

The following syllabus is a proposed syllabus for a semester-long course covering feminist philosophy from a global perspective.

## **Gender and Social Justice (upper-division course)**

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Office Hours: TBA

### **Course Description**

What is the nature of gender, and what is its relation to equality and justice? How does gender connect to sex and sexuality, to race, and to class? How do gender and sex inequality relate to colonialism and imperialism? What are the origins of gender inequality, and what would a world characterized by gender equality look like? Does gender equality have anything to tell us about our relationship to technology and the environment?

We will explore these questions by reading historical and contemporary essays from philosophy and feminist theory and by reading some feminist novels and stories. By taking this class, students will learn to: carefully read and explain difficult philosophical texts; clearly articulate and defend philosophical views about sex, gender and equality, both orally and in writing; refine and defend their beliefs about what sex equality requires and how to achieve it; and take pleasure in the challenges of careful and rigorous reading and thinking.

### **Texts**

Required texts are:

Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*  
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* \*  
Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*  
Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*

All other texts will be available on the course website. Many of the texts we will be reading are dense, philosophical texts, and I strongly encourage you to read them at least twice.

\*NOTE: *Wide Sargasso Sea* contains spoilers for *Jane Eyre*! If you haven't read *Jane Eyre*, and don't wish to have its ending revealed, you are encouraged to read it before the second half of this course, when we will discuss *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

### **Screen Free Classroom**

In order to avoid distractions and to promote lively participation, thoughtful note taking, and good cheer, I ask that you bring (1) a paper notepad, (2) a writing utensil, and (3) a paper copy of the reading to every class meeting, and **refrain from using your cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class**. Please notify me if special circumstances, such as an injury or a disability, require you to take notes electronically. Please also notify me if obtaining hard copies of the course materials poses a problem for you.

## **Graded Coursework**

Philosophy is a conversational activity. This course will be discussion-based: every session will center around in-class discussion, and most will involve group work so that everyone has a chance to participate. Group work will be conducted in small groups of 4 or 5. We will assign the groups on the first day of class. If you join the class after the first day, please contact me as soon as possible so that you can be placed in and introduced to your group.

In order for this collaborative endeavor to work, you must complete the assigned reading before class and arrive prepared to discuss it. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your fellow students, to come prepared, and to bring your energy and enthusiasm to share.

All of the following course requirements must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course. If you are at all concerned that you may not be able to satisfy one of the course requirements on time, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

### **Class Participation**

Regular class attendance and active participation will be essential in this collaborative, discussion-based course. Consistently helpful contributions to class discussion may result in the raising of a student's final grade by up to a third of a full letter (e.g. from a B to a B+). Likewise, I may lower the final grade by up to one third of a full letter (e.g. from a B to a B-) in case of spotty attendance or failure to contribute productively to class discussion.

Note that philosophical conversation is more about listening and thinking than it is about speaking, especially when the conversation involves more than two people. I do not care about the quantity but rather about the thoughtfulness of your contributions to the discussion. A thoughtful contribution is one that arises from the careful attention you will pay to your face-to-face interlocutors and to the text.

### **Commonplace Book**

A commonplace book is a notebook that collects ideas, observations, quotations and arguments and organizes them thematically. Many students and scholars kept commonplace books in the European Renaissance and early modern period, using them as a resource to store and retrieve information. You will keep a commonplace book for this class.

The goal of this assignment is to help you draw connections across the books and stories that we read, to provide a store of information and ideas that you can draw on when you write your term paper, and to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on connections between the material that we discuss in class and your own life.

There is not a single method for creating a commonplace book, but it is important that you use it regularly (every day or every other day) and that you systematically organize it.

Some suggestions for ways in which you might use your commonplace include:

- Think about the overarching philosophical questions that we consider in class (What is gender? What would a world in which sex equality is realized look like?) and create pages or sections of your commonplace book with these headings. As you read, when you find something that is related to the topic, write down the quotation or your idea along with the author and the page number.
- If you find a particularly interesting topic or question as you read, make a new page or section in your commonplace book focused on that topic. As you find related quotations in other books that we read, add them to that section of your commonplace book.
- When you come across a related idea in reading that you're doing for another class or for fun or a movie or TV show that you're watching or a conversation with friends over lunch or dinner, jot it down in the commonplace book.
- Much of our class will concern questions about how to live one's life well. Spend some time thinking about the connections between the books that we read and discussions we have and your own life. Do you agree with the theory of freedom that Dostoyevsky presents in *Notes from the Underground*? Write down what features of your own experience support or confound the theory.
- You can also use your commonplace book in class or in section—for instance, to jot down a question that you don't get a chance to ask, or a connection that you notice between readings and lecture.

