

Women and Philosophy

PHIL 220 Fall 2015

Admin 216 (T/R 5:45-7:45)

Course Description:

In this class, we will explore the discipline of philosophy by conducting a meta-analysis of the concepts male/female and man/woman in the traditional philosophical canon. We will study some major figures and main subjects of Western philosophy, focusing on what is said, or not said, about women. Arguably, the social and political disenfranchisement of women, which has occurred throughout history, has been/is often based on philosophical theories (and their fundamental assumptions) about the nature and mental capacities of women. Thus, the relationship between women and philosophy is critical in order to appreciate the position of women today (and in relation to this men and masculinity). Not only is it important to understand these perspectives in order to understand the history and development of philosophy itself, but as we shall see, feminist philosophies have implications for our practical lives.

PLU and the General Education Program:

This course counts for a philosophy major or minor, and fulfills the philosophy element in PLU's General Education Program (GEP). The GEP prepares graduates to ask significant questions, engage relevant knowledge, and wrestle with complex issues. The program is rooted in the classical liberal arts and sciences as understood within the Lutheran educational tradition, and is grounded in an understanding of scientific perspectives, mathematics, languages, and the long-standing traditions of critical discourse about nature, humanity and the world. The array of academic disciplines has developed as a set of lenses through which we view the world. Through exposure to current procedures, methods, and accumulated knowledge of those disciplines, PLU welcomes students into on-going conversations about nature and the human condition. While immersed in these rigorous conversations, students are challenged to think critically, discern and formulate values, express themselves effectively and creatively, interact with others respectfully, and understand the world from various perspectives. Thus, PLU educates students for courageous lives: lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care—for other people, their communities, and the earth.

The Diversity Element and Alternative Perspectives:

The goal of the Diversity element is to promote awareness that different cultural perspectives exist within our own society and around the world. This element of the program offers students critical tools for assessing values within a cultural context. Viewing our own values in the larger comparative context provides an opportunity for introspection that allows students to question values and arrive at informed commitments. This course meets the Alternative Perspectives part of the Diversity element in PLU's General Education Program by creating an awareness and understanding of diversity in the United States and directly addressing issues such as ethnicity, gender, disability, racism, or poverty.

This course should provide critical tools for assessing values within a cultural context. Viewing our own values in the larger comparative context should facilitate the kind of introspection that allows one to question values and arrive at informed commitments. It should broaden, challenge, and complicate worldviews.

This specific course will help students understand the importance of studying/critiquing a discipline from the perspective of marginalized persons. This course will show that philosophy makes a concrete difference to how we live and show the importance of thinking carefully about our philosophical assumptions because they affect people's possibilities.

Learning Goals For Philosophy General Education Courses:

Students who take philosophy engage in a systematic and sustained examination of the basic concepts of life, such as justice, knowledge, goodness, and the self.¹ By scrutinizing methods, assumptions, and implications, they are able to explore lifelong questions of meaning, thought, and action. They acquire historical perspective on the diversity of human thought and tolerance for the considered opinions of others. Through the collective exploration of, and reasoned argument over, difficult ideas, students develop autonomy in their decision-making. Philosophy is vital to the formation of meaning and purpose in students' lives and provides an indispensable framework for developing a sense of vocation--Who am I? What values should we hold? What really is the common good to which I might contribute? What kind of life should I live? In short, the active study of philosophy is essential "to empower students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care--for other persons, for the community and for the earth."

The Philosophy requirement is central to PLU's identity as a Lutheran university because questions of faith and reason are seriously considered; not just in isolation but as they intersect with each other. In our General Education courses we focus on the following skills, values/beliefs and content:

- Writing, which develops argumentation skills including clarity and analysis
- Oral Communication, which includes a clear organization and presentation of ideas
- Reasoning which is the ability to evaluate and provide reasoned justification for beliefs
- Aptitude and Experience with Philosophical Discourse (as a mode of learning and community)

Required Texts:

Scholz, Sally J. *Feminism: A Beginner's Guide*

Mahowald, Mary Briody *Philosophy of Woman*

hooks, bell *feminism is for everybody*

Adams, Carol *Neither Beast Nor Man*

Electronic readings made available on Sakai (*).

