

PHI/WGS 297: Philosophy of Feminism

Instructor: Chris Bousquet, crbousqu@syr.edu

Time: Tuesday/Thursday: 3:30-4:50pm

Office Hours: Monday 3-4pm on Zoom and by appointment

Course Description:

This course will examine fundamental questions of feminist philosophy. It's impossible to give an uncontested definition of feminism, but for our purposes, feminism is an intellectual, social, and political movement that seeks to understand and eliminate *gender-based oppression*. This definition itself raises two questions. What is oppression? How do we identify it and how do we eliminate it (and who is the "we" implicated in these questions)? And what is gender? How do we understand and identify those to whom the feminist project applies? We will also explore a number of topical issues in feminist theory: global feminism, sexual consent, abortion, and economic disparities between genders. Among the questions we will seek to answer are: How ought we to respond to deep-seated traditions in other cultures that appear to us to oppress on the basis of gender? What counts as sexual consent and is the consent model the best way of addressing sexual violence? How should political institutions address the issue of abortion, given radical disagreement over its moral status? And what are the causes of and solutions to economic disparities between genders?

Course Goals:

By the end of this course, students will understand and be able to apply core elements of feminist theory. Students should be able to evaluate leading theories of oppression and gender and weigh in on pressing contemporary feminist issues. To these ends, students will learn to employ the philosophical method, gaining the skills to distinguish between better and worse theories, analyze arguments, and formulate their own arguments.

Grading:

Participation: 10%

- This class will be heavily discussion-oriented. I'll take attendance and expect students to attend every session (barring excused absences) and contribute to conversation by asking/answering questions, making comments, and talking in small groups. This is a critical (perhaps the most critical) part of what it is to "do philosophy."

Reading Quizzes: 10%

- I will give occasional in-class pop quizzes on the day's readings (I'll give 5 and grade your best 4). These will be short and easy if you've done the reading. If you miss class the day of a quiz and have a valid excuse, I'll give you a pop quiz on a later day. If you miss class without a valid excuse, you'll receive a 0 on the quiz.

One 1-page argument reconstruction: 10%, due Friday, September 27

- In this assignment, I'll ask you to summarize an argument from an article we've read as clearly and concisely as possible. I'll post instructions as to which argument I'd like you to explain the week prior to the due date.

One 2-page short writing assignment: 15%, due Friday, November 8

- This short essay asks you to answer a question related to the course content, which may involve taking a side on a debate, criticizing an argument, or applying a theory to a contemporary topic. I'll post the questions two weeks before the due date.

Two short video assignments: 25% total, due Friday, September 6 and Friday, October 18

- These assignments ask you to record a short video (5-7 minutes) responding to a question that I've posted. You may use notes for these, but you should not merely read from a script.

One Essay Outline: 10% due Monday December 2

- Your outline will include a clear statement of your thesis, an explanation of at least three points you will make in its favor, and the identification of one objection an opponent might offer and how you will respond to this objection.

One Final Essay (4-5 pages): 20% due Friday, December 20

- Your essay will reflect your considered opinion on some issue we've covered in class, arguing in favor or against some view. Building on your outline, you will offer a clear thesis statement and justify it with at least three arguments that draw upon evidence we've encountered in class or that you've found on your own. You will also consider and respond to at least one argument against your view. The idea is to engage with what you have read and develop your own take.

Important Dates:

- **Friday, September 6:** First video assignment due
- **Friday, September 27:** Argument reconstruction due
- **Friday, October 18:** Second video assignment due
- **Friday, November 8:** Short writing assignment due
- **Monday December 2:** Essay outline due
- **Friday, December 20:** Final Essay due

Course Policies:

Late Assignments:

I will accept late work, but I will take off 5 points for each day an assignment is late. If you need an extension for an assignment, please let me know 72 hours before the assignment is due and we can try to work something out.

Academic Integrity:

Work for this class must be just *your own*, produced by you, not another student, an AI, a parent, a dog, a cat, a deity, or anything else. You can find SU's academic integrity policy [here](#) and I will take it very seriously. I'll employ plagiarism and AI detection tools for out-of-class assignments. If you violate this policy, I will have to contact the Office of Academic Integrity. Depending on the severity of the offense, consequences can range from a zero on an assignment to removal from and failure in the course. If you're stressing for time or confused about an assignment, reach out to me instead!

