

## Gender Matters, PHIL/WMNST 8

**Professor: Dr Desiree Lim ([dyl10@psu.edu](mailto:dyl10@psu.edu), 203 Sparks, office hours Tuesday 12pm-1pm and by appointment)**

**Seminar time and venue: Tuesday and Thursday, 10.35-11.50 am, 324 Sackett Building**

### Course description

This course provides a survey of key topics in feminist philosophy. It offers students the opportunity to think critically and analytically about gender, using philosophical tools to attain a clear understanding of both classic and current debates. As a starting point, how should gender be conceptualized? What is the difference between sexism and misogyny? Why is intersectionality so important? With this conceptual grounding in place, we will delve into sharply contested issues like the ethics of marriage, sexual consent, sex work, and sexual preferences. While we will primarily adopt the lens of contemporary analytic philosophy, students will also draw on a range of diverse sources (e.g. literature; history; op-eds; political manifestos).

### Readings

All readings are either online, or will be available on Canvas under 'Files'. If you cannot access a particular reading, please let me know as soon as possible.

### Course requirements

#### *Participation:*

Attendance of all seminars is **mandatory**. No student can expect to pass this course if a significant number of seminars are missed. If you are unable to attend a seminar, you **must** let me know by email **before** class begins. Unexcused absences (i.e. those not supplemented by official documentation) will result in the loss of a mark.

As this is a seminar-style class, students are expected to **actively participate in discussions** while being respectful, attentive, and open to the viewpoints of other students. Relatedly, you are **strictly required to do the assigned reading** before each seminar, as you will not be able to fully participate in the discussion without first reading the material and familiarizing yourself with it. Typically, each class will begin with about 15 minutes of lecture, followed by the discussion.

Finally, the typical rules of seminar etiquette apply vis-à-vis the use of technology. While laptops and other electronic devices are permitted, they can only be used for purposes of **note-taking**. Other uses are distracting to surrounding students and may result in the student being asked to discontinue the use of the device.

#### *Reading responses:*

Students should choose any **10 out of the 15 topics** to write reading responses to. I will be using these responses to structure the discussion, so they are vital for the seminar. The reading responses should be  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 page in length (Times New Roman size 12, double-spaced, 1-inch margins) – they can raise a question, contribute a thought, agree or disagree with an author's argument, etc. Essentially, they should demonstrate that they have critically engaged with one or both of the readings. Please email your responses to [dyl10@psu.edu](mailto:dyl10@psu.edu) by **Monday, 6pm of the same week (e.g. your reading response for Week 4 readings should be submitted on the Monday of Week 4)**.

#### *Coursework:*

There will be two term paper assignments: a mid-term essay, 6-7 pages (Times New Roman size 12, double-spaced, 1-inch margins), **due Friday, 3/1 by 6pm EST**, and a final paper, also 6-7 pages with the same formatting requirements, **due Monday, 4/29 by 6pm EST**.

Prior to the paper deadlines, you will receive class feedback on your papers during the writing workshops in Week 8 and 15. This will be especially valuable for those who are unfamiliar with philosophical writing. During

those workshops, students will share prepared essay abstracts with the rest of the class, so that they can offer helpful comments and suggestions. Paper abstracts are due **Friday, 2/22 and Friday, 4/19 by 6pm EST.**

Please email your abstracts and completed papers **directly to me** (dyl10@psu.edu). A list of questions will be uploaded to the 'Files' section on Canvas, and you should pick two. There should be **absolutely no content overlap** between the two papers. **It is your responsibility to make sure that the paper reaches my inbox on time;** double-check that it's in your "sent" folder, etc.

*Late submissions:* All students are entitled to a **single one-day extension** that can be used once, on either of the two papers. If you plan to use your extension, **you must let me know by midnight the day before the paper is due.** Once the extension has been used, late papers will be penalized by **3 marks** for each day that a paper is late.

## Grading

### Participation: 20%

You are guaranteed 15/20 of the participation grade if you don't have any unexcused absences. The remaining 5 marks will be based on an evaluation of your participation during the class, according to this scale:

**5** – Always contributes to the discussion (such as through raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on or responding to others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, and respectfully/constructively challenging assumptions and perspectives).

**4** – Mostly contributes to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.

**3** – Occasionally contributes to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.

**2** – Rarely contributes to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.

**1** – Never contributes to the discussion in the aforementioned ways, instead sitting in silence throughout.

**0** – Engages in disrespectful and disruptive behaviour.

### Reading responses: 20%

Each response will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and make up 2 marks of the final grade.

