

PHIL/FEMGEN179R/279R: FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Anna-Bella Sicilia (please call me “Anna-Bella”)

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Location: [Littlefield Center](#), Rm 103 ([accessibility info](#))

Time: Mon & Weds at 3:00-4:20pm

Are there distinctively feminist ways of thinking and theorizing? What does feminist theory contribute to our understanding of life’s deepest questions concerning personal identity, human action, objective knowledge, and ethical reasoning? In this course, we cover some of analytic feminist philosophy’s most transformative contributions to each of the major philosophical subdisciplines, from metaphysics and epistemology to political philosophy and aesthetics. Because feminist theorists often position themselves as reacting to oversights and missteps in mainstream, male-dominated analytic philosophy, students will cultivate a productive and charitable yet critical perspective on many traditional philosophical debates. And they will develop their own understanding of what it means to think like a feminist, historically and today.

Enrollment: Undergraduates should enroll in Phil 179R. Graduate students should enroll in Phil 279R.

Office hours: Mondays at 11am-12pm in the Department of Philosophy (Building 90 on the Main Quad, Rm 92K; [accessibility info](#)) or by appointment. My office is on the second floor, which can only be accessed by stairs, but I am always happy to arrange an alternative meeting spot for us.

Learning outcomes for this course: Students who take this course will...

- * develop well-rounded knowledge of analytic feminist philosophy’s contributions to the major philosophical subdisciplines.
- * learn to extract theses and basic arguments from dense texts.
- * cultivate the skills required to clearly, conversationally explain these theses and arguments to others, both verbally and in writing.
- * devise and communicate original arguments for philosophical positions in major debates.

Assignments & course structure: This is a *student-guided class*. You get to personalize the assignments to your interests, goals, and learning styles. (See assignment details on Canvas.) There are two tracks for this class. On the **exam track**, you will write a short (1000-1500 word) paper and take two exams (for which you can choose an oral or written format). On the **paper track**, you will write one short (1000-1500) paper and one long (2000-2500) paper. For students on the paper track, you’ll complete a scaffolding exercise for the short paper and meet with me during week 7 about your long paper. Graduate students enrolled in the course must take the **paper track**.

Assignment	Points (1 point = 1% of grade)
Reading Notes (voice note, written note, or class presentation)	34 (voice/written notes earn 2 points; class presentations earn 15)
Exam #1 or scaffolding exercise & short paper	20
Short paper or paper prep & meeting for long paper	16
Exam #2 or long paper	30

Total =

100

Course materials: All readings for the course are Canvas. While there are no required books for the course, I highly encourage students (to whom this doesn't pose an accessibility issue) to print out course readings to avoid the use of screens in class. (Learn how to use Cardinal Print and consult a map of available printers [here](#).) The cost of printing is less than 3¢/page.

Participation: Students are expected to prepare for (by reading the assigned reading), attend, and actively participate in each class. If you are wondering whether to attend class, determine whether you have a legitimate excuse. These include illness/pain/disability-related barriers, unexpected childcare or work obligations, family emergencies, or similarly unavoidable, severe situations. (Forgetfulness, having assignments due for other classes, and extracurricular activities are not legitimate excuses.) Students with legitimate excuses should stay home and reach out to me if they miss (or anticipate missing) more than three classes. If you're chronically absent, I will reach out to discuss alternative ways for you to participate.

Late & makeup work: Use the above guidelines for determining whether you have a legitimate excuse for submitting an assignment late. If so, send me an email letting me know you have a legitimate excuse without any details (please do not share personal or health information), and we will agree on a reasonable extension at no penalty to your grade. If you do not have a legitimate excuse for an assignment, submit it when you can; the penalty for unexcused late assignments is a half letter grade (5%) per day it's late. Barring extreme and unexpected circumstances, you must let me know in advance if you will need to schedule a makeup exam. I am not able to grant extensions for assignments or makeup exams that accumulate in the last two weeks of the quarter.

