

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN FEMINISM (SPRING 2020)

MONDAYS & THURSDAYS, 9:50-11:10AM IN HH-A1

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COURSE DESCRIPTION.

What is gender-based oppression? Why does this sort of oppression exist? Who is affected by it, and how? What would a world without gender-based oppression look like? How can we get there, given where we are now? In this course, we'll be concerned with these questions. But, as we'll see, in order to answer them, we will need to look critically at a wide variety of injustices, including economic, racial, environmental, physical, sexual, disability, and carceral injustice. Put somewhat differently, our approach to understanding gender-based oppression in this course will be broadly *intersectional* (and we'll spend a bit of time thinking about what that means, too).

This course will proceed from three political assumptions: (Gender) oppression exists, it is bad, and we would be better off without it. In this respect, among others, this course will resemble courses in feminist theory. This course will differ from other feminist theory courses, however, insofar as we'll use the tools of analytic philosophy to investigate these issues—as such, much of our reading will draw from literatures in contemporary feminist metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of race, and philosophy of disability.

INSTRUCTOR. My name is **Dee Payton** and I'm a graduate student in the Philosophy Department here at Rutgers. **You can call me 'Dee'**. My research focuses primarily on topics at the intersection of analytic feminist philosophy and metaphysics. For me, this means I think a lot about questions like: “What is it for something (like gender) to be socially constructed?”, “What is it for something to be social in the first place, rather than biological/natural?”.

OFFICE HOURS. My office hours this term begin **after class on Mondays and Thursdays, and go until 12pm** in the **Rutgers Philosophy Department** (106 Somerset St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901). Anyone enrolled in this course is warmly invited to attend them!

- **You can ask me about anything course-related during my office hours!** You *do not* have to have your question completely worked out before you come to office hours, and you *do not* have to bring some idea/project/etc. that you think will “impress” me (although if you do, that's cool, too). I've set aside office hours so that you can come to me with anything course-related that you need help with/want to chat about/etc.

COURSE GOALS.

By the end of this course you will be able to . . .

- ⚙ Accurately **summarize** an author's argument, give a **focused objection** to that argument, **anticipate a reply** to that objection, and **offer a response**.
- ⚙ **Defend** a view on a contentious topic by giving a clear, valid argument for the view, defending each premise in turn, and then anticipating and responding to objections.

- ⚙ **Explain** in some detail how gender-based oppression works to your friends/family/employer/etc., and describe its connections to other forms of oppression.
- ⚙ Clearly and confidently **articulate your own views** about gender-based oppression, and feel more comfortable critically reflecting on your own views in this area.¹

WEBSITE. We will use **Canvas** in this course. Course announcements and reading materials will be posted on the course website. You can access the course website here: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/39810>. Please note that **all course readings will be posted on the Canvas site** (unless otherwise specified).

ACCESSIBILITY. Please get in touch with me if you require any accommodations. For further resources, contact the **Office of Disability Services (ODS)**: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

REQUIREMENTS.

Participation 5%	Participation is required: You can keep up your participation grade by regularly attending class, turning in your assignments, and contributing to class discussion.
Write-ups 30%	<p>On 13 of the 24 times that we meet you are required to submit a weekly write-up. Each of your write-ups should consist of a typed document with exactly one thoughtfully constructed question or comment about the material we will be going over during the meeting for that week. Your write-ups should be between 150-200 words. <u>Please print out your write-ups and hand them to me in class.</u></p> <p>Importantly, you can turn in a write-up only if you contribute to discussion during our meeting that day. In other words: If you don't contribute to the discussion, you cannot submit your weekly write-up. And, if you do not submit your weekly write-up, you will not receive participation points for that day. You can only turn in one write-up per day.</p> <p><i>Hint:</i> Here's an easy way to make sure you get all of your participation points— Do your write-ups regularly and just read those questions/comments to the class!</p>
<i>Read & Posts</i>	I'll be out of town during two of our scheduled class meetings (2/27 and 4/9). On those days, instead of completing a write-up, you should do the assigned reading, and post your question on the course website.
Conversations 15%	There will be no written exams in this course. Instead, we will have one-on-one spoken exams . During the exam, I'll ask you a few questions about the material we've been covering in class, and your grade on each exam will be determined by the quality of your answers. The exam will take no longer than 20 minutes .

¹ The first two goals on this list are adapted from Zoë Johnson-King's [Moral Motivation](#) course syllabus.

Note: You can take your conversation exam any time after Spring Break. Just send me an email, and we can set up a time to meet in my office. If you have not sent me an email by **4/16**, I will get in touch with you. (Also, if you absolutely cannot meet any time outside of class, there will be a class session in which you can take a written version of the exam.)

Final essay
50%

You will be required to write **one, double-spaced, 6-7 page academic essay** in this course. Prior to turning in the final version of your essay, you will have to do the following:

1. Write a **thesis statement** and turn it in during class on **3/12**.
2. Write a **1-2 page outline of your essay** and turn it in during class on **3/23**.
3. Meet with me to **discuss your outline** between **3/30** and **4/7**.
4. Write a **3-4 page (double-spaced) rough draft** of your essay and turn it in during class by **4/23**.

CLASSROOM POLICIES.

Pronouns

Gender non-binary **they/them** pronouns will be the default pronouns in our classroom. I will give my reasons for this policy on the first day of class. If you would like the class to use different pronouns for you (e.g., she/hers, he/his), please let me know as soon as possible.