### Mid-term paper: 20%

### Final paper: 40%

A rubric for paper grading will be provided at the beginning of term.

Your final grade will be based on a 100-point scale. **All grades are fixed and will not be re-evaluated. If you grade is changed at all, it will be lowered. Receiving feedback from me prior to each assignment is no guarantee of receiving a particular grade.** The purpose of my feedback is to help you improve your paper, not to ensure that you get the grade you want.

94-100: A    77-79: C+

90-93: A-    70-76: C

87-89: B+    60-69: D

84-86: B     0-59: F

80-83: B-

## Schedule and core readings:

### Week 1: What is Gender?

#### Tuesday, Jan 8

Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011. Introduction.

### **Thursday, Jan 10**

Katharine Jenkins. "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*." *Ethics* 126 (2016): 394-421.

### Week 2: What is Oppression?

### **Tuesday, Jan 15**

Marilyn Frye. "Oppression."

### **Thursday, Jan 17**

Emily McTernan. "Microaggressions, Equality, and Social Practices." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26.3 (2018): 261-281.

### Week 3: Epistemic Injustice

### **Tuesday, Jan 22**

Miranda Fricker. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Chapter 1.

### **Thursday, Jan 24**

Kristie Dotson. "Tracking epistemic violence, tracking practices of silencing." *Hypatia* 26.2 (2011): 236-257.

### Week 4: Misogyny

### **Tuesday, Jan 29**

Kate Manne. *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Chapter 1.

### **Wednesday, Jan 31**

Kate Manne. *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Chapter 2.

### Week 5: Race and Intersectionality

### **Tuesday, Feb 5**

bell hooks. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. London: Pluto Press, 2016. Chapter 1.

### **Thursday, Feb 7**

Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1.8 (1989): 139-167.

### Week 6: Gender and Cultural Traditions

### **Tuesday, Feb 12**

Susan Okin. "Is multiculturalism bad for women?"

### **Thursday, Feb 14**

Leti Volpp. "Blaming culture for bad behaviour." *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* 12 (2000): 89-116.

### Week 7: Abortion and Reproductive Justice

**Tuesday, Feb 19**

Judith Jarvis Thomson. "A defense of abortion." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1.1 (1971): 46-66.

**Thursday, Feb 21**

Susan Bordo. "Are Mothers Persons?" in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

Week 8: Writing Workshops**Tuesday, Feb 26**

Writing Workshop I

**Thursday, Feb 28**

Writing Workshop II

[NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK]

Week 9 - Consent**Tuesday, March 12**

Alan Wertheimer. "Consent to Sexual Relations." *Law and Philosophy* 25.2 (2006): 267-287.

**Thursday, March 14**

Kristen Roupenian. "Cat Person." Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/cat-person>

Week 10: Pornography**Tuesday, March 19**

Helen C. Longino. "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A Closer Look."

**Thursday, March 21**

Claire Potter. "Not Safe for Work: Why Feminist Pornography Matters." Available at: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/not-safe-for-work-feminist-pornography-matters-sex-wars>

Week 11: Objectification**Tuesday, March 26**

Naomi Wolf. *The Beauty Myth*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011. 1-19.

**Thursday, March 28**

Martha Nussbaum. "Objectification." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24.4 (1995): 249-291.

Week 12: Sex Work**Tuesday, April 2**

Scott A. Anderson. "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution." *Ethics* 112.4 (2002): 748-780.

#### **Thursday, April 4**

Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto. Available at:  
<https://www.joannestle.com/diningrm/SexWorkersEuropeManifesto.html>

#### Week 13: Sexual Preferences and Attraction

#### **Tuesday, April 9**

Amia Srinivasan. "Does anyone have the right to sex?" Available at: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n06/amia-srinivasan/does-anyone-have-the-right-to-sex>

#### **Thursday, April 11**

Robin Zheng. "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2.3 (2016): 400-419.

#### Week 14: Marriage

#### **Tuesday, April 16**

Stephanie Coontz. *Marriage: A History*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Chapter 3.

#### **Thursday, April 18**

Clare Chambers. "Why Marriage is Both Anachronistic and Discriminatory." Available at: <https://aeon.co/essays/why-marriage-is-both-anachronistic-and-discriminatory>

#### Week 15: Writing Workshops

#### **Tuesday, April 23**

Writing Workshop III

#### **Thursday, April 25**

Writing Workshop IV