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Introduction to Feminist Philosophies

Course Description:

What is feminism and why are people still talking about it urgently? Why do some philosophers argue that we *need* to talk about it now more than ever, and that the discussions happening concerning feminism and race are some of the most crucial conversations happening today? In this course, we will pursue these questions with an eye to our contemporary world. We will unpack the diagnostic concepts of sexual oppression, epistemic position, intersectionality, and the distinction between gender and sex, while we further study diverse—and competing—analyses of sex-based oppression. It is the aim of this course to introduce students to the rich and varied issues in recent feminist thought and to bring these insights to bear on the lives of people of all genders. An essential aspect of this is keeping other related sites of oppression—race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity—centered within the conversation. We will try to answer these questions: How and why is feminism helpful for understanding our society? Who is represented by feminism and who should be represented by feminism? What is feminism’s past, and what is its future?

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce you to the diverse history of feminist thought and some of its key points of contention. You will have the opportunity to familiarize yourselves with several theoretical perspectives on gender and sex oppression, and you will be asked to evaluate these different theoretical lenses and their consequences. A central goal of this course is to prepare you to make clear, critical distinctions in your written assignments.

Required Text:

Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader, ed. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
ISBN-13: 978-0195150094

It is crucial that you purchase or rent this edition. You **must** bring the text to class.

Course Requirements:

1. **One Page Responses:** You will be asked to write three responses—**no more than one page, single spaced**—that are due at the start of class on the days noted on the syllabus. The assignments will be provided in class. The purpose of these responses is for you to practice a method of close, exegetical reading and interpretation of the texts. The one page responses are graded according accuracy (4 points), organization (4 points), and depth (4 points).

2. **Short Paper:** A short paper of around 4 pages will be due **via email** at the start of class on October 13, 2019. In this paper, you will be asked to compare and contrast the positions we will have worked through in class, and you will receive a prompt in the weeks before. You will

be asked to take a position and argue for it, so please meet with me if you would like to discuss your thesis. This paper will be graded according to the following rubric: accuracy (3 points), organization (3 points), depth (3 points), and argument (3 points).

3. **Final Paper:** A final paper of 6-7 pages will be due **via email** at the end of the term by 11:59 pm on December 12, 2019. The final paper may build on the ideas present your shorter papers, but it must be a distinct piece of writing. Prompts will be provided, but we can discuss if you would like to write on your own topic. This will be graded again according to the following rubric: accuracy (3 points), organization (3 points), depth (3 points), and argument (3 points). We will discuss more in class.

4. **Participation:** While there will be some lecturing, much of this course will be discussion-based and there will occasionally be group work. Courteous and active engagement in class discussion is a big part of this course, although active participation may take different forms for each student, such as active listening, participation in class discussion, attending office hours, etc. Even if shy, I encourage each student to try to speak more over the course of the semester, whether that means offering your own interpretations to the whole class or in group work a bit more often, posing questions (not necessarily answers!) to me or your peers, or coming to discuss the readings with me one-on-one. It is essential that each member of the class treat one another **with respect**.

5. **Attendance:** For each unexcused absence beyond three, your grade will go down one full letter. Unexcused tardiness beyond 15 minutes counts as an unexcused absence.

Grades:

One Page Responses: 30%

Short Paper: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation, Preparation, Attendance: 10%

If you need help with material or need to discuss your performance in the class, please email me or come to my office hours.

Students with Disabilities: Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with me to discuss this as soon as possible. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.

Technology in the Classroom: You are not allowed to use any electronic instrument during class, unless it is to accommodate a certified disability. Phones and laptops must be shut off and put away.

Grades:

3 One Page Responses: 30%

Short Paper: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Participation, Preparation, Attendance: 10%

For your papers, you will be graded on the following categories:

Accuracy – clear, concise, excellent grasp of the material, free of errors

Organization – well-structured presentation of your ideas, proper length, compliance with assignment

Depth – sophistication of analysis, critical engagement with the ideas and questions involved

Argument – unique thesis of your own, coherence of argumentation (*not applicable to one page responses)

Non-Sexist Use of Language: We academics no longer use “man” or “mankind” to refer to the entirety of humanity or a hypothetical person. This extends to written work as well as discussions, and it will serve you well throughout the rest of your professional lives.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the assignment. ***Stress and time-management issues are often what lead to thoughts of plagiarizing.*** If these are problems surrounding a particular assignment, speak to me.

