

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 4060: Seminar in Advanced Feminism / January-April 2014

New Course

Course Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am to 11:20

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3, or by appointment.

Seminar in Advanced Feminism:

This course is described in the Undergraduate Calendar as “an advanced study of problems in feminist philosophy.” There are many different approaches that could be called “feminist philosophy” (liberal, radical, postmodern, psychoanalytic, Marxist, etc.). Each of these approaches, or ‘camps’ has a different set of “problems” it thinks feminism ought first and primarily to turn its attention toward. Each of these has a different idea about **how** that effort and attention should look: what concepts are crucial to work with; which methods of analysis and political action are appropriate to broaching and-or solving the problems it **sees as** feminist issues.

This course takes a different approach.

Another kind of *advanced study of the problems of feminist philosophy* is to wonder why and how feminism as a ‘question’ has taken place? How the problem of feminist problems arises at all? How has sex-gender come to be a ‘grand narrative’ about who and what we are? Rather than accept at face value that pay equity, equality, abortion, FGM, etc. are problems that feminism and feminists should think about and work toward fixing, we can take one step back and ask: What even gets to **count as** a “problem of feminist philosophy”? This is our working question. What sorts of **phenomena**, personal or collective, psychic or material, local or global, appear to us, or to anyone as “problems” for, and about, feminism? What is made visible as a feminist concern? And how (by what means & mechanisms) does any phenomenon ostensibly warranting feminist attention appear? Through what voices? According to what implicit and explicit rules? In what places? How often? With what set of material items does its meaningfulness express itself to us? In what media? Over what amount of time or

history? Who are its key culprits, heroes, savants? Where are they? What institutions are they within that supports this “problematization”?

What analytical tools might we be able to make use of to study the large complex of forces that *produce* sex and gender as a truth-bearing phenomenon and feminism as an appropriate set of attitudes and concepts for getting at those ‘truths’? Foucault called these “power set-ups” or apparatuses.

If we take this approach rather than say, a liberal or Marxist approach, a whole other set of important questions come into view. First, what kinds of phenomena, questions, things, ideas, concepts, gestures, bodies (etc.) have never, do not, and likely will not strike us, or anyone, as *relevant to, or about feminism*? What statements and ideas are not heard as if they are about, or have anything to do with feminism and ‘feminist problems’? What, in other words, are the invisibles, unsaid and untruths? Second, then why & how these visibles and invisibles rather than others? (We need a theory of truth and power). And third, how might that power set-up -- which is, after all the field of lived possibility about sex-gender on which we operate and get to be sexed and gendered subjects interested in sex-gender -- be changed? Fourth: what is our involvement in the production of these fields of visibilities and truths, and also in the production of what remains invisible and unsayable?

These are political & ethical questions about lived realities, and lived realities as sex-gendered, and hence also “feminist” questions.

In this course we will use the working example of the phenomenon of abortion to develop conceptual and analytical capacities for asking and following through with these latter sorts of feminist analyses.

Textbook(s):

We will read, in this order:

1. Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought (Karen Houle. Lexington, 2013). **Required: One copy on reserve.**
2. The Ethics of Abortion: Women’s Rights, Human Life and the Question of Justice (Christopher Kaczor, Routledge, 2011). **Required.**
3. Love’s Work: A Reckoning with Life (Gillian Rose, New York Review Books, 1995). **Recommended.**
4. The Ethics of Ambiguity (Simone de Beauvoir, Citadel Press, 1948; 1976). **Recommended.**
5. Additional readings posted to Course-link on occasion

Assessment/Assignments:

1. Small assignments (in-class writing, participation, homework assigned, involvement in discussions on Courselink). Varied weighting. Each totalling **50%**
2. Final essay 15-20 pages (includes a mandatory early draft, a mandatory annotated bibliography, bibliography) **50%**

Note on #1:

If you miss any class whatsoever, for whatever reasons, get in touch with me to find out if you have work to hand in the following class. I keep track of attendance (and lateness) every class, and make a note if I received explanation for an absence. If you missed a class for academically-acceptable reasons, you can also make up any work we did in-class that would count toward your grade. If you missed class for any other reason (Kraft dinner ran out, slept in, went to a bbq in Alaska, had tickets to Justin Bieber) then you won't be able to make up in-class missed work but I would accept your homework if you bring it the next class. Be careful not to let this slip. These small tasks are meant to make you engage with the material (rather than just listening or reading) which really augments your understanding. Also: they are meant to make sure you come to class with something thought-through and ready to contribute. And they really add up. Students are often not inclined to do these little bits because they seem, well, little. But do them. I have had students in the past get A's on their final essay or final exam but end up with a mark in the 60% because they didn't bother to do any of the smaller assignments.

Regulations:

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students. I also use the Announcements on Courselink regularly to let you know where we are at, or if anything is going on you should be aware of.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. Where possible, this should be done **in advance** of the missed work or event, but otherwise, just as soon as possible after the due date, and certainly no longer than one week later. In the event of missed **in-class work**, you will receive zero unless you are able to provide evidence of having missed the class for medical or compassionate reasons. Having signed up for the course constitutes a commitment to participating in, and contributing to, all aspects of it, including the in-class components. This means that you may not go on Facebook or You Tube or text message in your pocket while in the classroom. If you are so bored and distracted by the class, please don't come. If you come and you're distracting to me or your peers I will ask you to leave the classroom or I'll sit you in a different location. Should you be asked to leave, or you decide to miss class, or to leave class

early, even in order to work a shift, you will not be able to *make up* what you missed by some other means. Sorry. Note: if appropriate, documentation of your inability to meet that in-course requirement is necessary, the course instructor will request it of you. Such documentation will rarely be required for course components representing less than 10% of the course grade. Such documentation will be required, however, for Academic Consideration for missed end-of-term work. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration. (http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c08/c08-ac.shtml)

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2009 courses, without academic penalty, is Friday, March 7th, 2014. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses see: (http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c08/c08-drop.shtml)

Copies of all the work you do, as, in the end, we might have different tallies.

LAPTOPS IN CLASS:

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/technology/Students+laptops+class+lowers+grades+Canadian+study/8788540/story.html>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The University of Guelph takes a serious view of academic misconduct, and it is your responsibility as a student to be aware of and to abide by the University’s policy. Included in the definition of academic misconduct are such activities as cheating on examinations, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and submitting the same material in two different courses without written permission from the relevant instructors. **Be warned that work you do for any other course, even a section of your work, cannot simply be copied and handed in for credit in this course, or vice-versa.** To better understand your responsibilities, read the Undergraduate Calendar. (http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c01/index.shtml) for a statement of Students’ Academic Responsibilities; also read the full Academic Misconduct Policy (http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml). You are also advised to make use of the resources available through the Learning Commons (<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/>) and to discuss any questions you may have with your course instructor, TA, or academic counsellor.

Instructors have the right to use software to aid in the detection of plagiarism or copying and to examine students orally on submitted work. Instructors have the right to request to see prep. notes for essays. Should there be any question about the integrity of the work you submit for 4340, the matter will be handed over immediately to the department chair and the Dean of Arts’ office, for investigation. For students found guilty of academic misconduct, serious penalties, up to and including suspension or expulsion, can be imposed. Hurried or careless submission of work does not exonerate students of responsibility for ensuring the academic integrity of their work. Similarly, students who find themselves unable to meet course requirements by the deadlines or criteria expected because of medical, psychological or compassionate circumstances should review the university’s regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration in the calendar (http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c08/c08-ac.shtml) and discuss their situation with the instructor and/or the program counsellor or other academic counsellor as appropriate.