Communication

While I have a no late-work policy in my class, if you get in touch with me *as soon as possible* to let me know what's going on, I'll be much more amenable than if you wait until the last minute to try to improve your grade. **So please, communicate with me!** Email me, talk to me after class, come to my office hours—let me know what's going on so that we can work together to figure something out.

**Respectful
Disagreement**

In this course, we will work through topics that will be personal and intimate for many of you, and topics that many of you will have strong personal and/or political views about. And unsurprisingly, there may be disagreement regarding some of these issues among members of our class. I expect that we will each engage each other **kindly, conscientiously, and respectfully**, regardless of whether we agree with each other.

Please note I will not tolerate any form of bigotry or intentional antagonism in this classroom. Students who engage in such behaviors will be asked to leave.

Academic Honesty

Please adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for not doing so can be severe: They include an automatic failing grade for the course, and possibly worse. A comprehensive overview of these policies can be found at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Note: All readings posted on the Canvas site unless otherwise specified.

WEEK 1

1/23

WHAT IS ANALYTIC FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY?

Course Intro

- Introduction (“Come Closer to Feminism”) and Chapter 1 (“Feminist Politics: Where We Stand”) of *Feminism is for Everyone* by bell hooks
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WEEK 2

1/27

FOUNDATIONS OF ANALYTIC FEMINISM

Arguments & Logical Foundations

- *Forallx*, Chapter 1 (“Arguments”) & Chapter 2 (“Validity”)

1/30

The Social Construction of Gender

- “Social Construction” by Ásta
 - “Ain’t I a Woman?” by Sojourner Truth
-

WEEK 3

2/3

WHAT IS GENDER?

SOCIAL POSITION ACCOUNTS OF GENDER

- “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” by Sally Haslanger

2/6

SELF-IDENTITY ACCOUNTS OF GENDER

- “Trans Women and the Meaning of ‘Woman’” by Talia Mae Bettcher
-

WEEK 4

2/10

OPPRESSION & MISOGYNY

OPPRESSION

- “The Five Faces of Oppression” by Iris Marion Young

2/13

MISOGYNY

- Chapter 2 (“Ameliorating Misogyny”) of *Down Girl* by Kate Manne
-

WEEK 5

2/17

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

- Chapter 1 (“Testimonial Injustice”) of *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* by Miranda Fricker

2/20

TESTIMONIAL SMOTHERING & QUIETING

- “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing” by Kristie Dotson

WEEK 6

2/24

WRITING WORKSHOP #1

WRITING WORKSHOP #1: How to Set Up an Argument

2/27

NO CLASS!

- ⚙️ *Read & Post Assignment:* “[Trans Women Are Victims of Misogyny, Too](#)” by Robin Dembroff

WEEK 7

3/2

BLACK FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION TO BLACK FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

- “Introducing Black Feminist Philosophy” by Kristie Dotson

3/5

INTERSECTIONALITY

- “Intersectionality” by Brittney Cooper

WEEK 8

3/9

PHILOSOPHY OF DISABILITY

CONSTRUCTING DISABILITY

- Chapter 1 (“Constructing Disability”, pages 9-21 & 43-48) of *The Minority Body* by Elizabeth Barnes

3/12

CONSTRUCTING DISABILITY, CONT.

- Chapter 3 (“The Value-Neutral Model”, pages 77-96), pages of *The Minority Body* by Elizabeth Barnes

*Talk by **Sara Bernstein** in the Rutgers Philosophy Department**Thesis Statement Due in Class****SPRING BREAK 3/16-3/20****WEEK 9**

3/23

TRANS PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION TO TRANS PHILOSOPHY

- Section 1 (“Terminology”) of the SEP article “Feminist Perspectives on Trans Issues” by Talia Mae Bettcher
- “What is Trans Philosophy?” by Talia Mae Bettcher

Outlines Due in Class

3/26

TRANS EXPERIENCES & OPPRESSION

- “Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion” by Talia Mae Bettcher

WEEK 11

3/30

LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION

GENDER/SEX DISCRIMINATION

- Supreme Court Amicus Brief, “Brief of Philosophy Professors as Amici Curiae in Support of the Employees”, by Dembroff et. al

4/2

GENDER/SEX DISCRIMINATION CONT.

- Listen to the NYT *Daily* podcast episode, “Because of Sex” (28 min.)
 - Chapter 6 (“Instinct and Injury”, especially pages 193-206) of *Scenes of Subjection* by Saidiya Hartman
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WEEK 13

4/6

WRITING WORKSHOP #2

WRITING WORKSHOP #2: Discussing Objections & Providing Replies

4/9

NO CLASS!

- ⚙ *Read & Post Assignment*: “Dig Deep: Beyond *Lean In*” by bell hooks
-

WEEK 14

4/13

GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUALITY

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- “What is Sexual Orientation?” by Robin Dembroff

4/16

GENDER IDENTITY

- “He/She/They/Ze” by Robin Dembroff & Daniel Wodak
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WEEK 15

4/20

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

- Chapter 1 (“Toward a Decolonial Feminist Universalism”, especially pages 23-28) of *Decolonizing Universalism* by Serene Khader

4/23

FEMINISM & TRADITION

- “Do Muslim Women Need Freedom?” by Serene Khader

Rough Drafts Due in Class**WEEK 14**

4/27

WRITING WORKSHOP #3 & [TBD]

WRITING WORKSHOP #3: How to Revise Your Paper

4/30

[TBD]

WEEK 15

5/4

COURSE WRAP-UP

Starts 30 minutes late Discussion & snacks!

Written Exam Session