Academic dishonesty: Per the University [honor code](#), [plagiarism](#) (copying passages from other peoples' work without attribution) is prohibited. This includes submitting work *as your own* when it includes passages (i.e., more than a single word or phrase) or ideas/arguments copied from or substantially informed by generative AI. Students are welcome to use AI for purposes specified by assignments, with an awareness that learning to use AI *well* – in ways that improve the quality of your work and promote your learning – is an important aspect of digital literacy. But using it sloppily, including failing to attribute its use, can constitute a violation of the honor code.

Writing & tutoring support: We will do a lot of writing in this class. For writing support, consider visiting the [Hume Center](#), or seeking [tutoring/Academic Coaching](#).

Disabilities & course accessibility: Is English your second or third language? Would sitting near the front of class, taking frequent breaks, or standing (rather than sitting) help you concentrate? This course is for learners of all kinds (including those with “invisible”/non-documented disabilities or demanding personal circumstances). If, at any point in the quarter, a disability or personal circumstances affects your learning, please feel free to reach out to me with the knowledge that I am committed to working collaboratively with you on possible access supports. If you have a documented condition and want to seek official university accommodations, you can do so via the [Office of Accessible Education](#) (OAE). (They won't disclose information about your disability to instructors.) Stanford's [Diversity & Access Office](#) also offers helpful resources. As I hope is clear, though, I am happy to work with you on course accessibility in ways not addressed by such accommodations, for reasons [nicely expressed by Desiree Valentine](#).

Mental health & academic accommodations: College can be extremely stressful and you are present here as a complete person, not merely a vessel for learning. Please take care of yourself! Stanford offers many mental health resources ([here](#) and [here](#)), including [Counseling & Psychological Services](#), all here for your benefit. CAPS even has a 24/7 on-call phoneline: 650-723-3785. In some cases where mental health is posing a serious barrier to your engagement in courses, it may make sense to seek a [OAE](#) accommodation. If you think you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual violence or harassment, the [Confidential Support Team](#) or [CAPS](#) are good places to start.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. Metaphilosophy: Theory & Methods	Assignments:
Sept 22. bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice” (1991) Amia Srinivasan, “Does Feminist Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?” (2015) <i>Optional:</i> Moya Mapps, “Getting Personal: A Feminist Perspective on Philosophical Methodology” (2025) Sept 24. Adrienne Rich, “Claiming an Education” (1977) Audrey Yap, “Argumentation, Adversariality, and Social Norms” (2020) <i>Optional:</i> Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” and “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” in <i>Sister Outsider</i> (1984)	Reading Note class presentation signup due 9/24
Week 2. History: “First” & “Second Wave” Feminism	Assignments:
Sept 29. Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I A Woman?” (1851) Jane Addams, “Why Women Should Vote” (1910) <i>Optional:</i> Angela Davis, “Women’s Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism” in <i>Women, Race, and Class</i> (1981) Oct 1. The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1978) Marilyn Frye, “Some Reflections on Separatism and Power” in <i>The Politics of Reality</i> (1983) <i>Optional:</i> Carol Gilligan, “Images of Relationship” in <i>In a Different Voice</i> (1982)	
Week 3. History: Complicating unified “waves” & grappling with intersectionality	Assignments:
Oct 6. Elizabeth Spelman, “Introduction” in <i>Inessential Woman</i> (1999) Naomi Zack, “Can Third Wave Feminism Be Inclusive? Intersectionality, Its Problems, and New Directions” (2006) <i>Optional:</i> Annette Martín, “Intersectionality Without Fragmentation” (2024); Robin Dembroff, “Intersection is Not Identity or How to Distinguish Overlapping Systems of Injustice” (forthcoming) Oct 8. María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception” (2002) Jim Pryor, “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” <i>Optional:</i> Hil Malatino, “The Promise of Repair: Trans Rage and the Limits of Coalition” (2021)	
Week 4. Metaphysics: Gender & social categories	Assignments:
Oct 13. Julia Serano, “Introduction” in <i>Sexed Up</i> (2022) Mari Mikkola, “Ontological Commitments: Sex and Gender” (2011) <i>Optional:</i> Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction” in <i>The Second Sex</i> (1948); Jacob Hale, “Are Lesbians Women?” (1996) Oct 15. Exam day.	Students on the exam track take exam #1 while students on the paper track complete

