

Intro to Feminist Philosophy

Temple University

Fall 2020

PHIL 2152.001/GSWS 3000.003

Professor: Katie Brennan

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Office Hours: 11-12am Tuesdays and Thursdays, via Zoom or by appointment

Course Description

Feminism is one of the core social justice movements today. A commitment to gender justice raises deep philosophical issues. What is gender? What are justice and injustice? What does specially gendered justice require? In this discussion-focused class, we will investigate foundational and topical questions of feminist theory, by both classic and contemporary authors.

Themes include: phenomenology of the female experience; beauty, sex, and power; feminist metaphysics (or what is gender?); feminist epistemology; oppression; intersectionality; global feminism; and transgender issues.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Engage with canonical and non-canonical texts in Feminist Philosophy.
- 2) Cultivate an ability to critically analyze and evaluate philosophical texts, ideas, problems and questions.
- 3) Construct positions, arguments, and interpretations through textual analysis and evaluation.

How This Course Will Be Taught

This is a completely online course that will consist of a combination of synchronous (meeting together as a group via Zoom) and asynchronous (working on your own time) elements. This is **not a correspondence course**. You will not get all the assignments at the beginning of the semester so that you end up working in an isolated way at your own pace. Instead, we'll expect you to use the digital tools built in to the course to interact with your classmates **on a weekly basis**, with deadlines, just like a face-to-face class. There will be a graded participation component in this course as well, so it is important to quickly master one of the main platforms for the course, **VoiceThread**, as well as the other digital platforms we use to deliver content and foster class discussion.

Technology Requirements

In order to make sure you are able to get the most out of the online course experience you need to make sure you have (or have access to) the following:

1. Access to a computer able to handle high speed video and voice elements
2. A high-speed Internet connection - This is very important for being able to view and participate with course content.
3. Camera/Microphone capabilities - The online courses require video/voice components and you need to make sure your computer is able to accommodate them.
4. Familiarity with Canvas-- Our online courses use Canvas as their hub. If you are unfamiliar with it, you can find links to Canvas resources on our course page.

Tech Questions: If you have technological questions or need help the TECH center is available <https://computerservices.temple.edu/technical-support>.

Limited resources are available for students who do not have the technology they need for class. Students with educational technology needs, including no computer or camera or insufficient Wifi-access, should submit a request outlining their needs using the Student Emergency Aid Fund form. The University will endeavor to meet needs, such as with a long-term loan of a laptop or Mifi device, a refurbished computer, or subsidized internet access.

Course Texts:

**All readings will be available electronically through Canvas.*

Course Requirements:

The evaluation for the course will consist of six items (totaling 2250 points):

1. Discussion Board (50 points each x 11, totaling 550 points)
2. Critical Reading Assessments (CRA) (50 points each x 1, totaling 550 points)
3. Four Homework Assignments (100 points each, totaling 400 points)
4. Final Project Presentation (50 points)
5. Final Project (400 points)
6. Participation (300 points)

Numeric-To-Letter-Grade Scale:

A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%

B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

1) Discussion Board

In order to complete a Discussion Board Assignment, students will upload one Question for Consideration and two Responses to Other Students. Students will complete the discussion board assignment on a weekly basis. Details about each are provided below:

a) Questions for Consideration (QFC):

A “Question For Consideration” may be about any philosophical aspect of the assigned texts we have read for that week. Don't repeat classmate's ideas-- challenge them, build off them, and have a discussion with each other. Your QFC must include the following elements:

- 1) A sentence or passage from one of the readings for the week, and the page number on which the sentence or passage was found. Your passage must be clearly and directly tied to your question.
- 2) Ask a discussion question about the reading. Your question should not be a simple yes or no question. Instead, it should be intended to generate discussion with the class.
- 3) Supply a reason why you are asking the question you are asking. This is important! If you can't think of a reason why you are asking your question, then maybe it isn't robust enough to generate true discussion!

Students will sometimes be asked to volunteer to share their QFC with the class. If students do not volunteer, I proceed to start calling on students to read their question aloud. So aim for a question that you are unafraid to share with the rest of the group. We can be very helpful in working out the answers to questions about the text together, so consider the class a collection of allies in the struggle for understanding.

b) Responses to Other Students (ROS):

Each student must respond to at least two other students' posts. Comments on others' posts must be between 100 and 250 words. These responses will be evaluated according to their engagement with other posts and according to the quality of the writing, thinking, and discussion. That means that the response should not just repeat what someone else has written, but should respond and comment on the previous posts or questions, advance and deepen the discussion. You can do this in various ways: mention an observation, claim, or supporting reason raised in the text that deepens the discussion; restate what another student has said, or restate a claim from the text, and then ask a *question* or suggest a clarification that might lead to a deeper discussion; offer an *example* (perhaps from personal experience) that either supports a claim being discussed or calls it into question; or suggest a different way to think about an issue.