Course Requirements:

1. **Two Exams:** These exams will test for knowledge of the material presented in readings and lectures. Format: multiple choice, true/false, and short answer. The first exam (**October 8th**) will be a take home, open note exam. It will be due by the beginning of the next class period (**October 13th**). The second exam will have a similar format, but it will be completed during class (**November 3rd**). The dates of the exams are stated on this syllabus. It is your responsibility to ensure that you do not miss these exams.
2. **Critical Essay:** This essay (3-5 pages) is an exercise in philosophical exposition and critique. You will be asked to clearly present an argument, considered an objection to that argument, and respond to the objection. Throughout the term, I will work with you on the basic skills for writing this paper. You will submit a draft of the paper and undergo one revision as part of the score. A writing prompt will be passed out later and we will go over the requirements of the paper in more detail.
3. **Participation:** Throughout the term there will be various exercises, researches, and discussion questions, which you will be expected to complete before, during, or after class. Other work might include peer-review of critical essays, pop-quizzes, or a plagiarism quiz...etc. Some will be working alone, others as a small group. The number of assignments cannot be determined in advance. In order to tally the final score, I will divide the number of points

¹ <http://www.plu.edu/philosophy/Learning-Outcomes/home.php>

assigned to the participation category by the number of assignments during the term. Thus, it is to your benefit to attend class since these exercises cannot be turned in at a later time. Actively participating in class will positively affect your participation score.

4. **Individual Project (bell hooks Challenge):** In the first week of the term, you will be given an assignment based on a reading from the bell hooks' book. You will be given all term to complete the project and it will be submitted during finals week. This project should be taken seriously and it should demonstrate what you have learned in this course. You will receive a description of the assignment in detail on the second day of class.
5. **Group Presentation:** Our class is comprised of thirty students and each student will participate in one group presentation. There will be six groups, each comprised of 5 students. The assignment is to discuss and critically evaluate a chapter from the Adams text. Groups will meet with me prior to their due date. Expectations for the assignment will be provided later in the term.
6. **Final Exam:** The final exam will be of the same format as the previous two exams but it will be of shorter duration. It will be comprehensive (some terms, etc. will be used from earlier sections.) You will be given one hour. The remaining hour will be devoted to wrapping up the course.

Requirements:

Exam 1	12%	60 points
Exam 2	16%	80 points
Critical essay	10%	50 points
Participation	18%	90 points
Individual Project	24%	125 points
Group Presentation	08%	45 points
Final Exam	10%	<u>50 points</u>
100%	Total	500 points

If you have any further questions about these class requirements please see me.

There will be no curves and no extra credit in this class. You will not be graded relative to your fellow students. What this means is that it is possible for *everyone* to get an A (4.0) or an E (0.0) or anything in-between. **In order to pass the course you must complete all assignments with an additive percentage of 60% or higher.**

Class Policies and Etiquette:

There are no shortcuts to learning philosophy. The subject demands that students learn in the old-fashioned manner of time-consuming and disciplined study. This means you must spend time reading the classic texts of philosophy (and secondary sources), devote your attention to lectures/class time, and involve yourself in critical discussion of the material covered.

1. Attendance is necessary to do well in the course. If you must miss class for any reason, you are responsible for making up any work missed. Find out before coming to class what you missed and make sure you are prepared for the session. Excessive absence will significantly lower your grade and normally results in failure.

2. Attendance alone is not sufficient for passing the class. Prepare for each class carefully and take an active role in discussions. As a general rule, you should spend two hours preparing for each hour spent in class.

3. You are required to sit the exams during the scheduled times. Do not schedule anything that conflicts with the exams. Do not assume that a make-up exam or quiz will be given if you miss class. There are no make-up quizzes or exams for unexcused absences. If an absence is excused, prior notification is required. Make-ups are rare and given only under extreme circumstances. Documentation such as a doctor's note or police report will be required for an excused absence.

