

## **FEMINISM, GENDER, AND PHILOSOPHY – HIW, KU Leuven, Spring 2024**

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### **Times and Location**

Friday 13.00-16.00, MS11 01.28

### **Office hours**

Prof. Dr. Julia Jansen: By appointment, HIW, Presidential Building, Room 01.12.  
Dr. Emanuela Carta: By appointment, HIW, Presidential Building, Room 02.02.

### **AIM**

The aim of this seminar is to explore what challenges feminist philosophy poses for conventional philosophical discourse, and how it can contribute to an understanding of the relevant social and political issues, including questions concerning power, subjectivity, embodiment, truth, knowledge, validity, and normativity.

### **CONTENT**

After a brief general introduction to the historical and political development of feminism and some main lines of criticism against patriarchal structures, we will discuss a wide range of philosophical approaches to feminism and gender theory, mainly from a phenomenological and continental perspective. Amongst the main questions to be addressed may be:

How can female experience of inequality be described, and which approaches are best suitable for this task?

How do scientific theories and entrenched beliefs support those inequalities in that they tend to naturalize sex differences and/or female inferiority?

How are gender norms inscribed and expressed in female embodiment?

Is it possible to access and know about biological sex in a neutral, that means non-normative or culturally shaped way?

To what extent can we differentiate between biological sex and culturally or socially constructed gender?

In which ways do systemic structures problematize liberal philosophical assumptions concerning freedom and equality?

Should philosophy contribute to the debate of gender issues outside of academia and/or even impact on social policy-making? If yes, how can this be facilitated, under what conditions, and to what extent?

### **TEXTS**

See the schedule below. *All texts will be made available on Toledo.*

### **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

The course combines lectures, class discussions, and peer teamwork. Each session will be dedicated to an assigned text. Students will be asked to prepare the text in advance. Short reports (max. 1 page) and/or presentations on assigned texts and/or suggestions for further reading and/or discussion posts can be submitted regularly throughout the course and are considered additional evidence of participation. Students are required to observe the schedule specified in the syllabus.

At the end of the course, students should:

- Identify core issues and criticisms in classic texts in feminist philosophy and gender theory.
- Relate core concepts and criticisms of feminist philosophy and gender theory to their historical and political origin and urgency.
- Apply core concepts and criticisms of feminist philosophy and gender theory to contemporary debates and current issues.
- Critically assess important aspects of traditional philosophy in the light of core concepts and criticisms of feminist philosophy and gender theory.
- Recognize the difference between descriptive analysis and normative argumentation.
- Present core concepts and criticisms of feminist philosophy and gender theory to high professional and academic standards, and in front of a peer group, for critical discussion.
- Write philosophical papers on relevant issues to high professional and academic standards.

## ASSESSMENT

The evaluation is based on two elements:

- 1) Participation (40%), consisting of the following tasks:
  - a. *Class Participation*: Students are expected to attend classes and actively contribute to class discussions.
  - b. *Assignments*: Students must complete at least six assignments during the course. Each assignment will consist of questions that will be posted on Toledo one week before the respective class at which it is due (every Friday at noon). Students choose which assignments they complete.
  - c. *Group Discussion*: During the third hour of each weekly session, students will team up in groups to discuss the assignment questions. After the group sessions, the entire class will come together to further discuss and consolidate insights from the group discussion.
- 2) Essay (60%): 4,000 words, without footnotes or bibliography

Online submission (TurnItIn, Toledo) by **June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024**.

The essays must provide answers to a question selected by the student in consultation with the professors. They will be marked on four criteria: structure, clarity of expression, knowledge of the texts discussed in class and command over the technical concepts used, and critical discussion of the relevant issues without unnecessary jargon.

**Late submissions are not permitted** unless evidence of exceptional circumstances is provided (e.g., medical certificates) to the examination ombuds.

If the student did not attend the course as required, did not sufficiently participate in group assignments, and/or did not submit all the course work (in time), they will receive the result 'not taken' (NA).

Guide to Grading:

18-20	A+	Excellent: high distinction, work of excellent quality.
16-17	A	Outstanding: work of very good quality and well above average.
15	A-	Very Good: distinction, work of good quality.
14	B+	Good: generally competent work of quality.
13	B	Satisfactory: fair but with some shortcomings.
12	C+	Sufficient: fair but with shortcomings.
11	C	Barely Sufficient: performance meets the minimal criteria.
10	D	Barely Sufficient: performance just meets the minimal criteria.
8-9	F	Insufficient: some more work is required to obtain a passing grade.
6-7	F	Very Insufficient: more work is required to obtain a passing grade.
0-5	F	Totally Insufficient: considerable further work is required to obtain a passing grade.