It is crucial that everyone be very respectful of each other in the discussion threads. Take an extra minute before posting in a thread to make sure that your words and tone are appropriate—especially when disagreeing with a fellow student.

2) Critical Reading Assessments (CRA)

Students will complete Critical Reading Assessments on a weekly basis. (See CRA assignment description and rubric). Students must complete the CRA on one of the required readings for the week. The Critical Reading Assessments are a series of questions designed to help students navigate the assigned readings.

3) Homework Assignments

You will be asked to complete four homework assignments throughout the semester. The due dates for each homework are clearly marked on the syllabus—each homework assignment is due *by midnight* and is to be submitted on Canvas. You will be able to find the prompt for each homework on Canvas

4) Final Project Presentations

Your task for this assignment is to present an early version/draft of your final paper in class, in order to receive feedback. While you do not have to present a completed draft, you should at the very least have an outline for your paper.

By an outline, I mean the following:

1. A thesis statement – your main claim/argument in the paper (what you are trying to convince the reader of).
2. Two to three sub-arguments in support of your thesis statement. You do not have to flesh out all the details here for the presentation, but should have a rough idea of what these would be.
3. Potential examples.
4. Identify the key concepts that will have to be defined.
5. Potential passages that you might use.

You will present for roughly **7 minutes**. You may use a PowerPoint or any other form of visual aid. Remember that this exercise is meant to help the whole class, so try to address your presentations not just to me, but also to your peers. You must submit a copy of your draft/outline on Canvas before you begin your presentation.

5) Final Project

For your final project, you have the option of writing a 5-7 page paper *or* of giving a 15-20 minute virtual presentation on the topic of your choosing.

What: Your final project consists of a position or ‘argument’ paper *or* presentation offering a thesis and reasons for the thesis, centrally supported by documentation of sources for the intellectual content. *You must incorporate at least one (but preferably more) of the texts from this course as a primary source for your project.* Empirical claims offered to support your arguments must be documented by reliable, credible, and appropriately unbiased sources (this means locating alternatives to ThinkProgress, Breitbart, and other sources that are not in this category; see Parameters and Criteria below as to why).

Who: All papers/presentations are expected to be of your own authorship. Words and facts not created by you must be attributed to a source. Plagiarism is intolerable and I pursue the available punishments for it.

When: If you choose to write a paper, it is due **Monday, December 14th** by midnight. If you choose to give a presentation, you will need to be ready to present it in class during the final week of the semester (we will sign up for presentations in class). Papers or presentations later than the deadline will receive a 10-point grade reduction for every 24 hour period in which they are late.

Where: All papers should be submitted via **Canvas**. Students choosing to do a final presentation must submit a bibliography on **Canvas** by midnight on the day of their presentation. If Canvas is not functioning, then students ought to email the paper to my address (mary.brennan@morgan.edu). Technological obstacles are not a sufficient reason to omit to provide the paper.

6) Participation

Your participation will be based on two different elements. 1) We will meet once a week as a class on zoom. You will be graded on your participation in these virtual meetings. Participation is based upon active involvement in discussion and group work, engaged reading and preparing for class, answering questions when called upon, and attendance (see the attendance guidelines below). 2) You will be asked to leave comments on the video lectures that I will be posting each week via Voice Thread. Your comments will be counted toward your participation grade.

Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all required virtual class meetings. Attendance is necessary to maintain your participation grade. Login and be prepared by the beginning of the class. Tardiness or leaving early will affect participation for that day. In order to encourage students to attend class, I provide two points extra credit for each virtual class meeting a student attends. In order to receive the extra credit, the student must be on time for the class meeting and must not leave class early. Arriving late will yield no extra credit.

Course Website on Canvas: We will use Canvas for our course schedule, discussion board posts, grades, and additional texts and materials.

