

Philosophy of Feminism

Fall 2021
Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:20

Instructor: Rowan Bell (they/them)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-4:30pm | Wednesdays 3-4pm | OR by appointment

Office: 103 Bowne Hall. Virtual meetings available by request. [Link to Zoom Office](#)

Introduction

Welcome to the fall 2021 semester of Philosophy of Feminism!

Feminism is **the movement to end gendered oppression**. Philosophy is, among other things, **the systematic study of ideas or concepts**. Philosophy of Feminism will therefore involve the systematic study of the following ideas and concepts:

- ⌘ **What is oppression?** What are its features? How does it work? How is it perpetuated and enforced? How is it different from other kinds of harm? Who is oppressed? What does it mean to be oppressed according to gender?
- ⌘ **What is gender?** Is it a social group? An identity? Is it multiple things? How is gender interdependent on other identities like race and class? What does it mean to be masculine or feminine? What does it mean to be trans or nonbinary?
- ⌘ **What should we do?** What is the role of feminist theory in ending oppression? Who is and who ought to be the focus of feminist theory? What critiques exist of feminism? What is the best use of our resources? How do we put our theory into practice (praxis)?

We will approach these questions with the help of historical and contemporary feminist philosophy, as well as some relevant non-philosophy (to be approached philosophically).

Objectives

I aim to help you gain or improve:

- ⌘ An understanding of the concepts and issues discussed in feminist philosophy
- ⌘ Skills in interpretation and evaluation of philosophical arguments
- ⌘ The ability to produce a clear and cogent argumentative essay

and most importantly:

- ⌘ Tools to move through the world with better understanding of its hierarchies, social categories, and injustices, in order to thereby undermine, question, and dismantle them

Classroom Code of Conduct

We will draw our discussion guidelines from Robert Jones Jr. (Twitter: @sonofbaldwin):

“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

Classroom discussions will be conducted with respect and intellectual charity. No bigotry will be

tolerated. In addition to the ethical reasons to avoid this, it's just bad argumentation. Do better.

Assessment

Your grade will be based on:

- **Participation** in class discussion and online
- **Argument Analysis Assignments**, completed in-class (only your best 3 will count)
- Three shorter **Written Assignments** due throughout the semester
- a **Final Paper Proposal** (1 page) due on the last day of in-person class
- a **Final Paper** (4-6 pages) due on December 9
- two **Rest & Health Assignments**

Note that **this class has no tests**.

Assignment	Due Date	% of Final Grade
Assignment 1	September 26	10%
Assignment 2	October 17	15%
Assignment 3	November 7	15%
Final Paper Proposal	December 2/5 (see below)	5%
Final Paper	December 16	30%
Class Participation	Every day*	10%
Argument Analysis	Assigned randomly	15% (3 @ 5% ea)
Rest & Health	Oct 8 & Dec 8	5% (2 @ 2.5% ea)

*You are not specifically graded on attendance; however, you will need to be regularly present to earn a participation grade. I will take attendance for my own records.

Electronics Use: Please be respectful and only use your devices for class-related reasons!

Deadlines and Permissions

You may **rewrite one assignment of your choice for a chance at a better grade**. (Note that this does not *guarantee* a better grade.) **Let me know** ASAP if you plan to do this.

You may **submit one assignment up to two weeks late** with no explanation. This does **not** include the final paper. **Let me know** by the due date if you plan to do this.

Disability Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations should register with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Please contact CDR and discuss this with me as soon as possible.

Religious Observances

Syracuse University's [religious observances policy can be found at this link](#). If you will need time off for a religious holiday that is not recognized by the university calendar, or some other accommodation related to your faith, please let me know as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

I take academic integrity very seriously. SU's [academic integrity policy can be found at this link](#). If you violate this policy, I will have to contact the Office of Academic Integrity. If you are struggling or falling behind, don't cheat—talk to me! There is always another option.

Texts

- Kate Manne. *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Available at SU Bookstore.
- Mikki Kendall. *Hood Feminism*. Available at SU Bookstore.
- All other readings/videos/audios are available on Blackboard, or linked here.

