

**Sex, Gender and Philosophy (PHIL 334)**

Winter session term 1, 2020

Tuesday/Thursday 14:00 - 15:30

Virtual meeting time: T/Th at 14:30

**N.B. 06/15/20: This syllabus is tentative and subject to change.**

CONTACT

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Office hours: TBA

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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This course will provide an overview of feminist perspectives on gender and sexuality. We will start by introducing different approaches to feminism and gender, such as: liberal feminism; radical feminism; Marxist/socialist feminism; intersectionality; Black feminism; and feminist phenomenology.

Building on these conceptual distinctions, we will turn to some key issues in philosophy of sex and sexuality. Some of the topics we will explore are: sexual objectification; sex work; heteronormativity; sexual preferences; queer theory and transfeminism; science and sexuality. Throughout the course, we will thus not only cover important issues in feminist philosophy, but also identify issues on which feminist philosophers disagree and analyze these disagreements.

No prior background in feminist philosophy or in philosophy of sex and sexuality is required for this course. You should, however, be prepared to do a substantial amount of reading and writing.

N.B. While this course investigates feminist perspectives on sex and gender, it is not an investigation of the circumstances that have given rise to feminist theory. We will be working with the following assumptions: that women do not enjoy equality with men, and that this is not a necessary state of affairs.

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ASYNCHRONOUS/SYNCHRONOUS COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE

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In accordance with UBC's guidelines for the term, this course will be held online.

I will record and post on Canvas two videos each week (20-30 min each) for conceptual clarification.

We will also convene twice a week during our regular time slot for a 45 min discussion on the reading of the day. We will meet at **14:30** so that everyone gets a chance to watch the relevant video before class. Attendance is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. I will make notes available for those who cannot attend this portion of the course. I am, however, not going to record the discussion period in order to make everyone feel comfortable raising questions and comments.

The only component of the course for which real-time attendance is mandatory are the 2-3 workshops (dates TBD). Arrangements will be made for those whose situation does not allow them to attend in real time at all (e.g. different time zone, family constraints, health, etc.)

In short:

Asynchronous components of the course:

- 2 x 20-30 min videos posted by the instructor every week;
- Notes summarizing the material discussed during the scheduled lectures, also posted on Canvas;
- Short paper, midterm and final evaluation.

Synchronous components of the course:

- Virtual meetings every T/Th at 14:30, for about 45 minutes;
- 2 or 3 workshops (depending on the enrolment).

N.B. While most of this course can be completed asynchronously, **those who can attend the lecture/discussion portion of the course are strongly encouraged to do so.** We will be engaging with complex readings and difficult course material; discussing them collectively is the best way to learn from them.

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LEARNING MATERIALS

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All readings will be posted on Canvas.

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CLASS SCHEDULE

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- Sept. 8: Sara Ahmed, "Feminism is Sensational" in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017)
- Sept. 10: Sandra Bartky, "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness" (1975)
- Sept. 15: Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984)  
bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" (2014 [1984])

Sept. 17: Catharine Mackinnon, “Difference and Dominance” (1984)

Sept. 22: Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991)

+ *Suggested readings: Patricia Hill Collins, excerpts from Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019); Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, Angie Morrill, “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy” (2013)*

### [Gender]

Sept. 24: Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” (1988)

+ *Suggested reading: Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality” (1980)*

Sept. 29 : Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” (2000)

Oct. 1: Natalie Stoljar, “Different Women. Gender and the Realism-Nominalism Debate” (2011)

+ *Suggested reading: Ayala & Vasilyeva, “Extended Sex: An Account of Sex for a More Just Society” (2015)*

### [Sexual objectification]

Oct. 6: Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, ch. 7-8 (1970)

Oct. 8: Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, ch. 7: Occupation/Collaboration (1987)

Oct. 13: Martha Nussbaum, “Objectification” (1995)

