

Introduction to Feminist Theory

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PHL/WGS 264: Introduction to Feminist Theory
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What is feminism? Feminist theory is not one but many theories. Each theory attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. In this course, we will study these various feminist theories. We will attempt to determine in what manner women are oppressed and evaluate the various feminist theories in terms of their success in analyzing and remedying this oppression. But, just as with feminism generally, this course will not merely be concerned with theoretical analysis, but also with analyzing feminism as a political phenomenon. So we will be considering such questions as: What do most people think the term feminism means? Can a person be a feminist and not know it? What is a femi-nazi? Is feminist activism relevant today or have recent legal and social changes made feminism irrelevant?

Required Texts:

Feminist Philosophies, 2nd edition, eds. Kourany, Sterba, Tong
Feminist Thought, 2nd edition, Tong

Course Requirements:

Extra credit is not possible at any time for anyone under any circumstances.

Grade Scale:

A 95-100
A- 90-94.9
B+ 87-89.9
B 84-86.9
B- 80-83.9
C+ 77-79.9
C 74-76.9
C- 70-73.9
D+ 67-69.9

D 64-66.9
D- 60-63.9

2 exams (midterm and final): These exams will require students to demonstrate an understanding of key philosophical terms used in the course as well as demonstrate knowledge of the central debates in these areas of study. All the questions for both exams will be essays. Both exams will be open notes but not open book. You are required to bring to each exam a large (8.5 x 11) bluebook. Each exam is worth 20% of the course grade.

article write-ups: Students are required to write a short essay that describes the main ideas of each article assigned from the Feminist Philosophies (KST) text and any photocopies handouts. The essays are due in class on the day for which the article is assigned. These essays should be about 200 words long (typed, double-spaced). Handwritten essays are accepted only in extraordinary circumstances and are NOT advisable. The write-ups are due when you arrive to class. (If you are late to class, place the essay on the table at the front of the classroom and take your seat.) Students who miss class may not hand in the essay later. If you anticipate missing a class, you may turn in the essay PRIOR to the class you will miss. You may also e-mail the write-up to me; however, it must be emailed prior to the start of class.

23 write-ups are assigned; the three lowest grades will be dropped. The write-ups will count for a total of 30% of the course grade.

Each write-up essay will be graded using the following scale:

- 4: demonstrates an understanding of the important idea(s) of the article
- 3: demonstrates a familiarity with the main idea(s) of the article
- 2: demonstrates a familiarity with at least one idea in the article
- 1: demonstrates some understanding of the article
- 0: demonstrates no understanding of the article; did not hand in a write-up

real world analyses: Once a week students are required to hand in an essay critically analyzing a "real world" experience in terms of the ideas we have been discussing in class. Because real world experiences cannot be scheduled to occur in line with our readings, it is acceptable to analyze the events in terms of ideas we have discussed in previous weeks. (Moreover, the events analyzed may be past events.) These essays, though informal, are to be philosophically insightful. Each is to be about 250 words long. The first will be due on January 12th, and the last will be handed in on the last day of class on Monday, April 19th. The analysis essays will count for a total of 30% of the course grade.

Remember, these essays are not descriptions of events, but analyses of events. Thus they must reveal an understanding of the experience, event or idea using the philosophical ideas discussed in class.

Each analysis essay will be graded using the following scale:

- 3: insightful, demonstrates adequate understanding of philosophical ideas and shows awareness of the relevance of those ideas
- 2: some insight and understanding, but incompletely/superficially developed
- 1: cursory, lacking insight or understanding
- 0: failed to turn in an essay

The exact topic of each essay is up to you, but sample "starters" could be: "I thought of what we discussed in class on Wednesday when...", "I was watching TV the other day and noticed...", "I was at work when..."

I place unreturned assignments in a file drawer in the Philosophy Office, FH 544. This file drawer is a public space and you can retrieve your graded work at your convenience.

Semester Schedule:

- 1/5: introduction to course
- 1/7: Gender Socialization (KST)
- 1/9: "Pricks" and "Chicks" (KST)

- 1/12: Sexual Terrorism (KST)
- 1/14: Date Rape (KST)
- 1/16: Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights (KST)

- 1/19: Martin Luther King Day-No Classes
- 1/21: Mother/Foetus/State Conflicts (KST)
- 1/23: Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power (KST)

- 1/26: Throwing Like a Girl (photocopy handout)
- 1/28: Women Wage Earners (KST)
- 1/30: Professional Women (KST)

- 2/2: The Job of Housewife (KST)
- 2/4: The Divorce Law Revolution and the Transformation of Legal Marriage (KST)
- 2/6: Patriarchy, Scientists, and Nuclear Warriors (KST)

- 2/9: The MoMA'S Hot Mamas (KST)
- 2/11: Women and Religion (KST)
- 2/13: midterm exam

- 2/16: Liberal Feminism, Chapter 1 Tong
- 2/18: continued
- 2/20: continued

- 2/23: Justice, Gender and the Family (KST)

2/25: domestic violence readings (photocopy handout)

2/27: continued

2/29-3/7: Winter Break-No Classes

3/8: Radical Feminism, Chapter 2, Tong

3/10: continued

3/12: The Dialectic of Sex (KST)

3/15: Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech (KST)

3/17: Marxist and Socialist Feminism, Chapter 3, Tong

3/19: continued

3/22: continued

3/24: Women: Caste, Class or Oppressed Sex (KST)

3/26: The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism (KST)

3/29: Psychoanalytic and Gender Feminism, Chapter 4, Tong

3/31: continued

4/2: Women and Caring (KST)

4/5: Maternal Thinking as a Feminist Standpoint (KST)

4/7: Existential Feminism, chapter 5, Tong

4/9: continued

4/12: continued

4/14: Ecofeminism, Chapter 8, Tong

4/16: continued

4/19: Killing Us Softly (video)

4/20: study day-no classes

4/23: Final Exam, 10:30-1:00