*Grading:* A few times during the term, at unspecified times, they will be collected and graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis for evidence that you have put effort into compiling a commonplace book that works for you. Commonplace books will be graded using the rubric that appears at the end of this syllabus.

You should **bring your commonplace book with you to lecture every day**, both so that you can use it to take down ideas that you have during lecture and so that you can hand it in if commonplace books are collected that day.

### Exams

There will be a closed book in-class midterm in class **at the beginning of week 8**. The exam will consist of one or more short essay questions, and will cover the material from the first seven weeks of class. Further details about the midterm will be provided at the end of week 7.

There will be a closed book final exam **during the examination period (date and time TBA)**. This exam will consist of one or more short essay questions, and will cover the material from weeks 8 to 15. Further details about the midterm will be provided at the end of week 14.

### Short Essay

A short essay, 2 to 3 pages, double spaced, will be assigned on at the end of week 4 and **due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 6.**

### Term Paper

A longer term paper is required, of 7 to 8 pages, double-spaced, on a topic of your choosing that grows out of one of our meetings or readings. A proposed paper topic is **due Friday of week 10**, a rough draft is **due Friday of week 12**, comments on another student's paper are **due on Friday of week 13**, and the final paper is **due Friday of week 16**. Details about each component of the assignment follow.

*Paper Topic:* A copy of a proposed topic is **due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 10**. The proposed topic should be a one-paragraph abstract or statement of a question that you plan to discuss in your term paper. This topic is not a commitment, and you may change your mind about your paper topic, but you will receive feedback on your proposed topic to help you improve your final paper.

*Rough Draft:* Another way in which you will develop your paper ideas is by helping one another with feedback on a rough draft of the paper. Giving feedback on your peers' writing also helps you to take up the perspective of the reader in thinking through what makes for a good philosophy paper. To be ready for the collaborative editing process, you will submit a rough, partial draft of your final paper (around 5 to 6 pages long), **due on the course website by 10:00 pm on Friday of week 12**. Please **also bring two hard copies to class for the first lecture of week 13**. This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft will receive a zero for this portion of the grade. It is crucial that you complete your draft on time so that you can participate in the peer editing exercise.

*Peer Editing Exercise:* We will have a collaborative editing exercise in class on at the beginning of week 13, shortly after the rough drafts are due. In addition to the in-class exercise, you will **submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Friday of week 13**. You will **email your comments to your partner as well as submitting them through the course website**. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

*Final Draft:* The **final paper is due on the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 16**. This paper will be graded on the standard letter scale using the rubric at the end of this syllabus. Aside from last minute emergencies, extensions must be arranged at least 24 hours in advance.

### Final Grades

Your course grade will be computed as follows:

- 20% Commonplace Book
- 15% Short Essay (2-3 pages)

- 10% Midterm Exam  
35% Term Paper (7-8 pages)  
Breakdown of Term Paper Grade:
- 5% Rough Draft (pass/fail)
  - 10% Peer Editing Comments
  - 85% Final Draft
- 20% Final Exam

As noted above, final grades may be adjusted upward or downward by up to a third of a letter grade on the basis of class participation.

