University of Guelph  
Department of Philosophy  
Fall 2013  

PHIL*2060DE Course Outline  

Instructor: Dr. Victoria I. Burke  
Office Hours: MWF 10-11 AM  
Office Location: Appointments will take place in MacK 339 (office wing)  
Email: vburke@uoguelph.ca  

Philosophy of Feminism  

Feminist issues are discussed in a wide variety of disciplines across the university, both in the social sciences and humanities, as well as in activist practice in the public sphere. PHIL2060DE Philosophy of Feminism will introduce students to the study of feminism specifically as it has been mobilized within the discipline of philosophy, and it will serve as both an introduction to philosophy and to feminist philosophy. In the 1980s feminists sought to draw attention to the gender bias of much of the history of philosophy. Feminist philosophers argued against the traditional privilege of mind over body, for example, or the valuing of reason over the emotions. The first half of PHIL*2060DE Philosophy of Feminism will examine some of these arguments, with readings that evaluate the classics in the history of philosophy with feminist concerns in mind. Often feminists have pointed out that the philosophers are not consistent with themselves when they make claims about feminine inferiority. In the course of examining how feminists have critically engaged Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche,
students will also be exposed to such elementary metaphysical distinctions as form and matter, appearance and being, substance and accidents, the eternal and the changeable, subjectivity and objectivity, and mind and body, as well as the political concepts of autonomy, equality and freedom. Today, many women in philosophy believe that the classics in the history of philosophy provide the theoretical tools necessary to advance the aims of truth and justice, not just for women, but for those who suffer oppression due to ethnicity, disability status or sexual orientation. Martha Nussbaum, for example, instead of criticizing Aristotle’s alignment of the active male with form and the woman with passive matter, has used Aristotle’s conception of flourishing to theorize disability rights as well as an alternative to distributive justice, the “capability” approach. Post-Hegelian theorists such as Foucault have been used by feminists to discuss the nature of oppression and gender difference or to theorize the category of patriarchy itself. Drawing upon the distinctions and categories we examine in the history of philosophy, we will proceed to issues within the recent philosophy of feminism, such as the idea of essentialism and the debates it has inspired. We will also devote significant attention to the contrasting “sameness” versus “difference” approaches to the pursuit of feminist justice in contemporary readings. We will also discuss the idea of domination itself. Readings will be drawn from queer theory, feminist theology, critical theory, legal theory and feminist epistemology.

Required Texts:
Photocopy packet

Course Requirements: Students will be assessed on the basis of two Analysis papers (5-6 pages each), participation in the discussions, and a take-home Final Examination.

Distribution:
1st Analysis (1200-1400 words): 25%
2nd Analysis (1200-1400 words): 25%
Class Participation 20%
Final Examination: 30%

Guidelines for submitting written work: The essays must be typed single-sided and double-spaced (a cover sheet is not necessary—put your name and student number at the top of the first page and start the essay one quarter of the way down the page). Students must keep a copy of their work for their own files in case the paper should become lost. If the paper becomes lost (by the student, the Office of Open Learning or the Instructor), it is the student's responsibility to be able to replace it. Papers must be submitted to the course website dropbox by the 11:59 PM on the day of the deadline. For footnoting or citation style use Chicago Manual of Style, MLA Style, or APA Style. Any of the standard style sheets is fine, as long as you are consistent. I will post a style guide for your convenience.
Gender Inclusive Course: all genders and sexual orientations are welcome in this course. This is mentioned because in the past some male students have said that they did not sign up for the course because they felt that they would not be welcome.

Course Schedule

Unit I: Feminist Critiques of the History of Philosophy

WEEK 1:
September 5-15: Course Introduction: The Idea of Oppression
Reading: Young, “The Five Faces of Oppression,” Haslinger and Hackett, pp. 3-15

WEEK 2
September 16-22: Feminist Critiques of Aristotle

WEEK 3:
September 23-29: Feminist Critique of Descartes
Reading: McCumber, “The Cartesian Relocation of Ousia,” pp. 109-127 (photocopy); Feminist Critiques of Descartes
Reading: Bordo, “Purification and Transcendence in Descartes’ Meditations,” pp. 75-95 (photocopy)

WEEK 4:
September 30-October 6: Feminist Critique of Rousseau
*1st Analysis Due by end of 4th week

WEEK 5:
October 7-13: Feminist Critiques of Hegel
WEEK 6
October 14-20: Feminist Critique of Nietzsche
Reading: Oliver, “Who is Nietzsche’s Woman?” pp. 201-218 (photocopy)

Unit II: Contemporary Feminism and Philosophy

WEEK 7: Feminism and the “Sameness” Critique

WEEK 8: Feminism and the “Difference” Critique

WEEK 9: The Idea of Domination
*2nd Analysis Due by the end of the 8th week

WEEK 10: Essentialism
November 11-17: Reading: Stone, “Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy,” pp. 135-53 (photocopy); Grillo, “Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House,” Haslinger and Hackett, pp. 30-38; Fraser, “Multiculturalism, Antiessentialism and Radical Democracy,” Haslinger and Hackett, pp. 459-468

WEEK 11: Epistemology and Language
WEEK 12
November 25-28: Review for Final Exam

The final exam will be a take-home exam: due date TBA

Bibliography for Photocopy Packet


Books on Reserve at the McLaughlin library


1 copy of the photocopy packet