

Feminist Ethics

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

-Audre Lorde

PHIL 344/WGSS 348

Fall 2021

Mondays and Wednesdays

11:35am-12:50pm

Yale College Distributions: WR, HU

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Introduction

In this course, we will explore questions at the intersection of moral philosophy and feminist philosophy. Is there a distinctively feminine way to approach moral reasoning? If there is, should we resist this feminine moral orientation as patriarchal, overly demanding, or otherwise oppressive? Or should we embrace it? Some of the most renowned philosophers in history – Aristotle, for example, and Kant – held views that were sexist, racist, or otherwise offensive. How should we relate to the work of such philosophers? Approaching moral philosophy from a feminist perspective would presumably change *what* we write. But would it also change *how* we write? If so, how?

This is a writing-intensive course; it is designed to strengthen your writing skills. We will also discuss meta-philosophical questions about the analytic philosophy paper as a genre of writing.

Prerequisites

At least one prior essay-based philosophy course. (Ideally in moral philosophy, feminist philosophy, or a related subject.)

Distribution

This course fulfills the Yale College Writing Requirement (WR.)

Grading Breakdown

Participation: 20%

Reading Notes: 10%

Short Papers: 10%

Long Paper 1: 20%

Long Paper 2: 20%

Long Paper 3: 20%

Participation

I expect everybody to participate actively in this class. Participation grades include contributions to class discussions as well as miscellaneous exercises and homework assignments.

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss class, please let me know ahead of time. If you were unable to let me know beforehand, at least send me a note afterward – communication is important to me.

Reading Notes

Reading notes should give a concise (one- to two-page) summary of the philosophy papers we read. Reading notes are due at midnight the night before each class. You can see an example of reading notes [here](#).

When you read a philosophy paper, sometimes it can be hard to see the forest for the trees. This assignment is designed to make you slow down, take a step back, and look at the big picture. It's about seeing the forest.

You can take [one free pass](#) on reading notes for the semester. If you want to use your free pass, just let me know.

Short Papers

Over the course of the semester, you will write three short papers, each 200-400 words. (A few paragraphs.) You must submit 1-2 of your short papers by the midpoint of the semester, but other than that, you have a lot of freedom with these assignments. Short papers can respond to reading assignments, build on conversations from class, draw connections to your personal experiences... Whatever sparks your interest.

Long Papers

Over the course of the semester, you will write three long papers, each about 1250 words. (Five double-spaced pages.)

I will assign a standard prompt for each long paper. If you want, however, you can petition to write about your own question instead. For example, in a long paper you might develop and expand ideas from one of your short papers.

For each long paper, we will do a peer workshop. We'll discuss best practices for giving and receiving feedback.

For Long Papers 1 and 2, after receiving comments and (initial) grades from me, you have the option to write another draft. If you do so, your overall grade for the assignment will be the average of your first draft grade and your second draft grade. For example,

First Draft: 87

Second Draft: 93

Overall: 90

You can choose to write a second draft, or you can skip it. Your call.

Long papers are due by 11:59pm on the following dates.

Paper 1.1: Monday October 11

Paper 1.2: Sunday October 17

Paper 2.1: Monday November 15

Paper 2.2: Sunday November 21

Paper 3.1: Monday December 6

Paper 3.2: Sunday December 12

Laptop Policy

My default policy is no laptops. Laptops introduce a host of potential distractions, both for you and for those around you: Facebook, Twitter, email, news... And after a long, exhausting year of taking classes online, I'm looking forward to having class discussions face to face.

That being said, you might have good reasons for wanting to use your laptop. Some students have disabilities that make it difficult to take hand-written notes. Some are English language learners who rely on technology for real-time translations. Some simply forgot to bring a printed copy of the reading. If you want an exception to the default "no laptop" policy, let me know.

A Word on Plagiarism

You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. Fortunately, it is also easy to avoid and if you are the least bit careful about giving credit where credit is due you should not run into any problems.

For more information, check out the Yale Writing Center website at <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/wr-instructor-resources/addressing-academic-integrity-and-plagiarism>.

Using the Writing Center

I encourage you to bring paper drafts to the Writing Center. It's an excellent resource, one that too often gets overlooked.