Content Warning: Due to the nature of this class, many of these readings will discuss potentially triggering topics and words, including sexual assault and other forms of violence, slurs, and discussions of body image. **Let me know if you need specific warnings.**

Reading Schedule

(also available as a calendar: see Blackboard)

Unit 1: Oppression

Thursday 9/2: Simone de Beauvoir (she/her), Introduction to *The Second Sex*

Tuesday 9/7: Marilyn Frye (she/her), “Oppression”

Thursday 9/9: SPECIAL CLASS – Attending Online Talk – Jasper Heaton (she/they), “Gender Identity and Transfeminism as Realism” – link to follow

+ **SUGGESTED:** Robin Dembroff (they/them), “Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender”

Tuesday 9/14: Betty Friedan, Excerpt from “The Feminine Mystique”

Thursday 9/16: bell hooks (she/her), “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory”

Tuesday 9/21: Iris Marion Young (she/her), “Five Faces of Oppression”

Thursday 9/23: Marilyn Frye (she/her), “A Note on Anger”

+ Audre Lorde (she/her), “[The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism](#)”

Sunday 9/26: Assignment 1 due on Blackboard

Unit 2: Gender

Tuesday 9/28: **Video:** Abigail Thorn (she/her), “[Social Constructs](#)”

Thursday 9/30: Elizabeth Spelman (she/her), “The Erasure of Black Women”

+ **SUGGESTED:** Kimberlé Crenshaw (she/her), “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”

Tuesday 10/5: Judith Butler (they/them), “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”

Thursday 10/7: Catherine MacKinnon (she/her), “Difference and Dominance”

Tuesday 10/12: Talia Bettcher (she/her), “Trans Identities and First-Person Authority”

Thursday 10/14: Robin Dembroff (they/them), “[Why Be Non-Binary?](#)”

Sunday 10/17: Assignment 2 due on Blackboard

Unit 3: Praxis I: Misogyny & Patriarchy in the World

Tuesday 10/19: Kate Manne (she/her), *Down Girl*, Introduction & Chapter 1

Thursday 10/21: *Down Girl*, chapter 2 & 3

Tuesday 10/26: Mikki Kendall (she/her), *Hood Feminism*: Introduction, “Solidarity is Still for White Women” (p1), “Hunger” (p31)

Thursday 10/28: *Hood Feminism*: “It’s Raining Patriarchy” (p67), “Fear and Feminism” (p159)

Tuesday 11/2: María Lugones (she/her), “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System”

Thursday 11/4: Serene Khader (she/her), “Why Are Poor Women Poor?” [available here](#)

Sunday 11/7: Assignment 3 due on Blackboard

Unit 4: Praxis II: Sexuality, Sex Work, & Pornography

Tuesday 11/9: Lori Watson (she/her), “Why Sex Work Isn’t Work”, [available here](#)

AND: Juno Mac (she/her) & Molly Smith (she/her), *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Rights*, ch. 2: “Work”

+ **SUGGESTED:** Juno Mac & Molly Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Rights*, ch. 1: “Sex”

Thursday 11/11: Class Debate (no required reading)

Tuesday 11/16: Anne Eaton (she/her), “A Sensible Antiporn Feminism”

Thursday 11/18: Robin Zheng (she/her), “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes”

November 23 & 25: Thanksgiving

Tuesday 11/30: Quill Kukla (they/them), “That’s What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation”

Thursday 12/2: Kristen Roupenian (she/her), “[Cat Person](#)” (short story) & Final Paper Proposal Discussions. **Final Paper Proposal First Draft due in class.**

Sunday 12/5: Final Paper Proposal due on Blackboard.

Tuesday 12/7: Filipa Melo Lopes (she/her), “Perpetuating the Patriarchy: Misogyny and the (Post-)Feminist Backlash”

Thursday 12/9: Final Paper Proposal Discussions & Class Reflections (no required reading)

Final Paper due on Blackboard Wednesday 12/16