **Speech Act Theory and Discursive Injustice** | Kukla (2012): “Performative Force, Convention, and Discursive Injustice”  
| March 18   | **The Limits of Consent**                  | Kukla (2019): “That’s What She Said The Language of Sexual Negotiation”  
Roupenian (2017): "Cat Person" |
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| March 23   | **Unit 5: Feminist Issues in Moral & Political Philosophy** | Watch Chan’s (2013) Video: "The Jam Session Model of Sex"  
Optional: Tambe (2018): "Reckoning with the Silences of MeToo"  
Watson (2015): "Why Sex Work Isn't Work"  
Friedman (2021): "Jobless, Selling Nudes Online, and Still Struggling" |
Watch: Mark Rubio "Opposing Abortion Does not make you a chauvinist" and "The Violinist" |
| April 1    | **Last chance to hand in Discussion Note #3** | Shouten (2017): “Fetuses, Orphans, and a Famous Violinist”  
Case Study: Recent “Heartbeat Bills” |
| April 6    | Oppression and...Faith?        | Preston-Roedder (2013): "Faith in Humanity"  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Final Paper Proposal due.</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td>Final Paper due April 20th.</td>
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<td>TBD/Catch-up Day</td>
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<td><em>Peer-Review Paper Workshop!</em></td>
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