

## INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEORY: PHIL 242

Fall 2011 MW 12:35 - 1:25, Plus conferences  
Leacock 26  
Professor Hasana Sharp

Office phone: 514-398-3050  
Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30 (415 Ferrier)  
email: [hasana.sharp@mcgill.ca](mailto:hasana.sharp@mcgill.ca)

### Course Description:

This class will survey a diverse range of concepts, themes, and problems central to feminist theory. The history of feminist theory represents, in large part, a debate about the nature, aims, and concerns of feminism itself. Feminist theory is characterized by conflict over such questions as: What counts as a feminist concern or problem? How does gender-based subordination operate? What is the nature of sexual difference? Who is and ought to be included within the terms of feminist theory and political practice? We will consider a range of feminist analyses of oppression, sexism, patriarchy, gendered embodiment, morality, selfhood, and politics. We will likewise consider criticisms of feminist theory's history of exclusion with respect to class, race, transgenderism, and intersexuality. This course will be issues-based, but will acquaint students with approaches to feminist theory from various traditions and perspectives.

Students should note that while they will not be expected to have any prior knowledge of feminist theory or political theory, they should be prepared to read a substantial amount, and to learn how to read, write and discuss philosophy. Note also that this course is an introduction to feminist theory and not an introduction to the circumstances that have given rise to feminist theory. We will begin with two assumptions: that women do not now enjoy equality with men, and that this is neither a natural nor a necessary state of affairs.

### Texts:

Linda Nicholson, *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997/2010).  
Nina Power, *One Dimensional Woman* (Zero Books, 2009).

Available at "The Word" bookstore on 469 Milton Street and on reserve in the Birks reading room.  
This course will be supported by MyCourses.

### Requirements:

Reading: Even though this is a lecture class, I'd like you to come to class having read the day's assignment, prepared to ask questions and discuss the material. Please note that you are responsible for all of the assigned material even if we do not get around to a detailed discussion of it in class.

Conferences: Beginning **the week of September 12** (to be confirmed), you are required to attend conferences with your TA where you will be expected to turn in questions you have, review, explore, and discuss the material with your peers. (10%)

*NB: The period prior to the course add deadline is not considered optional. You are responsible for the reading and conference attendance will be taken into account. If you are considering taking the course, plan to attend the first conference.*

Two short papers: There will be two brief papers (600 words each) that will analyze a concept, argument, question, or problem drawn from the reading. Students are encouraged to discuss their papers, or submit rough drafts well in advance of the due date, but not immediately prior. (30% each)

*NB: written assignments will not be accepted by email. Late assignments will suffer a 1/3 grade deduction per day. Thus an evaluation of A- will become a B+, should it be one day late. There will be no exceptions without valid medical documentation that is promptly submitted to the professor.*

Final exam: There will be a cumulative take-home exam. (30% of grade)

Grading Criteria: To do excellent work in this course, you need to be able to do more than just reiterate what various authors have said in your reading or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand and comprehend the material, but that you have thought critically about it, fully fleshing out its subtleties and implications so that you can creatively apply the material at many levels. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; however, "B" work doesn't capture the complexity of the issues and tends toward accurate summary rather than independent analysis. A "C" suggests a struggle with the material that manages an average, basic comprehension of it but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. An "F" indicates no understanding of the material.

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information). Note that the code stipulates that any assignment suspected of plagiarism should be submitted directly to the associate dean for review.

Notes: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.