### Oct. 15: Workshop I – Sex Work

Catharine Mackinnon, “Defamation and Discrimination” in *Only Words* (1993)

Kamala Kempadoo, “Women of Color and the Global Sex Trade: Transnational Feminist Perspectives” (2001)

Jennifer Saul, “On Treating Things as People: Objectification, Pornography, and the History of the Vibrator” (2006)

+ Suggested reading: Mari Mikkola, "Contexts and Pornography" (2008)

Oct. 20: TBA

**[Heteronormativity]**

Oct. 22: Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980)

**Take-home midterm exam is due**

Oct. 29: Janet Smylie and Nancy Cooper, "Nîso-okaâwimaâwak (Two Mothers)" (2017)

Nov. 3: Sara Ahmed, "Lesbian Feminism" in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017)

**Nov. 5: Workshop II – Sexual Preferences**

bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" (2015)

Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes" (2016)

Raja Halwani, "Racial Sexual Desires" (2017)

Nov. 10: TBA

**[Queer theory and transfeminism]**

Nov. 12: Alexis Shotwell, "Open Normativities: Gender, Disability, and Collective Political Change" (2008)

Nov. 17: Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1992)

Nov. 19: Julia Serano, excerpts from *Whipping Girl* (2007)

**[Science and sexuality]**

Nov. 24: Alison Wylie, "Good science, bad science or science as usual? Feminist critiques of science" (1997)

Nov. 26: Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance" (2004)

Dec. 1: Elizabeth Lloyd, "Pre-Theoretical Assumptions in Evolutionary Explanations of Female Sexuality" (1993)

Dec. 3: Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Should There be Only Two Sexes?” in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- (i) Summarize and explain the main concepts studied throughout the course (e.g. gender; objectification; heteronormativity; sexual preferences; etc.)
- (ii) Provide a critical analysis of a philosophical argument
- (iii) Write short- and mid-length philosophical essays
- (iv) Demonstrate a good understanding of the interactions between feminist contributions on sex and gender
- (v) Identify issues on which feminist philosophers disagree and explain those disagreements
- (vi) Demonstrate a good understanding of how feminist philosophy engages with concrete contemporary issues.

EVALUATIONS

- A short paper (20%)
- A take-home midterm exam (25%)
- Participation to the workshop(s) (10%) and write-up of your experience (15%)
- A mid-length final paper (30%)

More information on the evaluations will be added over the summer.

ACADEMIC CONCESSION

UBC’s policy for academic concessions can be found on the Arts Advising website [<https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/academic-performance/help-academic-concession/>].

If you miss marked coursework (assignment, exam, presentation, participation in class) and are an Arts student, review the Faculty of Arts’ [academic concession page](#) and then complete Arts Academic Advising’s [online academic concession form](#), so that an advisor can evaluate your concession case.

If you are a student in a different Faculty, please consult [your Faculty’s webpage on academic concession](#), and then contact me where appropriate.

N.B. Extensions should be requested as early as possible. Unexcused late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 5% per calendar day.

GRADING SCALE

90-100: A+	76-79: B+	64-67: C+	50-54: D
85-89: A	72-75: B	60-63: C	0-49: F (Fail)
80-84: A-	68-71: B-	55-59: C-	

**GRADING CRITERIA**

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To do excellent work in this course, you need to do more than reiterate what the authors say or what was said in class. An “A” indicates that you not only understand the text, but also engage critically with the material. A “B” stands for an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors. A “C” reflects a basic comprehension of the material with some significant misunderstandings or errors. A “D” shows only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material, most of it being misunderstood. An “F” indicates no understanding of the material.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

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I am committed to providing an inclusive learning environment. Should you need some form of accommodation, do not hesitate to get in touch with UBC’s Centre for Accessibility [<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>] and/or to discuss the matter with me.

**USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

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Lectures may not be recorded without the instructor’s permission.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

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UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person’s words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else’s work as one’s own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student’s own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.