Late Papers: Late papers will not be accepted, unless we have come to a prior agreement at least 72 hours prior to the deadline. A late paper is one turned in after the class session on the date it is due or the time given, if specified. For the sake of fairness, extensions will only be given for reasons of illness, academic conflict (too many exams and papers being due on a given day), or unusual circumstances. Again, you must speak to me well before the due date and provide a compelling reason in order to secure an extension.

I encourage all to meet with me when you are writing your responses and papers, but I will stop giving input on drafts of responses and papers starting 48 hours before their due dates.

This syllabus is subject to revision.

Reading Schedule:

Week One: Introductions; Social Construction and Epistemic Position

- August 23: Opening Day
- August 25: Frye, “Oppression,” (handout)

Week Two: Social Construction and Epistemic Position

- August 28: Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” p. 3-16
- August 30: Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” p. 3-16
- September 1: Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” (handout)

Week Three: Social Construction and Epistemic Position

- September 4: **Labor Day, no class**
- September 6: Hill Collins, “The Politics of Black Feminist Thought,” p. 51-61
- September 8: Hill Collins, “The Politics of Black Feminist Thought,” p. 51-61

One page response due

Week Four: Epistemic Position; transition to Humanist Feminism

- September 11: Martín Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” p. 78-91
- September 13: Martín Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” p. 78-91
- September 15: Truth, “Ar’ n’t I a Woman?” p. 113

Week Five: Humanist Feminism

- September 18: de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction, p. 114-124
- September 20: de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction, p. 114-124
- September 22: Nussbaum, “Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings,” p. 124-139

One page response due

Week Six: Humanist Feminism; transition to The Difference Approach

- September 25: Nussbaum, “Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings,” p. 124-139
- September 27: Young, “Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics,” p. 174-187
- September 29: Young, “Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics,” p. 174-187

Week Seven: The Difference Approach

- October 2: Adams, “Women and Public Housekeeping,” p. 187-188; Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic,” p. 188-192
- October 4: Gilligan, “Moral Orientation and Moral Development,” p. 200-210
- October 6: Gilligan, “Moral Orientation and Moral Development,” p. 200-210

Week Eight: The Difference Approach

- October 9: **Fall break, no class**
- October 11: Serano, “Trans-misogyny Primer” (handout), Intro to *Whipping Girl* (handout)
- October 13: Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality,” (handout)

Short Paper I due via email

Week Nine: The Dominance Approach

- October 16: Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality,” (handout)
- October 18: Mackinnon, “Difference and Dominance,” p. 244-255
- October 20: Mackinnon, “Difference and Dominance,” p. 244-255

Week Ten: The Dominance Approach

- October 23: Mackinnon, "Difference and Dominance," p. 244-255
- October 25: Mackinnon, "Desire and Power," p. 256-265
- October 27: Mackinnon, "Desire and Power," p. 256-265

Week Eleven: Postmodern Feminism and Feminist Identity Politics

- October 30: Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," p. 292-297
- November 1: Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," p. 292-297
- November 3: hooks, "Seduced by Violence No More," p. 333-335

One Page Response due

Week Twelve: Postmodern Feminism and Feminist Identity Politics

- November 6: Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," p. 412-417 (watch video on Combahee River Collective in class)
- November 8: Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," p. 412-417
- November 10: Butler, from *Gender Trouble*, p. 353-363

Week Thirteen: Postmodern Feminism and Feminist Identity Politics

- November 13: Butler, from *Gender Trouble*, p. 353-363
- November 15: Ghandi, "Postcolonialism and Feminism," p. 470-480
- November 17: Ghandi, "Postcolonialism and Feminism," p. 470-480

Week Fourteen: Postmodern Feminism and Feminist Identity Politics

- November 20: Davis, "Mama's Got the Blues," p. 431-444
- November 22: **Thanksgiving, no class**
- November 24: **Thanksgiving, no class**

Week Fifteen: Transgender Theory and Feminism

- November 27: Davis, "Mama's Got the Blues," p. 431-444
- November 29; *Transparent*, "Man on the Land"
- December 1: Bornstein, "Send in the Clowns," p. 382-384; Feinberg, "Walking Our Talk," p. 521-526

Week Sixteen: Conclusion

- December 4: Wrap-up, evaluations

December 12th: **Final Paper due by 11:59 pm.** Submit electronically.