



PHIL 29S – Introduction to Feminist Philosophy

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College: Stanford University, Summer 2024

Class: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:20 in TBD

Office Hours: Thursday 4:30-5:30 in TBD

Course Description

Feminism interrogates the ways that gender and sexuality shape our society as a whole. Unsurprisingly, educational institutions and the student-teacher relationship in specific have been thoughtfully examined by feminist thinkers. These reflections have given rise to insightful critiques of the gendered assumptions and hierarchies often built into the classroom environment and creative proposals for alternative ways of learning together. The methods of feminist pedagogy embody these techniques, showing that freer, more equal, and more joyous forms of education will better empower students and teachers to produce knowledge, develop personally, and contribute to social change.

But realizing these goals together will not be easy. Feminist pedagogy requires that both teacher and student challenge themselves to build a space of trust, respect, and critical reflection. Bringing our lives into the classroom, listening to others who we may disagree with, and carefully considering the truth of our feelings and beliefs are all skills that require practice and courage. Together, we will focus on developing these skills together through the construction of a feminist classroom.

In the class, we will explore the methods of feminism in relation to our collective activity of learning together. We will study consciousness raising, collaborative knowledge production, social construction, deconstructive techniques, critical theories of oppression and injustice, intersectional approaches, and structural analysis, examining how each can be applied to ourselves, the world around us, and the classroom we constitute.

I would like to thank the Hunter WGS Faculty, for making their syllabi available for consultation. In particular, this syllabus is inspired by those of Professors Abdullah-Matta, Allison, Azari, Cartei, De Lorenzo, Iscan, Mendelsohn, Mitchell, Ngeo, Polyak.

Teaching Philosophy

Our course will include three main components: Readings to be done before class, in class discussions, and assignments based on classroom material. Each of these serves many functions within the context of the university as a whole, but as critical learners we ought to reflect on their relation to the collaborative process of education we will be engaged in.

What is the Purpose of Assigned Readings? First, to expose ourselves to a selection of feminist perspectives on the world. As students, we will study and reflect on both the main ideas and the way of approaching feminist thought that each reading exemplifies, benefiting from while being critical of the experience/training, differential access to resources, and unique worldviews of the authors we encounter. But our readings will serve a number of additional purposes. Through reading, we practice the skill of listening and exploring other people's ideas—ideas which we may find difficult or uncomfortable. At the same time, the readings will provide a touchstone which is common to each of us while not being personal to any of us, so that through discussing them we can practice developing shared rather than individual forms of knowledge. Finally, by studying the readings as creative interpretations of the world, we will experience and enact our unique ability as free beings to respond to the world as meaningful through the prism of our ability to think and act for our own reasons—reasons that we can reflect on together—an activity which expresses a fundamental aspect of our humanity.

What is the Purpose of the Classroom? Classroom discussions will provide a space for us to get to know each other, laying the foundation for honest and critical reflection and providing an opportunity for building relationships that have value beyond the immediate context of the classroom (e.g. friendships, collaborations, comradeship, partnership, networking, shared community, etc.). Our shared respect and trust will, in turn, enable us to explore the material in a variety of different modalities with different methods and results (objective knowledge, catharsis, recognition, personal desire, self-understanding, moral orientation, mutual accountability, truth-building, etc.). More deeply, the challenging practice of community constitutes the earth on which the garden of justice struggles to bloom, as we experience the joy of our mutual presence and see the possibility of social transformation that is indicated by our collaboration as an example of non-oppressive but non-utopian social relations. If we engage with each other in a genuine fashion, our practice of learning together will demonstrate the possibility of a world which is not bloodied by the fist of injustice by actualizing a free relation to each other.

What is the Purpose of Assignments? To challenge students to objectify the process of learning in which they have participated in a product or performance that expresses their creative appropriation of the ways of making sense of the world (concepts) that they have discovered in the class. An assignment should hold the student accountable in a way that supports their making the knowledge their own by internalizing and applying it. In this process, the ideas of the class are developed insofar as they are thought through by a unique person with a unique perspective. At the same time, the process of engaging with ideas in a way that enables a student to apply and develop them involves a transformation of the learner themselves. And finally, insofar as the

teacher is also a student, the student's learning is also an object for the teacher as a part of their own learning about both the subject matter of the class and the practice of teaching itself.

Course Materials

We will be using a [google drive](#) with files accessible directly or via the [masterdoc](#). All selected [readings and multimedia](#) and [documents](#) are provided electronically.

