

INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEORY  
PHIL 242  
FALL 2016

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### COURSE OUTLINE

This course will offer an introduction to, and a selective survey of, Feminist Theory, with a focus on “material” approaches to feminism. Feminist theory is both a critical and a productive project; it exposes limitations in the traditional philosophical canon while also expanding its possibilities. In so doing, feminist thought also poses challenges to the opposition between theory and practice. The theme of materiality is designed to highlight the tangibility of feminist theory, revealing the ways in which feminist theory and feminist activism inform and even come to constitute one another. We will consider this theme from several perspectives: phenomenology and embodiment, feminist science studies, feminist approaches to sexuality, queer and trans feminism, intersectionality, decolonialism, and feminist political economy.

### OBJECTIVES & EXPECTATIONS

This course is designed to: (1) introduce students to the theoretical field of feminism and acquaint them with diverse feminist approaches, and (2) enable students to articulate thoughtful and critical responses to the course material. No prior knowledge of feminist theory or philosophy is required for this course. Students should, however, be prepared to read complex texts and to learn how to read, write, and discuss philosophy. Reading should be done carefully and more than once. Class lectures and conferences will serve to situate and clarify the readings. Assignments will require not only factual familiarity with these texts, but critical evaluation, argumentation, and synthesis.

### REQUIRED READING

All course readings will be available on MyCourses.

## EVALUATION

**Reading:** come to class having carefully read, and prepared to discuss, the assigned material.

**Conferences** (10%): conference attendance is required. Note also:

(i) You must register for a conference section separately on Minerva. Conferences will begin on September 16.

(ii) For each weekly conference, you will be required to come with one question on that week's reading. The question should be written (along with your name) on a note card that you hand in to your TA. These note cards will be used to determine your attendance at conferences (although they are not individually graded or returned).

**Papers** (25% each): two 1000-word papers in which you will analyze a concept, argument, question, or problem drawn from the reading. Instructions for each assignment will be distributed two weeks before the due date.

**Final exam** (40%): one take-home exam (two questions, 700 words each), covering material from the entire course. Possible exam questions will be distributed two weeks before the last day of class, when the exam will be distributed. During those two weeks you will have an opportunity to identify anything unclear or otherwise problematic in the possible questions.

Essay topics, guidelines, and exam questions will be posted on MyCourses.

Note also:

(i) Your papers **must** conform to the style guidelines (double-spaced, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins).

(ii) Papers may only be submitted in hard-copy format.

## GRADING CRITERIA

Excellent work in philosophy does more than reiterate what has been read. An "A" indicates that you not only comprehend the material, but have also thought critically about it, considering its limitations and possibilities. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors. A "C" suggests a basic comprehension of the material with some misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of the material. An "F" reflects no understanding of the material.

If you believe that an error was committed in grading your work, you may request a reassessment of your grade by providing the instructor with a written explanation detailing why you believe the grade is unfair. Please note that, as a result of reassessment, your grade may go up **or** down.

## POLICIES

### Technology

Please silence your phone when in class or conference. Electronic devices should **only** be used for course-related activities, such as taking notes or viewing readings. Please be considerate of your classmates' attention and concentration when using these devices.

### Email Communications

Before emailing your instructor or Teaching Assistant, please make sure you are not asking a question whose answer can be found in this syllabus. If you have a question that will require a long response, please come to office hours.

### Extensions

No extensions will be granted without supporting documentation. Requests for extensions must be directed to the instructor well in advance of the due date. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade per calendar day past the due date. For example, a paper that is evaluated as a B, if one day late, will be assigned a grade of B-; the same paper, if two days late, will receive a C+.

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McGill University values academic integrity. All students must, therefore, understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

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.

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

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READING SCHEDULE  
(recommended readings are *not required*)

Topic	Date	Reading
Course Introduction	F, Sep 2	None
Incitements to Feminism	W, Sep 7	(i) Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (ii) María Lugones and Elisabeth Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You?" (iii) bell hooks, "Theory As Liberatory Practice" <i>Recommended:</i> Uma Narayan, "Contesting Cultures"
Phenomenology & Embodiment	F, Sep 9	Simone de Beauvoir, Introduction to <i>The Second Sex</i>
	M, Sep 12	Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"
	W, Sep 14	Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl" <i>Recommended:</i> Cressida Heyes, "Dead to the World: Rape, Unconsciousness, and Social Media"
***	F, Sep 16	CONFERENCES BEGIN
	M, Sep 19	Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory" (22) <i>Recommended:</i> Susan Wendell, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability"
Feminism & the Sciences	W, Sep 21	Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" <i>Recommended:</i> Sandra Harding, "From the Woman Question in Science to the Science Question in Feminism"
	M, Sep 26	(i) Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes" and "The Five Sexes, Revisited" (ii) Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science and Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles"
	W, Sep 28	Elizabeth Lloyd, "Pre-theoretical Assumptions in Evolutionary Explanations of Female Sexuality"
(hetero)Sexuality	M, Oct 3	Andrea Dworkin: "Occupation/Collaboration"
	W, Oct 5	Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex"
***	F, Oct 7	FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE
	M, Oct 10	Thanksgiving—NO CLASS
	W, Oct 12	Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
Queer and Trans Feminism	M, Oct 17	Gayle Salomon, <i>Assuming A Body</i> , ch 3
	W, Oct 19	Gayle Salomon, <i>Assuming A Body</i> , ch 4
	M, Oct 24	(i) Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back"

		(ii) Stephen Whittle, "Where Did We Go Wrong?"
	W, Oct 26	Jack (Judith) Halberstam, Intro to <i>Female Masculinity</i>
	M, Oct 31	Alexis Shotwell, "Open Normativities"
	W, Nov 2	Cressida Heyes, "Feminist Solidarity After Queer Theory"
***		SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE
Intersectionality and Decolonial Feminism	M, Nov 7	(i) Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (ii) Treva B. Lindsey, "A Love Letter To Black Feminism" (iii) Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" <i>Recommended:</i> (i) bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" (ii) Combahee Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
	W, Nov 9	Kimberley Springer, "Third Wave Black Feminism?"
	M, Nov 14	Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"
	W, Nov 16	Maria Lugones, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism"
	M, Nov 21	Catch-Up Day...
Feminist Political Economy	W, Nov 23	Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman" Carole Pateman, "Contracting In" <i>Recommended:</i> Alison Jaggar, "The Politics of Socialist Feminism" (43)
	M, Nov 28	Carole Pateman, "What's Wrong With Prostitution?" <i>Recommended:</i> Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex"
	W, Nov 30	Meg Luxton, "Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism: Reclaiming Our History, Reanimating Our Politics"
	M, Dec 5	Alison Phipps and Isabel Young, "Neoliberalisation and 'Lad Cultures' in Higher Education"