

# **Phil/WGST 275: Moral and Philosophical Issues of Gender in Society**

**Summer I 2021, UNC-CH**

**Instructor: Zachary Thornton** (zacthorn@live.unc.edu)

**Class time:** M Tu W Th F 11:30am – 1 pm EST

**Office hours:** Tu W 1 pm – 2 pm EST and by appointment.

**Classroom:** <https://unc.zoom.us/j/96983454441> Pass: Caldwell

**My Office:** <https://unc.zoom.us/j/743340112> Pass: Caldwell

**Required text:** All texts are available in the resources tab on Sakai

## **The Course**

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to philosophical issues regarding gender and society. We will learn about important concepts in feminist theory, including gender, gender-based oppression, and intersectionality. With these concepts, we will study ethical, political, and philosophical issues central to contemporary feminism. Topics that we will discuss include: What is the nature of gender? What does it mean to be gender queer? What is intersectional feminism? How do we live a feminist life?

Students will learn about this material by engaging with their peers in class discussions, online forums, and peer feedback, all of which will be firmly grounded in assigned readings. No particular background in philosophy or gender studies is presupposed. Intellectual curiosity and ability to engage with your peers in open and respectful dialogue are required.

### **Course Objectives**

If this class is successful, then, by the end of the semester, students should be able to...

- Fluently recite some of the major issues in the topics covered in class.
- Carefully evaluate argument or idea presented in discussion.
- Respond to an argument or idea presented in discussion in a substantial and productive way.
- Articulate their philosophical thoughts clearly and concisely in writing and discussion.

- Produce rigorous and precise arguments to promote and defend their philosophical views.

## **Course Structure**

This class is intended to focus on close reading of course material and class discussion, so there will be very little lecturing on my part. This choice is intentional, here are my reasons:

First, the topics we'll be discussing are essential social and they are best learned in a social context. We will, in a sense, be crowd sourcing insights into the issues we will discuss. A diversity of perspectives is crucial for completely understanding these issues. Engagement with your peers is the best way for you to access their perspective and share your own.

Second, for most of you, your time in university will be on the only time in your life where you can be part of a group of people dedicated to learning challenging philosophical texts for an extended period of time. This is an incredibly valuable intellectual experience because it helps us appreciate the difficulty of these texts, but also their universality and depth.

And third, philosophy is most enjoyable when it is done collaboratively.

## **Discussion policy:**

The success of this class will depend largely on there being an environment that encourages open and productive discussion. It will be incumbent on all of us to foster this environment of mutual respect.

Norms for discussion (this is a living document, meaning that it can be changed to reflect new norms that we as a group adopt):

- Speak from your own experience and don't try to generalize to everyone, even if they may have the same identity as you
- Step up and step back
- Be respectful to everyone's experiences
- Be conscious of the power of words
- Don't use unnecessarily controversial examples or language
- Listen to understand and not just to respond
- Challenge the idea and not the person
- Don't repeat other people's personal stories and experiences outside of this class.

## **Recording**

I may record classes to upload to Sakai. If I do decide to record class, I will first let everyone know and listen to any concerns people might have before I begin recording. You may request that I record a class that you will miss, however, I cannot guarantee that I will.

## **General Advice**

The texts we read in this course are often challenging and contain subtle philosophical arguments. If you have not read a philosophy paper before, especially philosophy from the last 100 years, you may find it difficult to follow these texts. The Pink Guide to Philosophy has some great advice on how to get the most out of this class, you can find the guide here:

<https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/pinkguidetophilosophy/>. The final page of this guide also contains links to other philosophy guides.

I also highly recommend reading the guides from UNC's very own Jim Pryor who has highly acclaimed guides on reading philosophy papers (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>) and on writing a philosophy paper (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>).

## Assessment

### Grading Items and Descriptions

#### Class engagement (15%)

- See attendance and participation policy below.

#### Forum Posts (3% each, 15%)

- There will be one discussion forum a week for 5 in total.
- You will earn 1% for each post and 1% for each comment.
- You will earn points for the first post and first two comments per forum.
- Posts and comments are due a week after the thread is created.

#### Reading Responses (2% each, 10 % total)

- Each student will sign up for 5 readings to respond to.
- Students will create a slide on VoiceThread to share their responses.

#### Quizzes (2% each, 10% total)

- Each quiz will have 5 questions, each worth 0.4% of your final grade.
- Quizzes will be given in class on Fridays.