Course Grading

- Individual Participation / Journal Responses (40%)
- Group Discussion Participation (30%)
- Final Project (30%)

Course Assignments

Participation / Journal Responses. Most every week will include an in-class writing portion, where you will respond to a question about the readings and material in a provided blue book journal. You must complete at least nine responses to obtain full credit and will receive 2% extra credit on your final grade for every additional response.

I strongly encourage you to write notes and annotate while you read, and you may consult these notes while you journal. You can find tips for taking notes in the [Reading Annotations Guide](#).

Final Project. At the conclusion of the course, you will complete a final project that includes a written component (250-1000w depending on your project). Your project may take one of four forms. In all cases, you will receive 10% of extra credit on your final grade if you enact your project, even in a partial form. You can find additional guidelines and a rubric on the [Final Project Guide](#).

- **Build the Curriculum** – Develop a program for educating a specific group (e.g. a group of students, adults, old people, workers, neighbors, people with a shared interest or hobby, etc.) on a specific topic from our course. Your curriculum should demonstrate knowledge of the topic as well as a considerate employment of feminist pedagogical techniques.
- **Make a Movement** – Develop an action strategy for achieving a specific feminist political or social goal within a specific community (e.g. school, neighborhood, district, borough, city, state, country, world). Your action strategy should explain why society ought to change and include a plan for doing so that identifies relevant obstacles to change as well as possible sources of feminist power.
- **Investigate the World** – Develop a proposal for empirically investigating a specific topic related to gender and sexuality. Your proposal should explain why researching the topic is important for feminists, what research methods should be used (e.g. experiments,

interviews, surveys, fieldwork, case studies, historical research, etc.), and how the topic intersects with other social categories like race, ability, and age.

- **Research Paper** – Write a 1000w research paper engaging substantially with 1-2 readings from the course. Your paper should interpret the thinker's ideas, critically reflect on them, pose objections or present developments where appropriate, and suggest further lines of investigation. If you choose this option, you may receive the 10% extra credit if you have someone else read the paper and offer comments and then write at least 250 words responding to the comments.

Submission. For all projects, you will upload your materials to canvas as file named “Lastname_ProjectTitle”.

Extra Credit: You may complete one or more of the following extra credit assignments to receive 4% per extra credit assignment on your final grade. You may submit extra credit assignments at any time before the last day of class (but not during the readings or exam period).

- **Cultural Analysis.** Write a 250w evaluation of a cultural artifact (TV/movie clip, work of art, play/concert or other cultural event, historical artifact, consumer good, architectural object, etc.) from a feminist perspective. Your analysis should consider what the object expresses about gender and sexuality, whether it contributes to justice/injustice, and how, if at all, it should be changed.
- **Concept Map.** Create a map of 5-10 concepts from the course showing how they are connected to each other in feminist theory. You should define each concept, identify the concepts it is directly and indirectly related to, and explain how these relations shape its meaning and usage.
- **Learning Reflection.** Write a 250w reflection on what you have learned from the class, including a consideration of your own process of learning. You should consider your overall learning in the course, highlight specific authors, ideas, and texts that were especially interesting, relevant, or problematic to you, and provide space for a synthetic discussion and self-assessment of your learning and your role as class participant.
- **Outrageous Act.** Perform an act that defies sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, ableist, or racist norms. This may include a (safe and legal) change in your individual behavior, a collective action, a public performance, etc. Afterwards, you must write a 250w reflection on what motivated your act, how it disrupted oppressive norms, how it felt to do so, and any ways that your action has transformed how you think / plan to engage with about yourself or the world going forward.

Course Information

Grading Criteria: You must complete all assignments in order to pass the class. In general, grades mean the following. An "A" (excellent) indicates a sophisticated understanding of the material, exceptional analysis, and original thought. "B" (very good) reflects an above average understanding of the material and good level of analysis. "C" (average) suggests an average comprehension of the material with either some misunderstandings or reliance on summary rather than independent analysis of the works. "D" (below average) indicates a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. I will circulate the more specific rubric I use to evaluate your assignments.

Gender Pronouns and Names: Stanford University affirms all forms of gender expression and identity. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me and one another on your names, pronunciation, and gender pronouns, and let me know if there are changes. If you would like to talk more about gender pronouns please email me or come to my office hours.

Learning Objectives. By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Identify the major social forces that shape disenfranchised people's lives (including but not limited to that of women) in specific historical and social locations
2. Describe how gender, race, class, sexuality, and other dimension of identity intersect in historical, social and economic contexts.
3. Define core concepts (and basic terms) in gender and sexuality studies and feminist theory such as consciousness raising, collaborative knowledge production, social construction, deconstructive techniques, critical theories of oppression and injustice, intersectional approaches, and structural analysis.
4. Engage with current debates in the field of Gender and Sexuality Studies
5. Apply core concepts and theories of Gender and Sexuality Studies to life experiences and historical events, and processes.
6. Communicate arguments/positions about gender, race, class & sexuality in writing & speech.