Feminist Ethics Reading List

	Philosophy	Writing
Wednesday September 1	None	None
Friday September 3 NOTE: Schedule Modified For Labor Day	Charles Mills "Ideal Theory as Ideology"	Richard Lanham "Who's Kicking Who?" Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Chapter 1: "Rules of Engagement" Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Chapter 5: "Smart Sentencing"
Wednesday September 8	Tobin and Jaggar "Naturalizing Moral Justification"	Olivia Bailey "But How Do I Participate?" Peter Elbow <i>Writing Without Teachers</i> pp. 3-11 and 18-22 Barbara Sarnecka <i>The Writing Workshop</i> pp. 101-102
Monday September 13	Carol Gilligan <i>In a Different Voice</i> Chapter 2: "Images of Relationship"	Freakonomics Radio "Here's Why All Your Projects Are Always Late"
Wednesday September 15	Shelly Kagan "Thinking About Cases" Optional: Malcolm Gladwell <i>Revisionist History</i> "The Standard Case"	Zachary Seech <i>Writing Philosophy Papers</i> Chapter 2: "Thesis Defense Papers" Jim Pryor "Guidelines on Writing A Philosophy Paper"
Monday September 20	Amia Srinivasan "Does Feminist Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"	James Lang <i>Small Teaching</i> pp. 13-16, 19-28, and 63-74 Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel <i>Make It Stick</i> pp. 79-82
Wednesday September 22	Lewis Raven Wallace "Objectivity Is Dead, And I'm Okay With It" Lewis Raven Wallace <i>The View from Somewhere</i> Introduction Chapter 1: "How Black Lives Matter Made the News"	Barbara Sarnecka <i>The Writing Workshop</i> pp. 77-101
Monday September 27	Sandra Harding "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?'"	Helen Sword "Beware of Nominalizations (AKA Zombie Nouns)" Joe Moran <i>First You Write a Sentence</i> Chapter 3: "Nouns Versus Verbs"
Wednesday September 29	Meenakshi Gigi Durham "On the Relevance of Standpoint Epistemology to the Practice of Journalism: The Case for 'Strong Objectivity'"	Joe Moran <i>First You Write a Sentence</i> Chapter 5: "The High-Wire Act"
Monday October 4 Guest Speaker: Lewis Raven Wallace	Lewis Raven Wallace <i>The View from Somewhere</i> Chapter 5: "Public Radio Voice"	None
Wednesday October 6	Moya Mapps "Getting Personal" Moya Mapps "Testimony, Technology, and the Black Lives Matter Movement"	Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Chapter 2: "On Being Disciplined" Chapter 4: "Voice and Echo"
Monday October 11	Dilek Huseyinzadegan "For What Can the Kantian Feminist Hope?"	Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Chapter 10: "Jargonitis" Barbara Sarnecka <i>The Writing Workshop</i> pp. 103-110 and 253-257
Wednesday October 13 Peer Workshop	None	Workshop Drafts
Monday October 18	None	None
Wednesday October 20 October Recess No Class	None	None
Monday October 25	Carol Gilligan <i>In a Different Voice</i> pp. 70-105 Judith Jarvis Thomson "A Defense of Abortion"	Eric Hayot <i>The Elements of Academic Style</i> Chapter 8: "The Uneven U"
Wednesday October 27	Eva Feder Kittay "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability"	Eric Hayot <i>The Elements of Academic Style</i> Chapter 9: "Structure and Subordination"
Monday November 1	Margaret A. McLaren "Feminist Ethics: Care as a Virtue"	Vershawn Ashanti Young "Should Writers Use They Own English?"
Wednesday November 3	Susan Moller Okin "Feminism, Moral Development, And the Virtues"	Vershawn Ashanti Young "Nah, We Straight" pp. 47-60
Monday November 8	Lisa Tessman "Critical Virtue Ethics"	Graff and Berkenstein <i>They Say, I Say</i> Chapter 4: "Yes / No / Okay, But" Chapter 6: "Skeptics May Object"
Wednesday November 10	Kate Manne <i>Down Girl</i> Chapter 6: "Exonerating Men" Hanna Rosin <i>Invisibilia</i> "The End of Empathy"	None
Monday November 15	Alison Jaggar "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology"	Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Chapter 6: "Tempting Titles"
Wednesday November 17 Peer Workshop	None	Workshop Drafts
Monday November 22 No Class November Recess	None	None
Wednesday November 24 No Class November Recess	None	None
Monday November 29	Martha Nussbaum <i>Anger and Forgiveness</i> pp. 1-6, 21-40, and 43-46	Joe Moran <i>First You Write a Sentence</i> Chapter 4: "Nothing Like a Windowpane" (Recommended, but <u>not</u> required)
Wednesday December 1	Mylisha Cherry "Errors and Limitations of our Anger Evaluating Ways" Amia Srinivasan "The Aptness of Anger" Sections I-II	None
Monday December 6	Amia Srinivasan "The Aptness of Anger" Sections III-V Hannah Gadsby "Nanette"	None
 Wednesday December 9 Peer Workshop	None	Workshop Drafts Helen Sword <i>Stylish Academic Writing</i> Afterwards: "Becoming a Stylish Writer" Joe Moran <i>First You Write a Sentence</i> Chapter 7: "A Small, Good Thing"