

Course Description

Is there an essential difference between women and men? If so, what is the source of this difference (e.g., the body or the soul?) and what does the difference imply in moral, social, and political terms? If not, how are the apparent differences produced? If the “facts” about gender are social and cultural products, then what does this imply about other (apparent) facts about the world? How do questions about race and ethnicity conflict or overlap with those about gender? Is there a “normal” way of being “queer”? Should these questions be applied globally? If not, why not? If so, how? This course introduces students to philosophy and feminism through a critical discussion of these and related questions. Assigned materials include historical and contemporary texts, the arts, and lectures on Columbia campus.

Course Goals

Learn what philosophy is and how philosophy relates to problems in feminism and gender studies.
Develop critical and analytical reading and writing skills.
Explore fundamental philosophical questions about the construction of the human subject, the universality of moral concepts, the nature of bias, and the possibility of knowledge and/or objectivity in science.
Learn how to use the powerful tools of gender and philosophy to dissect contemporary and historical materials.
Reconsider basic assumptions about who you are and what you want to be!

Readings

Because we will read and discuss particular passages in class, it is important that you have HARD COPIES OF REQUIRED READINGS with you. Some assigned readings are ONLY available in Courseworks. Find them in the Assignments section, listed alphabetically by author’s name. The following books are required and available at Book Culture (on 112th b/w Brdwy and Amsterdam) and in the reserve room at Butler Library:

Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*
Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (Penguin) [or another version of Plato’s *Phaedo* will do]
Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (Vintage)
Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body, Gender,...* (Harvard)
Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
Toni Morrison, *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power* (Pantheon)
Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal* (Free Press)

Assignments

Your primary goal is to read and think about the assigned materials, and to discuss them in class. This means coming to class prepared! There may be quizzes.
Three one-page, single-spaced papers
One 5-page double-spaced paper
Final examination
Two lecture or art analyses: attend a lecture at Columbia (Barnard/Columbia/Law/anywhere on campus), visit a museum, or go to a theater or musical event and write a 300-400 word account and analysis.

Grades

One in-class essay(s) and two two-page papers 36%; one five-page paper 25%
Lecture analyses combined with class attendance and participation 14%
Final Exam 25%

Lecture Topics and Readings

A. Essentialism: A Philosophical and Historical Perspective

Week 1 *Introduction to Course // The Origins of Essentialism.*

9/7: Introduction // Mind-Body Dualism.

Reading: Plato’s *Phaedo* in *The Last Days of Socrates* (another edition of the *Phaedo* is fine).

Week 2 *Mind, Body, Nature, and Truth*

9/12: Reading: Pagels’ *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, ch. 1 (all), ch. 2 (pp. 32-43), ch. 3 (64-77).

9/14: Reading: Pagels’ *Adam, Eve*, ch. 4 (all), ch. 6 (all).

Week 3 *Women’s Souls and Virtue // Bodies and Property*

9/19: Reading in Schneir: Wollstonecraft (pp. 5-16); Grimke (pp. 35-48); Sojourner Truth, pp. 92-98.

9/21: Reading: in Schneir, Goldman (308-24); Engels (pp. 189-204).

Sunday Morning Assignment in the Metropolitan Museum

Week 4:

9/26: Review based on Museum Trip

9/28 In-class Essays

B. Essentialism: Construction and Critique

Week 4 Foucault, *the Discourse of the Normal and the Perverse*.

10/3 - 5: Reading: Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Parts 1, 2, 3.

Week 5 Constructing Sexual Difference.

10/10: Reading: Laqueur's *Making Sex*, ch. 1-2, 3 (quick read w/ special attention on pp. 69, 82, 88, 98-99).

10/12: Reading: Laqueur, ch.5 (pp. 149-63), ch.6 (pp. 193-207; 243).

First Analysis Due In Class. First Paper Assignment Distributed.

Week 6 *Constructing Gender*

10/17-19: Reading: Butler, *Gender Trouble*, preface, ch. 1, ch. 3, § Concluding Unscientific Postscript to end

Week 7 *The Normal*

10/24 -26 Reading: Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*, chs. 1, 2, 3, and pp. 142-54, 192-3.

FIRST PAPER DUE by 5:00 Friday

C. Ethnicity, Gender, and Truth

Week 8 *Race, Gender, and Power*.

11/1- 3: Assignment: Frontline documentary, "Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill: Public Hearing, Private Pain"(view in Butler or Barnard lib). Reading: Morrison, *Race-ing Justice*, articles by Higginbotham, Marable, Painter.

Week 9 *Race-ing Objectivity*

11/7 NO CLASS (Election Day)

11/9 Reading: Morrison, *Race-ing Justice*, articles by Stansell, Lubiano, Crenshaw.

Second Paper Assignment Distributed

D.Feminism, Gender, and the Global Context

Week 10 *Constructing the Global Subject and Re-orienting Desire*

11/14-16: Readings: Abu-Lughod, "Saving Muslim Women or Standing with Them?" and "Against Universals: The Dialects of Women's Rights...." from *Rethinking the Human*, both in Courseworks.

SECOND PAPER DUE by 5:00 Friday

Week 11 *Globalizing Desire*

11/21 Reading: Massad, "ReOrienting Desire," Long, "Unbearable Witness" and Franke, "Ahmadinejad," in Courseworks

11/23 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

E. Feminism, Objectivity, and Science

Week 12 *Feminism, Objectivity, and Knowledge*.

11/28: Reading: Langton (ch. 7), Courseworks

11/30: Fricker (ch.8), and Wylie (ch. 9), Courseworks

Final Paper Assignment Distributed

Second Lecture Analysis Due Friday, 4:00.

Week 13 *Feminism and Nature*.

12/6-7 Haslanger (ch.6 of *Cambridge Companion*/Courseworks); Lloyd, "Objectivity and the Double Standard"(Pay special attention to the first two sections and the last section, Courseworks).

Week 14 *The Abuses of Essentialism Reconsidered // Conclusions*.

12/12: Reading: Thornhill, Palmer, "Why Men Rape;" Time Magazine, "The Most Impt Sex Organ" in Courseworks.

Final PAPER DUE at 3:00, Thursday, December 15.

REMEMBER: 3-hour EXAM during exam period.