4. Cell phones, pagers and any other electronic devices should be turned off prior to class sessions. Please do not wear headphones, earbuds, etc. in class. Also, you may bring laptops, but you may not be able to use them in the class. When using them in class, do not check e-mail, Facebook, etc. Active discussion is the best way to do philosophy and electronics often hinder the development of skills.

5. PLU's expectation is that students will not cheat or plagiarize, and that they will not condone these behaviors or assist others who plagiarize. Academic misconduct not only jeopardizes the career of the individual student involved, but also undermines the scholastic achievements of all PLU students and attacks the mission of this institution. Students are inherently responsible to do their own work, thereby insuring the integrity of their academic records.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
09/08 T	Introduction What is Philosophy? Video: Brandon and Rachel	Solomon and Higgins, excerpt from <i>The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy*</i> (sent in e-mail)
09/10 R	What is Feminism?	Scholz Chapters One & Two hooks pp. 1-24
09/15 T	Conceptual Foundations Ancient Philosophy	Mahowald Preface, Introduction Mahowald pp. 5-33 (Plato & Aristotle) pp. 33-37 (Genesis)
09/17 R	Medieval Philosophy	Mahowald pp. 44-48 (Augustine), pp. 53-60 (Aquinas) Modesta Pozzo Reading
09/22 T	Post Enlightenment Oppression & First Wave	Scholz pp. 26-33 Young "Five Faces of Oppression"*
09/24 R	Locke, Hume, Kant	Mahowald pp. 67-87 and 101-112
09/29 T	Rousseau, Wollstonecraft	Mahowald pp. 87-100 and 112-128
10/01 R	Modern Philosophy	Scholz Chapter Three Virginia Woolf Reading
10/06 T	J.S. Mill, H.T. Mill	Mahowald pp. 151-185
10/08 R	No Class	Exam 1
10/13 T	Feminist Philosophies Turn In Exam 1	Scholz Chapter Four Paper Assigned in Class, Argument Tool
10/15 R	Existentialist Feminism Nietzsche, de Beauvoir	Mahowald #239 pp. 199-201, pp. 201-221
10/20 T	Socialist Feminism Engels, Lenin, Gilman	Mahowald pp. 271-288, pp. 291-299, pp. 300-308

10/22 R	Pragmatism & Feminism Taft, Addams	Mahowald pp. 325-337 Work on Paper
10/27 T	Liberal Feminism Eisenstein	Mahowald pp. 400-411 Scholz Chapter Five
10/29 R	Global (and Indigenist) Feminism Paper Revisions- In class	hooks Chapter Eight Grey, "Decolonising Feminism" Moreton-Robinson, "Tiddas Speaking Strong..." Scholz Chapter 6 Rough Draft Paper Due
11/03 T	No Class- Take Home Exam	Exam 2
11/05 R	Feminist Issues Reproduction, Beauty	Scholz Chapter 7 hooks Chapters Five and Six Video bell hooks and Laverne Cox
11/10 T	Work, Race & Gender Turn in Exam 2	hooks Chapters Nine and Ten
11/12 R	Violence, Masculinity, Parenting	hooks Chapters Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen
11/17 T	Sex and Politics, Lesbianism, Spirituality	hooks Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen, and Eighteen
11/19 R	Eco-Feminism Eating Animals	Adams Preface, Chapter One Video-Earthlings
11/24 T	Animal Experimentation, Animal Rights	Adams Chapters Two & Three
11/26 R	HOLIDAY-NO CLASS	
12/01 T	Politics of Solidarity, Ecofeminism	Adams Chapters Four & Five
12/03 R	Animal Trafficking & Integration	Adams Chapters Six & Seven
12/08 T	Feeding on Grace, Beastly Theology and Coda	Adams Chapters Nine & Ten, Coda
12/10 R	Roxane Gay: Confessions of a bad feminist (TED Talk) Wrap Up	Paper Due!
	FINALS WEEK Sorry Babe, You're a Feminist - Katie Goodman of Broad Comedy	Final Exam bell hooks Challenge Project Due