#### Papers (2 mini papers, 2 long papers, 25% in total)

- 2.5% for each mini paper.
- 10% for each long paper.
- See below sections "Written Work" and "Due dates and extensions."

#### Peer feedback (5% each, 10% total)

- For the long papers, students will be assigned a partner paper that they will read, evaluate, and provide feedback on.
- 2.5% for each rough draft.
- 2.5% for each peer evaluation sheet.

#### Final Exam (15 %)

- Our final exam time is June 23rd from 11:30am EST to 2:30pm EST.

#### Extra Credit (1% each, 2% total)

### **Attendance and Participation Policy**

Your presence in class is mandatory. We are all dedicating an hour and a half five times a week to work through these texts together, and your lack of presence takes away learning opportunities from other students. Being present in class requires more than merely signing into the Zoom room. You are expected to have your camera on, irrelevant internet browser windows closed, and course materials ready-to-hand.

I understand that the coronavirus pandemic is affecting everyone in myriad ways and will be throughout this semester. I will be flexible about what counts as an excused absence and will be happy to work with you on making accommodations.

For full credit, students are expected to engage with their peers 4 times per week. Since this is a discussion based class, your contributions are incredibly important. The questions you ask and insights you share are very important for you and your peer's learning. I recognize that participating in class is sometimes difficult. I am hoping to push everyone to share their thoughts while also giving you room for have days where you just want to listen.

To grade engagement, I will mark each time a student talks in a week, participates in the zoom chat, and leaves a voice comment on people's VoiceThread. I will then assign them a score at the end of the week. All these contributions can happen in the same day or spread out throughout the week. I will also consider accepting emailed questions or comments for me to share during class as participation. At the end of the course, I will average each student's weekly score, and that will determine their in-class participation grade. The rubric for determining these scores is as follows:

4 or more contribution = 10 points

3 = 9

2 = 7.5

1 = 5

0 = 0

Notice that your grade for engagement is not relative to the amount other students participate – it depends solely on your engagement. Also notice that there is a big jump in score between participating 0 times a week and participating once.

(Example: Suppose a student got the following weekly scores: Week 1: 10, Week 2: 7.5, Week 3: 10, Week 4: 10, Week 5: 9. Their final in-class participation score would be 9.3 which is a 93%.)

## **Written Work**

The writing assignments in this class are the two mini papers, two long papers, two peer feedback assignments, and the final exam. The writing in this class will exceed 10 pages.

Papers will be submitted under the assignments tab on Sakai. Papers must be submitted for anonymous review. Failing to submit your paper for blind review will result in a 2-point deduction. All word limits are hard limits – going over the word limit will result in a 2-point deduction. To stay under the maximum word count, you will need to write succinctly, and likely will need to revise and delete unnecessary or irrelevant words.

I will grade your papers anonymously. This is to ensure the upmost fairness in the grades I assign. Since I will be grading papers in this way, I cannot regrade them. If I were to regrade your paper, I would be grading it in a significantly different context than I graded everyone else's papers and I could no longer guarantee the fairness of the grade.

I will be giving detailed written comments on your first long paper. These comments are meant to help you improve for the next paper and grow as a writer and a thinker. Because these comments are meant to facilitate improvement, there will be more critical comments than praise. Do not take this personally or as a reflection of the quality of your overall work. Additionally, you will receive peer feedback on your papers. If you would like more feedback on your papers from me, I would be happy to give you feedback during office hours.

## **Due dates, extensions, late work**

Due dates are hard deadlines. If you have not contacted me before 24 hours before the exam, you will be penalized immediately after it's due.

If you need an extension on an assignment, email me before the assignment is due. Given the sometimes personal stresses of COVID, you do not need to explain why you need an extension. However, we must decide on a new due date for the assignment that is in a reasonable amount of time.

Any unexcused late work will be penalized with a deduction of 5% off the assignment grade per day it is late.

# Assignment Schedule

Zach Thornton's PHIL/WGST 275, Summer I 2021

UNC - CH

## Week 1

May 19 - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "We should all be Feminists"

Forum post #1 assigned

Reading summaries sign up opened

May 20 - bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everyone* intro & ch. 1

May 21 - "The Feminist in Cellblock Y" (1 hr, 15 mins)

Quiz #1 in class

Mini paper #1 assigned

Reading summaries sign up closed

## Week 2 – Intersectionality and Oppression

May 24 - Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"

Forum post #2 assigned

Mini paper #1 due

May 25 - Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression", cont.

