

## Philosophical Issues of Feminism (PHL 356)

### *Abbreviated Syllabus*



M W 4:10-6:00 PM, Natural Sciences Bldg 204

Credit hours: 4

Professor Megan Dean | [deanmeg2@msu.edu](mailto:deanmeg2@msu.edu) | she/her/hers

**Office Hours:** TBA

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This course introduces students to central concepts, thinkers, and issues in feminist theory. Students will engage with philosophical writing along with popular media to explore three major themes: What are sex and gender? What is gender oppression? And what is a “good” body? Topics will include the relation between biology, sex, and gender; intersectionality; the harms of stereotyping; and the ethics of beauty practices and weight-loss dieting. A variety of feminist perspectives and approaches will be considered. Throughout the semester, there will be opportunities to consider how course material pertains to current events and personal experiences.

Please note that this course will regularly discuss topics of violence, harassment, and oppression.

### **Course goals**

In this course, students will:

- Engage with feminist theoretical writing and popular media to gain familiarity with key issues, theories, and debates within feminism;
- Build a conceptual “toolbox” of theories and insights from a variety of feminist perspectives and traditions;
- Practice using feminist conceptual tools to analyze and critique current events and personal experiences;
- Practice communicating theoretical concepts, analyses, and evaluations clearly and persuasively to others in and outside our class.

### **Course texts**

All texts and media (podcasts, films, blog posts, etc.) will be available on D2L.

### **Course structure**

This course will be held in person. All materials will be distributed through the course website on D2L. The professor will communicate with the class through D2L and by email. Please note that this course requires regular group work and class discussion. As per university policy, masks will be required at all times in class until further notice.

## Evaluations

- **Class participation: 10%**
  - For details on how the participation grade is calculated see [this page](#)
- **Reading quizzes: 2% x 10 = 20%**
  - The highest quiz grade will be counted twice and the lowest grade dropped
- **Short written assignments (3-4 pages): 15% x 2 = 30%**
- **Event/media reflections: 5% x 3 = 15%**
- **Self- and peer-reviews: 5%**
- **Final project: 20%**
  - The final project proposal is worth 5% and the final project itself is worth 15%

## Important dates

- **Reading quizzes**
  - All quizzes are pop quizzes and can be given during any class period
- **Short written assignments**
  - [Assignment 1](#) is due at midnight, ~~September 27~~ **October 3 \*\*\***
  - [Assignment 2](#) is due at midnight, November 1
- **Event/media reflections:**
  - [Reflection 1](#) is due midnight, September 24
  - [Reflection 2](#) is due midnight, October 29
  - [Reflection 3](#) is due at midnight, November 24
- **Self- and peer-reviews**
  - [Module 1 review](#) is due at midnight, September 28
  - [Module 2 review](#) is due at midnight, November 2
  - [Module 3 review](#) is due at ~~midnight, November 24~~ **midnight, December 3\*\*\***
- **Final project**
  - [The final project proposal](#) is due at midnight, November 14
    - Responses to feedback on the proposal are due at midnight, December 2
  - [The final project](#) is due at midnight, December 7

### Detailed course schedule with readings

Date	Topic/Task	Readings
Sept 1	<a href="#">Introduction day</a>	No readings
6	Holiday	*No class*
8	<a href="#">Module 1: What are sex and gender?</a>	Simone de Beauvoir, " <a href="#">Introduction to Volume I: Facts and Myths</a> " (from <i>The Second Sex</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Backup link to <a href="#">whole book here</a>)</li> </ul> **Link to PDF of <a href="#">De Beauvoir Reading</a> **