Course Schedule

Readings Folder

Note: The texts for each week (assigned and recommended) are listed in order of importance.

Week 1 – Introduction to Liberatory Education

We will begin by critically reflecting on the practice of learning. We will investigate the ways in which traditional educational models can perpetuate gendered forms of hierarchy and injustice and explore feminist proposals for reshaping the classroom. At the same time, we will begin building collective trust by getting to know each other and sharing about ourselves. Key concepts: pedagogy, banking education, student-teacher / teacher-student, freedom/domination.

- Assigned:
 - Read the syllabus.
 - hooks 1994, “Engaged Pedagogy” in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, pg 13-22.
 - Davis 1981, “Education and Liberation: Black Women's Perspective” in *Women Race and Class*, pg 99-109.
- Recommended:
 - Freire 1970, “The Banking Concept of Education,” and “Education as a Practice of Freedom” in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pg 71-92.
 - Shrewsbury 1997, “What is Feminist Pedagogy?” in *Women's Studies Quarterly* Vol. 25, No. 1/2.
 - Rich 1977, “Claiming an Education” in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978*, pg 231-5.
- Media:
 - Daniels 2009, Precious
 - Alternative Education (28:25-33:00): Progressive educator leads a student-centered sharing exercise.

Week 2 – Collective Learning through Consciousness Raising

During the second wave, feminists took the problem of collective education seriously, inventing a method called “consciousness raising” to facilitate the collective discovery of truth through collaborative self-reflection. We will adapt this method to structure our class discussions in ways that embody the goals of feminist pedagogy. Key concepts: consciousness, self-reflection, trust, honesty, abstraction.

- Assigned:
 - Lorde 1978, “The Transformation of Silence into Language Speech and Action” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, pg 40-44.
 - Allen 1970, “The Small Group Process” in *Free Space: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women's Liberation*, pg 23-31.

- Recommended:
 - National Organization for Women 1982, *NOW Guidelines for Feminist Consciousness-Raising*.
 - Rosenthal 1984, “Consciousness Raising: From Revolution to Re-Evaluation.” in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 8(4).
 - Haslanger 2021, “Political Epistemology and Social Critique” in *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Volume 7*, pg 23-65.
- Media:
 - Gerwig 2023, *Barbie*
 - Barbie Deprogramming (1:12:30-1:17:00): Matel employee Gloria visits the patriachalized Barbie Land and leads the brainwashed dolls in a consciousness raising exercise that breaks through their false consciousness.

Week 3 – Learning about Ourselves Together

To practice consciousness raising effectively, we need to understand what it means to discover knowledge about ourselves collectively. Feminist thinkers have developed sophisticated theories of knowledge which show that to truly understand ourselves, we must understand each other without ignoring or becoming stuck in our differences. Key concepts: social knowledge (epistemology), difference, pluralism, listening, critique.

- Assigned:
 - Lugones 2003, “On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism” in *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, pg 65-75.
 - Takacs 2002, “Positionality, Epistemology, and Social Justice in the Classroom” in *Social Justice* Vol. 29, No. 4, pg 168-194.
- Recommended:
 - Lorde 1979, “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* pg 110-113.
 - Welch 2017, “Native American Chaos Theory and the Politics of Difference” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, pg 370-381.
 - Harding 1991, “What Is Feminist Epistemology?” in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*, pg 105-137.
 - Longino 2002, “Socializing Knowledge” in *The Fate of Knowledge*, pg 124-144.
- Media:
 - TBD

Week 4 – The Construction of Gender

As we understand who we are, we must ask how we can make ourselves and our world better. A foundational claim of feminist thought maintains that gender is socially constructed and can therefore be transformed to be more just. We will explore these ideas, encapsulated in Simone de Beauvoir's famous claim that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Keywords: social construction, sex/gender, practice, social change.

- Assigned:
 - Beauvoir 1949, "Introduction" and "Childhood" in *The Second Sex*, pg 3-6, 12-17, 279-83.
 - Lorber 1994, "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender" in *Paradoxes of Gender*, pg 13-19, 22-27, 30-36.
- Recommended:
 - Davis 1981, "Woman Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism" in *Women Race and Class*, pg 110-126.
 - Haslanger 2012, "Future Races, Future Genders" in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*, pg 248-272.
 - Hayman & Levit 2002, "Un-Natural Things: Constructions of Race, Gender, and Disability" in *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* pg 159-186.
 - MacKinnon 2002, "Keeping it Real: On Anti-Essentialism" in *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* pg 159-186, pg 71-83.
- Media:
 - Gerwig 2023, *Barbie*
 - The Dawn of Woman (1:00-4:00): Parodies the traditional evolutionary story of gender (with a direct homage to Kubrick) through a "feminist" retelling.