Optional: Robin Dembroff, “Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as Critical Social Kind” (2019); Talia Mae Bettcher, “Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance” (2014)	scaffolding exercise on 10/15
Week 5. Metaphysics: Ideology	Assignments:
Oct 20. Tommie Shelby, “Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory” (2003) Optional: Kate Manne, “Ameliorating Misogyny” in <i>Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny</i> (2017) Oct 22. Sally Haslanger, “Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements” (2017) Optional: Matteo Bianchin, “Explaining Ideology: Mechanisms and Metaphysics” (2020)	Students on the paper track submit their short paper 10/22
Week 6. Metaphysics: Autonomy & Personal Identity	Assignments:
Oct 27. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, “Introduction: Autonomy Refigured” in <i>Relational Autonomy</i> (2009) Optional: Andrea Westlund, “Rethinking Relational Autonomy” (2009) Oct 29. Hilde Lindemann, “What Child is This?” in <i>Holding and Letting Go: The Social Practice of Personal Identities</i> (2014) Optional: Quill Kukla, “Holding the Body of Another” (2007)	Students on the exam track submit their short paper 10/29
Week 7. Epistemology & Philosophy of Science: Standpoint theory & objectivity	Assignments:
Nov 3. Nancy Hartstock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism” (1983) Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought” (1986) Optional: Natalie Ashton and Robin McKenna, “Situating Feminist Epistemology” (2020) Nov 5. Rae Langton, “Feminism in Epistemology: Exclusion and Objectification” (2000) Optional: Elizabeth Anderson, “Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Philosophy” (1995)	Students on the paper track meet with me about their long papers
Week 8. Action Theory: Double binds & agency	Assignments:
Nov 10. Marilyn Frye, “Oppression” in <i>The Politics of Reality</i> (1983) Sukaina Hirji, “Oppressive Double Binds” (2021) Optional: Caleb Ward, “Theorizing Non-Ideal Agency” (2025) Nov 12. Elisabeth Camp and Carolina Flores, “Playing with Labels: Identity Terms as Tools for Building Agency” (2024) Vicky D’Auost, “Which Map is Not Whose Territory?” in <i>Pushing the Limits: Disabled Dykes Produce Culture</i> (1996) Optional: Robin Dembroff and Cat Saint-Croix, “‘Yep, I’m Gay’: Understanding Agential Identity” (2019); Sally Haslanger, “What is a Social Practice?” (2017)	

Week 9. Political Philosophy: The public/private split & the nature of work	Assignments:
Nov 17. Judith Squires, “Public and Private” (2018) <i>Optional:</i> Catharine MacKinnon, “Privacy vs. Equality: Beyond <i>Roe v. Wade</i>” (1987) Nov 19. Silvia Federici, “Wages Against Housework” (1974) bell hooks, “Rethinking the Nature of Work” in <i>Feminist Theory from Margin to Center</i> (1984) <i>Optional:</i> Elizabeth Brake, “Care as Work: The Exploitation of Caring Attitudes and Emotional Labor” (2020)	
Week 10. Ethics: Care	Assignments:
Nov 24. Annette Baier, “The Need for More than Justice” (1987) Nodding, “The One-Caring” in <i>Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education</i> (1984) <i>Optional:</i> Cheshire Calhoun, “Justice, Care, and Gender Bias” (1988) ----Thanksgiving Break----	
Week 11. Aesthetics: Beauty, objectification, & authenticity	Assignments:
Dec 1. Ann Cahill, “Feminist Pleasure and Feminine Beautification” (2003) <i>Optional:</i> Sheri Irvin and Sheila Lintott, “Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects: A Feminist Reclamation of Sexiness” (2016) Dec 3. Julia Serano, “Putting the Feminine Back into Feminism”, <i>Whipping Girl</i> (2007) Rowan Bell, “Being Your Best Self: Authenticity, Morality, and Gender Norms” (2024) <i>Optional:</i> Nicholas Wiltsher, “The Aesthetic Constitution of Genders” (2024)	Students on the exam track take Exam #2 on final exam day (TBA) Students on the paper track submit their long papers on final exam day (TBA)