AI Statement:

Using artificial intelligence to complete any assignments is prohibited because developing your own understanding of the material is a key goal of this course. AI detection tools including Turnitin's built-in AI writing indicator, may be used as one factor in evaluating potential inappropriate use of AI in this course.

Student Resources:

Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS)

Free, small-group and one-on-one tutoring and workshops.

Address: 014 Bird Library

Phone: 315.443.2005

Writing Center

Face-to-face appointments as well as online sessions to help students with writing projects.

Address: 101 H.B. Crouse Hall

Phone: 315.443.5289

Online Appointments: <https://syr.mywconline.com/>

Counseling Center

Variety of services to help with mental health, substance abuse, sexual assault/relationship violence and more.

Address: Barnes Center at The Arch, 150 Sims Drive

Phone: 315.443.8000

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction

- Tuesday, August 27: bell hooks "Theory as Liberatory Practice"
- Thursday, August 29: Sandra Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression"

Week 2: No Class, Continued Reading on Oppression

- Tuesday, September 3: No Class, Chris at conference
- Thursday, September 5: No Class, Chris at conference
- ****Listen to podcast: What the 'tradwife' trend says about modern life****

Friday, September 6: Video Assignment 1 due

Week 3: Oppression (cont.)

- Tuesday, September 10: Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"
- Thursday, September 12: Audre Lorde "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"

Week 4: Misogyny

- Tuesday, September 17: Kate Manne, *Down Girl*, Ch 1 and 2 (excerpts)
- Thursday, September 19: F Melo Lopes, "Perpetuating the patriarchy: misogyny and (post-feminist backlash)"

Week 5: Gender

- Tuesday, September 24: Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (excerpts)
- Thursday, September 26: Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl" (excerpts)

Friday, September 27: One-page argument reconstruction due before Midnight

Week 6: Gender (cont.)

- Tuesday, October 1: Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body* (excerpts)
- Thursday, October 3: Robin Dembroff, "Why Be Non-Binary?"

Week 7: Intersectionality

- Tuesday, October 8: Elizabeth Spelman, *The Inessential Woman*, "Introduction"
- Thursday, October 10: Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"

Week 8: Intersectionality (Cont.)

- Tuesday, October 15: No Class, Fall Break
- Thursday, October 17: Patricia Hill Collins, "Intersectionality and Epistemic Injustice"

Friday, October 18: Video Assignment 2 due

Week 9: Global Feminism

- Tuesday, October 22: Jennifer Mather Saul, "Feminism and Respect for Cultures"
- Thursday, October 24: Amartya Sen, "More Than 100 Million Women Are Missing"

Week 10: Consent

- Tuesday, October 29: Elinor Mason, "Consent"
- Thursday, October 31: Radiolab, "In the No," Part 1

Week 11: Consent (cont.)

- Tuesday, November 5: "Cat Person", Kristen Roupenian
- Thursday, November 7: "'Half Victim, Half Accomplice': Cat Person and Narcissism," F Melo Lopes

Friday, November 8: 2-page short writing assignment due

Week 12: Abortion

- Tuesday: November 12: Manne, Ch 3 (excerpts) and Madeline Peltz, "In forthcoming book, Heritage president rails against birth control, IVF, abortion, childlessness, and dog parks"
- Thursday, November 14: No Class, Chris at conference

Week 13: Abortion (cont.)

- Tuesday, November 19: Matthew Braddock, "Do Not Risk Homicide: Abortion After 10 Weeks Gestation" (excerpts)
- Thursday, November 21: "I Am Pro-Choice, Not Pro-Abortion" and Valerie Tarico, "Why I'm Pro-Abortion, Not Just Pro-Choice"

****Thanksgiving Break, no class November 26, 28****

Week 14: Feminist Economics and the Wage Gap

- Tuesday, December 3: Sheryl Sandberg, Ted Talk, "Why we have too few women leaders"; bell hooks "Dig Deep: Beyond Lean In"
- Thursday, December 5: Sarah Jaffe, "Trickle-Down Feminism"

Monday December 2: Final Essay Outline Due

Week 15: Wrap-up

- Tuesday, December 10: Last class, no reading

Friday, December 20: 4-5 page paper due

N.B. Readings and assignments are subject to change at the instructors' discretion.