Week 5 – The Deconstruction of Sex

While the distinction between sex and gender was essential to the development of feminism, recent work in feminism and medical sciences have troubled the meaning of "sex" itself. Deconstructing the relation between nature and society, feminists have argued that how we understand our bodies shapes who is allowed to exist. Key concepts: embodiment, deconstruction, biology of sex (chromosomes, hormones, primary/secondary sex characteristics, intersexuality).

- Assigned:
 - Oudshoorn 1994, "Introduction" in *Beyond the Natural Body: an Archaeology of Sex Hormones* pg 1-14.
 - Butler 1993, "Bodies that Matter" in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* pg 3-6.

- Recommended:
 - Clune-Taylor 2021, “Is Sex Socially Constructed?” in *The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Philosophy of Science* pg 187-200.
 - Fausto-Sterling 2000, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*.
 - Haraway 1989, “Introduction: the Persistence of Vision” in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*.
 - Davis 1981, “Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights” in *Women Race and Class*, pg 202-221.
- Media:
 - TBD

Week 6 – The Many Faces of Injustice

If we collectively construct social identities and even the body itself, then we can transform them together. Feminists have done extraordinary work in theorizing the different ways that society can go wrong and what we can do about them, carefully investigating what it means to benefit from or be subordinated within gendered social systems. Key concepts: power, symbolic/material injustice, oppression, domination, alienation, inequality.

- Assigned:
 - Frye 1983, “Oppression” in *Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* pg 1-16.
 - Young 1990, “The Five Faces of Oppression” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* pg 39-65.
- Recommended:
 - Davis 1981, “The Anti-Slavery Movement and the Birth of Women's Rights” and “The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working Class Perspective” in *Women Race and Class*, pg 30-45, 222-244.
 - McIntosh 1989, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, pg 188-192.
 - Miller 2003, “Domination and Subordination” in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, pg 110-116.
- Media:
 - TBD

Week 7 – Intersectionality and Experience

Though early forms of feminism tended to homogenize women's experience, critiques from working class and women of color pierced through the veil of sameness and uncovered the intersectionality of social categories like gender, race, age, and class (and many more), showing that each unique mixture creates a distinct terrain for experience and social struggle. Key words: intersectionality, identity, experience, coalitionism.

- Assigned:
 - Hill Collins 2019, “Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry” in *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* pg 24-29, 43-50.
 - Crenshaw 2003, “Traffic at the Crossroads: Multiple Oppressions” in *Sisterhood is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium* pg 43-57.
- Recommended:
 - Davis 1981, “Class and Race in the Early Women's Rights Campaign” in *Women Race and Class*, pg 46-69.
 - Crenshaw 1989, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” in *University of Chicago Legal Forum* Volume 1989 Issue 1.
 - Crenshaw 1991, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” in *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6.
- Media:
 - Livingston 1991, Paris is Burning
 - Realness (18:00-21:00): Exemplifies the practice of passing as “normal” (cishet) in queer culture.
 - Home (23:57-26:00): Portrays the development of non-conforming kinship structures in queer culture.

Week 8 – Interlocking Social Structures

Intersectional identities like race, gender, and class are not just dimensions of individual experience, but social categories that precede and shape our identities. Feminist thinkers argue that these categories arise from the structure of our society, going beyond individual action to shape the terrain of social life itself. Feminists have thereby pioneered the investigation of structural injustices, or forms of harm that are not the fault of individuals or groups, but of the way that we organize our relations to each other. Key concepts: social structure, structural injustice, social relation, social role.

- Assigned:
 - Davis 1972, “Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves” in *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2.
 - Combahee River Collective 1977, “A Black Feminist Statement” in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, pg 15-27.
- Recommended:
 - Snorton 2017, “Trans Capable: Fungibility, Fugitivity, and the Matter of Being” in *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, pg 55-100.

- Davis 1981, “The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women” and “Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist” in *Women Race and Class*, pg 87-98, 172-201.
- Spillers 1987, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” in *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, No. 2.
- Media:
 - Cuarón 2018, Roma
 - "Family" Dinner (9:15-10:30 / 16:00-20:45): Depicts the care work performed by domestic laborers participating in care chains and their close relation to but also alienation from the families that they work for.

FINAL PROJECT DUE at 11:59PM on 5/22