Late Work: It is important for all of us to be working on the same material at the same time. Late (even *barely* late) work loses the point equivalent of one full grade, and a further grade for each additional twenty-four hours of lateness. If for some reason you cannot complete an assignment it is your responsibility to notify me **in advance** and to provide proper documentation. Technical issues are not acceptable excuses for late work.

Communication Check your Temple e-mail and Canvas regularly. Class announcements such as updates, cancellations or assignment changes will be communicated by e-mail and/or Canvas. Although I often check email and the discussion board during the weekend, I cannot guarantee that I will respond to emails sent over the weekend.

Academic Conduct: It is crucial that everyone be very respectful of each other in class and in the discussion threads. Take an extra minute before posting in a thread to make sure that your words and tone are appropriate. Counterarguments are always welcome, and in fact are encouraged; but when we disagree, it is important to do so in a productive manner.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and academic cheating are prohibited by University policy. Your work must be your own, and all sources must be cited according to the Chicago Manual Style (including books, articles, electronic resources on the internet, pictures, or anything else you reference that has not been written or created by you). Anyone caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment or the course. *If you are uncertain about whether completing an assignment in a particular way is cheating or plagiarism please contact me.*

Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1 (8/24-8/31): Introduction and Welcome

Week 2 (8/31-9/7): The Phenomenology of the Female Experience

Reading:

- Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality*

Podcast:

- 99% Invisible: “Invisible Women” :
<https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/invisible-women/>

Week 3 (9/7-9/14): Beauty, Sex, and Power

Reading:

- Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”
- Jia Tolentino, “Always Be Optimizing” (listen: [pt 1](#) [pt 2](#))
- Amia Srinivasan, Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?

Podcast:

- Radiolab, “In the No Part 1”:
<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/no-part-1>

Homework #1 due

Week 4 (9/14-9/21): Feminist Metaphysics

Reading:

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

Podcast:

- Radiolab, “Gonads: Dutee”
(<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/dutee>)

Week 5 (9/21-9/28): Feminist Standpoint Theory

Reading:

- Nancy Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”

Week 6 (9/28-10/5): Developments and Criticisms of Feminist Standpoint Theory

Reading:

- Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought”
- Uma Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist”

Homework #2 due

Week 7 (10/5-10/12): Oppression

Reading:

- Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”
- Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression”

Week 8 (10/12-10/19): Intersectionality

Reading:

- Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”

Week 9 (10/19-10/26): Intersectionality, Continued

Reading:

- Audre Lorde: Sexism: an American Disease in Blackface?
- Patricia Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought”

Homework #3 due

Week 10 (10/26-11/2): Global Feminism

Reading:

- María Lugones, Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “Wild Tounge”

Podcast:

- UnMute Podcast: Episode 031: Serene Khader on Cross-Border Feminist Solidarity: <https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-031-serene-khader-on-cross-border-feminist-solidarity/>

Week 11 (11/2-11/9): Transgender Issues

Reading:

- Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, Chapter 1
- Heath Fogg Davis, “The Sex Markers We Carry: Sex- Marked Identity Documents”

Homework #4 due

Week 12 (11/9-11/16): Drag, Queer, and Pop Culture

Reading:

- Bell Hooks, “Is Paris Burning?” in *Black Looks: race and representation*, Boston: South End Press, pp. 145-156.

Film

- *Paris is Burning* (1991)

Week 13 (11/16-11/23): Presentations

- Final Project Presentations

Week 14 (11/23-11/30): Fall Break, No Classes

Week 15 (11/30-12/7): Presentations

- Final Project Presentations

*****Final Projects due by Monday, December 14th at midnight**

Disability Statement

Any student who has a need for accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability or medical condition should contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex (drs@temple.edu; 215-204-1280) to request accommodations and learn more about the

resources available to you. If you have a DRS accommodation letter to share with me, or you would like to discuss your accommodations, please contact me as soon as practical. I will work with you and with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities. All discussions related to your accommodations will be confidential.

Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities Policy

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at policies.temple.edu.

Attendance Protocol and Your Health

If you feel unwell, you should not come to campus, and you will not be penalized for your absence. Instructors are required to ensure that attendance is recorded for each in-person or synchronous class session. The primary reason for documentation of attendance is to facilitate contact tracing, so that if a student or instructor with whom you have had close contact tests positive for COVID-19, the university can contact you. Recording of attendance will also provide an opportunity for outreach from student services and/or academic support units to support students should they become ill. Faculty and students agree to act in good faith and work with mutual flexibility. The expectation is that students will be honest in representing class attendance.