### **Schedule of Readings**

#### I. UNIT 1: Introduction

##### A. WEEK 1

1. Lecture 1
  - a) Course introduction: Please read the syllabus before our first meeting
2. Lecture 2
  - a) Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ch. 1

##### B. WEEK 2

1. Lecture 3
  - a) Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ch. 2
2. Lecture 4
  - a) Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ch. 3

#### II. UNIT 2: The Nature and Origins of Patriarchy

##### A. WEEK 3

1. Lecture 5
  - a) Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*
2. Lecture 6
  - a) Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, ch. 1 & 10

##### B. WEEK 4

1. Lecture 7
    - a) Christine Delphy, "The Main Enemy"
  2. Lecture 8
    - a) Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, "Rethinking Women's Oppression"
- 3. SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNED**

#### III. UNIT 3: The Man-Woman Relation

##### A. WEEK 5

1. Lecture 9
  - a) Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction
2. Lecture 10
  - a) Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ch. 1

##### B. WEEK 6

1. Lecture 11
  - a) Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex"
2. Lecture 12

- a) Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: What Are They? What Do We Want Them to Be?"
- 3. **SHORT ESSAY DUE THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- C. WEEK 7
  - 1. Lecture 13
    - a) Catharine MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory"
  - 2. Lecture 14
    - a) Catharine MacKinnon, *Sex Equality*, ch. 1
- D. WEEK 8: Midterm Exam
  - 1. Lecture 15
    - a) **CLOSED BOOK MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS (COVERS UNITS 1, 2 & 3)**
- IV. UNIT 4: Gender, Sex, Race, Class, Empire
  - A. WEEK 8, CONTINUED
    - 1. Lecture 16
      - a) Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pt. 1
      - b) Selma James, "Sex, Race, and Class"
  - B. WEEK 9
    - 1. Lecture 17
      - a) Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pt. 2
      - b) Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
    - 2. Lecture 18
      - a) Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception"
  - C. WEEK 10
    - 1. Lecture 19
      - a) Angela Davis, from *Women, Race, and Class*
      - b) Angela P. Harris, "*Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory*"
    - 2. Lecture 20
      - a) Nancy Fraser, "Multiculturalism, Antiessentialism, and Radical Democracy: A Genealogy of the Current Impasse in Feminist Theory"
    - 3. **PROPOSED TERM PAPER TOPIC DUE THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
  - D. WEEK 11
    - 1. Lecture 21
      - a) Mahasweta Devi, "Breast-Giver"
      - b) Gayatri C. Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World"
    - 2. Lecture 22
      - a) Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater"
  - E. WEEK 12
    - 1. Lecture 23
      - a) Catharine MacKinnon, "Postmodernism and Human Rights"
      - b) Amartya Sen, "More than 100 Million Women Are Missing"
    - 2. Lecture 24
      - a) Sara Ruddick, "Notes Toward a Feminist Maternal Peace Politics"

**3. ROUGH DRAFTS OF TERM PAPER DUE THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**

V. UNIT 5: Second into Third Wave Feminism

A. WEEK 13

1. Lecture 25

a) **PEER REVIEW WRITING WORKSHOP IN CLASS—BRING TWO HARD COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS**

2. Lecture 26

a) Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

**3. PEER EDITING COMMENTS DUE TO YOUR PARTNER AND THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**

B. WEEK 14

1. Lecture 27

a) Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Preface and Introduction

b) Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender"

2. Lecture 28

a) Ann Ferguson, "Moral Responsibility and Social Change: A New Theory of Self"

b) Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet"

VI. UNIT 6: Ecology and Environment

A. WEEK 15

1. Lecture 29

a) Vandana Shiva, "Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation"

2. Lecture 30

a) Maria Mies, "New Reproductive Technologies: Sexist and Racist Implications"

**3. TERM PAPER DUE THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**

VII. UNIT 7: Imagining a New World

A. WEEK 16

1. Lecture 31

a) Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*

2. Lecture 32

a) Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, continued

B. EXAM PERIOD

**1. CLOSED BOOK FINAL EXAM (COVERS UNITS 4, 5, 6 & 7) (DATE/TIME TBA)**

## Grading Rubric for Term Papers

A, A-	Excellent essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is straightforward and easy to read.</li> <li>• Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it.</li> <li>• Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension to the reader. Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed.</li> <li>• Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.</li> </ul>
B+, B, B-	Good essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult.</li> <li>• Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic.</li> <li>• Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.</li> </ul>
C+, C, C-	Adequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical.</li> <li>• Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant.</li> <li>• Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.</li> </ul>
D+ or lower	Inadequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning.</li> <li>• Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another.</li> <li>• Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the philosophical or literary themes of the course.</li> <li>• Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed.</li> <li>• Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.</li> </ul>
F	Failing essay	Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.