13	***Class cancelled due to illness***	---
15		Jones, <a href="#">"Theorist Judith Butler Explains How Behavior Creates Gender: A Short Introduction to 'Gender Performativity'"</a> ;  Fraker, <a href="#">"Gender is dead, long live gender: just what is 'performativity'?"</a>
20		Dembroff, <a href="#">"Why be nonbinary?"</a>
22		Fausto-Sterling, <a href="#">"The five sexes"</a> ; InterACT, <a href="#">"Intersex definitions"</a>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Fausto-Sterling backup <a href="#">link</a>)</li> </ul> Griffiths, <a href="#">"Sex is real"</a>
27	<b>Discussion Day</b>  <i>Short written ass't 1 due</i> Now due Oct. 3	Bettcher, <a href="#">"Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion"</a>  If that link doesn't work-- <a href="#">try this</a>
29	<a href="#">Module 2: What is gender oppression?</a>	Frye, "Oppression"  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link here: <a href="#">Politics of Reality - Oppression.pdf</a></li> </ul>
October 4		Lindemann, <a href="#">"Discrimination and Oppression"</a>
6		Warren, Selections from <a href="#">"The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism"</a> <b>READ pp.125-133</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Backup <a href="#">link</a> )</li> </ul>
11		Lorde, <a href="#">"Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"</a> (in <i>Sister Outsider</i> ) (scroll down for the essay or use link on left of page)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(<a href="#">Backup link to whole book</a> )</li> </ul>
13		Steinmetz, <a href="#">"She Coined the Term 'Intersectionality' Over 30 Years Ago. Here's What It Means to Her Today"</a>  Roeder, <a href="#">"America is Failing its Black Mothers"</a>
18		Bartky, <a href="#">"On Psychological Oppression"</a> (in <i>Femininity and Domination</i> )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Backup link for <a href="#">the whole book</a>)</li> </ul>

20		Collins, " <a href="#">Controlling images</a> "; Lee, " <a href="#">Model minority</a> "  (From <i>50 Concepts for a critical* phenomenology</i> )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Backup link to whole book</a></li> </ul>
25	Fall break	*No class*
27		McKinnon, " <a href="#">Allies behaving badly</a> "
Nov 1	<b>Discussion Day</b>  *Short written ass't 2 due*	No new readings
3	<a href="#">Module 3: What is a good body?</a>	Spelman, " <a href="#">Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views</a> "
8		Wendell, " <a href="#">Flight from the rejected body</a> " (From <i>The Rejected Body</i> )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Backup link <a href="#">for whole book</a> )</li> </ul>
10	Visit from Ashley Maloff, RCPD	Kukla, " <a href="#">Two models of disability</a> " (Note that Kukla now goes by Quill Kukla, them/they) ; Brown, " <a href="#">Activist Lydia X. Z. Brown on Disability Justice, Mutual Aid, and How Race and Disability Intersect</a> "
15		Young, " <a href="#">Throwing Like a Girl</a> " (from <i>On female body experience</i> )
17		Bartky, " <a href="#">Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power</a> " (in <i>Femininity and Domination</i> )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Backup link for the <a href="#">whole book</a> )</li> </ul>
22		Strings, " <a href="#">Obese Black Women as 'Social Dead Weight'</a> "
24	Citation workshop  <a href="#">CLASS WILL BE ONLINE, ASYNCHRONOUS; click here for class</a>	OPTIONAL RESOURCES: <a href="#">The OWL at Purdue's Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) Author-Date Guidelines</a> ; <a href="#">CMOS Author Date Powerpoint Presentation</a> (click through the slides, focus on slides #17-34); and <a href="#">The CMOS Online "Author-Date: Sample Citations"</a>
29		Goering, "Conformity through cosmetic surgery: The medical erasure of race and disability" (in <i>Science and Other Cultures</i> )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to <a href="#">whole book</a>; this essay starts on page 172.</li> </ul>
Dec. 1	<a href="#">Project workshop</a>	No new readings

6	<b>Discussion Day</b>	No required readings OPTIONAL: Ahmed, " <a href="#">Notes from a feminist killjoy</a> "
8	<b>Wrap-up day</b>	No new readings; final project presentations (OPTIONAL-- more info TBA)

\*This syllabus is subject to change. Check back regularly for updates.\*