Forum post #1 due

May 26 – Combahee River Collective, "How We Get Free"

Mini paper #2 assigned

May 27 – Kimberly Crenshaw's Ted talk, "The Urgency of Intersectionality" (18 mins, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>)

Optional classic paper: Kimberly Crenshaw, "Mapping at the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color"

May 28 – Marilyn Frye, “On Being White”

(<https://feminist-reprise.org/library/race-and-class/on-being-white-thinking-toward-a-feminist-understanding-of-race-and-race-supremacy/>)

Quiz #2 in class

Mini paper #2 Due

Paper #1 assigned

### **Week 3 – Gender and Sex**

June 1 – Marilyn Frye, “Sexism”

Forum post #3 assigned & #2 due

June 2 – Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Social Construction”

Paper #1 Rough draft due

Peer feedback #1 assigned

June 3 – Iris Marion Young, “Throwing like a girl”

June 4 – Marilyn Frye, “Some Notes on Separatism and Power”

(<https://feminist-reprise.org/library/resistance-strategy-and-struggle/some-reflections-on-separatism-and-power/>)

Quiz #3 in class

Peer feedback #1 due

### **Week 4 – Epistemic injustice, silencing, objectification**

June 7 – Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* ch. 1 & 7.1

Forum post #4 assigned & #3 due

Paper #1 Final Draft Due

June 8 – Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression”

Jun 9 – Sally Haslanger, “On being objective and being objectified.” Sect. 1-3

June 10 – Sally Haslanger, “On being objective and being objectified.” Sects. 4 – 6 (end)

Paper #2 assigned

June 11 – Audre Lorde, “Use of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”.

Quiz #4 in class

### **Week 5 – Feminism at the margins: Trans feminism and Multiculturalism**

June 14 – Maria Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World-Traveling’, and Loving Perception”

Forum post #5 assigned & #4 due

Paper #2 rough draft due

Peer feedback #2 assigned

June 15 – Talia Mae Bettcher, "What is Trans Philosophy?"

June 16 – Robin Dembroff, “Beyond Binary: Gender Queer as a Critical Gender Kind”

Peer feedback #2 due

June 17 – Serene Khader, *Decolonizing Universalism* ch. 1

June 18 – Serene Khader, *Decolonizing Universalism* ch 3

Quiz #5 in class

### **Week 6**

June 21 – TBD (Rae Langton on Speaking up or Robin Zheng on Solidarity)

Paper #2 final draft due

**Final Exam: June 23 @ 11:30 am EST – 2:30 pm EST**

### **Grading Scale**

A = 93 – 100

A- = 90 – 93

B+ = 87 – 90

B = 83 – 87

B- = 80 – 83



C+ = 77 – 80

C = 73 – 77

C- = 70 – 73

D+ = 67 – 70

D = 63 – 67

For grade definitions, see

<https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/> .

## **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonest**

Your work must be your own and must be done for this class alone. Quoting or paraphrasing any source, whether a book, magazine, web site, or any other medium, whether one of our texts or otherwise, requires that you cite that source properly. I am flexible about how your using sources outside of the texts I've assigned to supplement your use of primary texts. I am also flexible about how you cite these texts, so long as they are cited.

**Note:** you are not allowed to submit written work that you have already submitted for other classes at UNC or elsewhere. (This requirement applies across campus, not just for this class.)

For further information on the University's Honor Code, and on failures to comply with this code, please see: <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/>

## **Accessibility Resources**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office, Tel - 919-962-8300 or Email - [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). Relevant policy documents as they relation to registration and accommodations determinations and the student registration form are available at: <https://accessibility.unc.edu/about-ars/policies/student-and-applicant-accommodations>

## **Counseling Resources**

It is incredibly important that you treat your mental health as seriously, if not more seriously, than your physical health. Issues like depression can quickly lead to declining physical health. And declining mental health can have a significant impact on every aspect of your life. Every semester, I have some students with mental health issues that significantly impact their performance in the class. Getting on top of mental health concerns early can dramatically help the development and outcome of a mental health problem.

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. (*source: Student Safety and Wellness Proposal for EPC, Sep 2018*)

### ***Title IX Resources***

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – [Adrienne.allison@unc.edu](mailto:Adrienne.allison@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

### **Syllabus Changes**

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible. (*source:* [http://faccoun.unc.edu/files/2011/03/Res-2012-11OnSyllabusGuidelines\\_v4FinalAsApproved.pdf](http://faccoun.unc.edu/files/2011/03/Res-2012-11OnSyllabusGuidelines_v4FinalAsApproved.pdf))