## DETAILED CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Background text (try to read as much as your time allows):

- Hay, Carol (2020), *Thinking Like a Feminist. The Philosophy Behind the Revolution*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company
- Lennon, Kathleen and Rachel Alsop (2020), *Gender Theory in Troubled Times*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dea, Shannon (2016). *Beyond the Binary. Thinking about Sex and Gender*, Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Kate Manne (2018), *Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Moraga Cherríe and Anzaldúa Gloria (1981). *This Bridge Called My Back*. Writings by Radical Women of Color, Watertown, MA: Persephone.
- Khader, Serene J. (2019), *Decolonizing Universalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1. (16 Feb 2024). **General introduction**. General overview of the syllabus and seminar expectations, and an introduction into the overall theme of the course: “What is feminist philosophy? What is philosophical feminism?”

2. (23 Feb 2024). **Classical texts in Feminism. Introducing gender: becoming woman**.

Text: Simone de Beauvoir (1956; orig. 1949), *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley, London: Jonathan Cape, Introduction, 13-33; Part V, Ch.VI: Women's situation and character, 567-597.

3. (1 Mar 2024). **Classical texts in Feminism. Politics of identity and Difference.**

Texts: Luce Irigaray (1995), "The question of the other", *Yale French Studies*, No. 87, ed. Lynne Huffer, 7-19; Heyes, Cressida (2014), "Identity Politics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/identity-politics/>.

4. (8 Mar 2024). **Classical texts in Feminism. Sex and gender, identity and difference.**

Texts: Judith Butler (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, Part III, Chapter IV: Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions, 175-194; Judith Butler (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York: Routledge, Introduction 1-22.

Recommended: Rosi Braidotti with Judith Butler (1994), Interview: Feminism by any other name, in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*; Kathleen Lennon & Rachel Alsop (2020), "Judith Butler: Performativity, Precariousness and Queering," in *Gender Theory in Troubled Times*, Cambridge: Polity, 151-175.

5. (15 Mar 2024). **Gender and Embodiment. Phenomenological Feminism.**

Texts: Sara Heinämaa (2012), "Sex, Gender, Embodiment", in Zahavi, Dan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a girl. A phenomenology of feminine body comportment motility and spatiality", *Human Studies* (1980) 3/2: 137-156.

Recommended: Elisa Magrí & Paddy McQueen (2023). "Gender and Sexuality. Feminist phenomenology and the politic of gender", in *Critical Phenomenology. An Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity, 120-156.

6. (22 Mar 2024). **Feminist Experience. Experience and Power.**

Texts: Johanna Oksala (2016), *Feminist Experience. Foucauldian and Phenomenological Investigations*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, Part I, Chapter 2, 3, 6; Julia Jansen & Maren Wehrle (2018), "The Normal Body", in Clara Fisher and Luna Dolezal (eds.), *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, 37-55.

Recommended: Amy Allen (1999), *The Power of Feminist Theory. Domination, Resistance, Solidarity*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Chapter 1, Feminist Conceptions of Power: A critical Assessment, 7-31.

(29 Mar 2024). **NO CLASS**

*Easter Break*

7. (19 April 2024) **Postcolonialism and Race.**

Texts: Bell Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press, 1981 (Chapter 5); Chandra T. Mohanty (1984), Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses, in *boundary 2*, Vol. 12 (3), 333-358; Khader, Serene J. *Decolonizing Universalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2019 (Chapter 1).

Recommended: Serena Parekh and Shelley Wilcox (2014), "Feminist Perspectives on Globalization", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, E. N. Zalta (ed.), (<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/feminism-globalization/>).

8. (26 April 2024) **Intersectionality.**

Texts: Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8; Anna Carastathis (2014), "The concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory", *Philosophy Compass* 9/5, 304-314;

Recommended: Kathleen Lennon & Rachel Alsop (2020), "Intersectionality," in *Gender Theory in Troubled Times*, Cambridge: Polity, 122-150; Hay, Carol (2020), *Thinking Like a Feminist. The Philosophy Behind the Revolution*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company [Chapter 2].

9. (3 May 2024). **Trans. Beyond Gender?**

Texts: Julia Serano (2007). *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Berkeley: Seal Press, Introduction and Part II, Ch. 10: Experiential Gender; Talia Mae Bettcher (2012). "Trans Phenomena," in Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salomon (eds.), *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, pp. 328-335;

Recommended: Gayle Salomon (2010). *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press, (Chapter 5); Lanei M. Rodemeyer (2018) "Feminist and Transgender Tensions." in Clara Fisher and Luna Dolezal (eds.), *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, 103-123; Shannon Dea (2016). *Beyond the Binary. Thinking about Sex and Gender*, Peterborough: Broadview Press (Chapter 8).

10. (10 May 2024). **Women as a Social Collective.**

Texts: Iris Marion Young (1994), "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective". *Signs*, Vol. 19, No. 3; Allison Stone (2004), "Essentialism and anti-essentialism in feminist philosophy". *Journal of Moral Philosophy*.

11. (17 May 2024). **What is a woman? The Amelioration of Gender Concepts**

Text: Haslanger, Sally (2000). "Gender and race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?", *Noûs* 34 (1):31–55.

Recommended: Katharine Jenkins (2016), "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman". *Ethics* 126 (2):394-421.

12. (24 May 2024). **Review Session**