

PHIL 3390 Feminist Philosophy

T/Th 11:30-12:50
MCKN 115

Prof. Maya Goldenberg
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Office Hour: Mondays 10:30-11:30 am <https://zoom.us/j/4462682473> (no appt required)

Description

Can there be a feminist science? What can feminist theory contribute to philosophy of science? Critics of the very idea of feminist philosophy of science insist that because feminism is an explicitly political stance, it can have nothing to do with science or how we understand it philosophically.¹ What distinguishes scientific inquiry and understanding is its ability to transcend partisan, political interests and the relativism that threatens if these are allowed a role in science. The epistemic ideals implicit in such arguments have come in for sharp and sustained criticism in recent decades, especially by feminist philosophers of science who have built a compelling case for recognizing that scientific knowledge – its production, its content, and its authority – is inevitably configured by a range of social, contextual factors; there is no escape to a ‘view from nowhere’. And yet, feminist philosophers of science strongly argue that this robust contextualism need not entail a reductive relativism. Instead, feminist methods strengthen science as a whole.

This class is an introduction to feminist philosophy of science, beginning with the question, can there be feminist science? We will build on key concepts in feminist philosophy of science-- evidence, objectivity, epistemic agency, empiricism, the “value-free ideal” (and the relationship between facts and values), standpoint, contextualism, intersectionality, and social accounts of knowledge—in order to answer this question. Finally, we will work in groups to investigate feminist philosophy of science in practice, namely feminist interventions in biology, neuroscience, social science, policy studies, and more.

Course texts

Elizabeth Potter, *Feminism and Philosophy of Science: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2006). (EP)
All other readings are available on CourseLink. (CL)

Learning objectives

- Content knowledge of the range of positions that have been central to the formation of and debate about feminist philosophies of science
- Skills of conceptual analysis relevant for assessing assumptions that underpin popular, scientific, and philosophical debate about the role of contextual values in scientific inquiry
- Insights about how ideals of objectivity, epistemic integrity, empirical credibility can be reframed in face of critiques of value-free conceptions of science

Assignments

- Short Writing #1 (500 words): Jan 15 (5%)
- Critical Analysis of a Journal Article (700 words): February 12 (10%)
- Student-led class period (in groups): March 2-April 6 (30%)
- 9 evaluations of student-led class periods: due the day after the class (9 x 1%)

¹ e.g., Pinnick, C. (1994) “Feminist Epistemology: Implications for Philosophy of Science.” *Philosophy of Science* 61: 646–657; Haack, S. (1993) “Epistemological Reflections of an Old Feminist.” *Reason Papers* 18: 31-43.

- Essay proposal: due March 14 (6%)
- Short Writing #2 (500 words): due April 8 (5%)
- Essay (2000 words not including references): due April 15 (35%)

Class Schedule

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| January 10. | <p>Introduction to feminist philosophy of science; Introduction to the course</p> <p>Background Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP pp. 1-12 |
| January 12 | <p>What is feminist science?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine, C. (2018) “Feminist science: Who needs it?” <i>Lancet</i> 392, pp. 1301-1302 (CL) • Longino, H. (1987) “Can there be a feminist science?” <i>Hypatia</i> 2, pp. 51-64 (CL) <p>Short Writing Assignment #1: In 500 words or less, what does feminism have to do with science? Due January 15 in Dropbox</p> |
| January 17 | <p>Exposing sexism and racism in science</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoffman, G. (2012) “What, if anything, can neuroscience tell us about gender differences?” In <i>Neurofeminism</i>, eds. Bluhm, Jacobson, Maibom. Palgrave, Macmillan, 30-55. (CL) • Clough, C., Orozco, J. (2016). “Scientific Sexism and Racism.” In Naples et al, eds. <i>Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies</i>. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. (CL) |
| January 19 | <p>Key concepts: Epistemic Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fricker, M. (2006) “Powerlessness and Social Interpretation.” <i>Episteme: Journal of Social Epistemology</i> 3(1): 96-108. (CL) • “1000-Word Philosophy: Epistemic Injustice.” (CL) |
| January 24 | <p>Key concepts: Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP pp. 58-75 • Wylie, A. (2011) Critical Distance: Stabilising Evidential Claims in Archaeology.” In Dawid, Twining, & Vasiliaki (eds.) <i>Evidence, Inference and Enquiry</i>. Oxford, pp. 371-394. (CL) |
| January 26 | <p>Key concepts: Facts and Values; Justification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP pp. 76-96 |
| January 31 | <p>Key concepts: The Bias Paradox</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intemann, K., de Melo-Martín, I. (2016). “Feminist Values, Commercial Values, and the Bias Paradox in Biomedical Research.” In Amoretti, M., Vassallo, N. (eds) <i>Meta-Philosophical Reflection on Feminist Philosophies of Science</i>. Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science. Springer, pp. 75-89. |
| February 2 | <p>Key concepts: Feminist Contextual Empiricism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP chapter 4 |
| February 7 | <p>Key concepts: Underdetermination</p> |

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| | <p>In class: Create a shared document on key concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intemann, K. (2005) "Feminism, Underdetermination, Values in Science". <i>Philosophy of Science</i> 72: 1001-1012. |
| February 9 | <p>Key concepts: Standpoint</p> <p>In class: Update key concept list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP pp. 131-139 • Wylie A. & Sismondo, S. (2015) "Standpoint Theory in Science." In J. D. Wright (ed.) <i>International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>. Oxford, pp. 324-330. <p>Critical Summary/Analysis due February 12</p> |
| February 14 | <p>Key concepts: Strong Objectivity; Standpoint</p> <p>In class: Update key concept list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP pp. 140-155 • Collins, P. H. (1986) "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." <i>Social Problems</i> 33: S14- S32 **<u>assigned reading only S14-19.</u>** |
| February 16 | <p>Key concepts: Intersectionality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarke, A. Y. & McCall, L. (2013) "Intersectionality and Social Explanation in Social Science Research." <i>Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race</i> 10: 349-363. |
| | READING WEEK |
| February 28 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 2 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 7 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 9 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 14 | <p>One-on-one meetings to review your essay proposals</p> <p>Essay proposals submitted in Dropbox before the start of class</p> |
| March 16 | One-on-one meetings to review your essay proposals |
| March 21 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 23 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 28 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| March 30 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| April 4 | Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i> |
| April 6 | <p>Feminist science in practice: <i>TBA</i></p> <p>Short Writing Assignment #2 due April 8</p> <p>Essay due April 15</p> |

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Late Penalty

Every student has two freebie days for late submission of written assignments with no questions asked and no explanation required. If you need additional consideration *after you have used your freebies*, contact your professor for consideration. The circumstances should be exceptional rather than just being busy. If you are busy, you may take a minor late penalty of 1.5% per day in order to submit your best work.

Illness and Missed Classes

Please do not come to class if you have any illness symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19. If your illness keeps you from participating in a group presentation, contact your professor to make arrangements for make-up written work.

University Policies

Email Communication As per university regulations, all students are required to check their email account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

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.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. See Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of Out-Of-Class Assignments Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student. When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway. Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer). Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. More information:

www.uoguelph.ca/sas

Academic Misconduct The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of 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. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who

are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

Disclaimer Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email. This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

Illness Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

COVID-19 Safety Protocols For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

- <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campus/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-yoursafe-return/>
- <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campus/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces>

Please note that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health or government directives.