

Philosophy 334-001: Sex, Gender, and Philosophy

Winter 2012-13

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Course overview

Western philosophy has always had a problematic relationship with the human body and its properties. One way to survey these difficulties is to look at philosophers' attempts to cope with the sexual aspects of humanity, both the division of humanity along the lines of a male/female dichotomy, as well as the activities and categories involved in sex, including sexual desire, reproduction, sexual morality, and the organization of society along lines of gender and sex-roles. The issues involved in sex and gender are also of keen concern to ethicists and social/political philosophers, because of the significant disparities visible across history in the social positions of men and women, and because of the centrality of sexual and family norms in the reproduction of moral norms more generally.

This course will provide a window on these subjects by looking at how some recent philosophers (as well as a few classic ones) have thought about sex and gender, with a special focus on contemporary feminism and the problem of sexual harassment. It is hoped that students will gain a background in an important and growing body of literature produced by philosophers concerned with these subjects. Students will also sharpen their existing philosophical skills by seeing how traditional approaches to ethics, epistemology and rationality can be employed or challenged when brought to bear on a set of issues that have often been given less attention than their importance in human life would seem to merit.

Prerequisites/Target audience

This course is appropriate for all undergraduate students; however, first year students may wish to wait and take this course later in their studies. This is definitely a philosophy course, and so most of the authors we will read are either academic philosophers, or are philosophically informed. While it is possible to do well in this course without a prior background in philosophy, it would be helpful to have some general background in the subject, such as Philosophy 100, 212, 230, 235, 240, 260, or 330. Such background will help motivate some of the problems we discuss, as well as give some experience with the kind of approach philosophers take to these problems. This course is also especially appropriate for students in Women's Studies or Critical Studies in Sexuality, and is likely to be counted for credit towards either program. The above notwithstanding, this course has no specific prerequisites, and you do not need the instructor's permission to enroll if there are seats available.

Course format

The course will consist mainly of a combination of lectures and large-group discussions. Lectures will typically aim to introduce the current reading, explicate any especially difficult parts, and set an agenda for analysis or criticism of the work. Lectures will not typically aim to reprise the material in the readings, except when it is deemed especially difficult. It is expected that students will have read the material in advance of that class for which it was assigned, and will be active participants in raising questions and contributing to our collective understanding of it. In addition, you are expected to bring the relevant texts with you to class meetings.

This course involves a significant amount of reading: I anticipate that many weeks will require most diligent students 5-6 hours of time to complete the readings in preparation for class.

Course readings

The readings for this course will be found in a specially compiled reader (in two parts), in addition to one book (Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*), available for purchase from the UBC Bookstore. There will also be a number of readings to be found for download via the course's Vista website.

The readings packet has been prepared with the intention of keeping the cost of the readings for this course as low as is possible, while covering the material I believe important.

Please note: it is very unlikely you will be able to do well in this course without having done the readings carefully in advance of the sessions in which we discuss them.

Grading

I hope that you will find that the intellectual work required in this course is difficult and rewarding because of its very nature. Facing up to and tackling the kind of challenges philosophy presents is critical to higher education. The purpose of giving marks in a course like this is three-fold: First, it gives you a very rough measure of your progress in learning and using the material that is the subject matter of the course. Second, it gives others a very rough measure of the quality of your intellectual work while at the University. Third, it gives you some external incentive to perform the reading assignments, attend the class meetings, and do the thinking that is part of studying philosophy, as well as to avoid some of the shortcuts or dishonest practices that undercut the value of attending a university. Marking is, however, only a blunt instrument in any of these areas, and it is, from my perspective, one of the least important aspects of this course or of a university education.

Your mark for this course will be determined by a combination of the following elements:

Four or five brief, impromptu in-class exercises (best 2 out of 4, or 3 out of 5 scores will count towards your course mark): 10%

One mid-term exam (lasting approximately 60 minutes): 15%

Three short writing assignments (each 3 pages in length): 15% x 3 = 45% of the course mark.

Final exam (2-2.5 hours, comprehensive): 30%

Schedule

All readings should be available in the course packets, the Freud book, or via links at the course's Vista website; if additional material is assigned, you will be notified of the change with enough time for you to be able to obtain the additional material.

The schedule of readings below is provisional: please see the Vista website for updates to the schedule, as well as listen at the start of class for changes in the schedule. However, barring significant disruptions, the due dates of the papers and the examination will not change.

Readings marked with a "V" are available via the Vista course website; those marked with an "R" are found in the course readings packet.

Date	Reading/topic	Evaluation
Thur, 6-Sep	Introduction	
Sexuality		
Tue, 11-Sep	Freud: <i>Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality</i> (specific excerpts announced separately)	
Thur, 13-Sep	Freud (cont'd).	

Date	Reading/topic	Evaluation
Tue, 18-Sep	Foucault: "The Moral Prolematization of Pleasures" (intro, pp. 35-37); "Chresis" (53-62); "Freedom and Truth" (78-93); and "The Diet of Pleasures" (109-116) (R)	
Thur, 20-Sep	Weeks: "The Languages of Sex" and "The Invention of Sexuality" (R)	
Tue, 25-Sep	Rubin: "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," pp. 267-287 (R)	
Thur, 27-Sep	Frye: "Lesbian 'Sex'" (R); Kant: "Marriage Right" and "A Human Being's Duty to Himself as an Animal Being" (R)	1st paper due Mon., Oct. 1, 5:00 p.m.
The Ethics of Sex		
Tue, 2-Oct	Nagel: "Sexual Perversion" (V)	
Thur, 4-Oct	Anscombe: "Contraception and Chastity" (V)	
Tue, 9-Oct	Mohr: "The Case for Gay Marriage" (V)	
Thur, 11-Oct	Card: "Against Marriage and Motherhood" (V)	
Tue, 16-Oct	Brake: "Minimizing Marriage," Ch. 6, section I ("Law, Morality, and Political Liberalism," pp. 134-139), and ch. 7, entire (V)	
Thur, 18-Oct		Mid-term Exam
Feminism and Philosophy		
Tue, 23-Oct	Descartes: excerpts from <i>The Meditations</i> (V) Wollstonecraft: excerpts from <i>The Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> (V) Gilligan: "Moral Orientation and Moral Development" (R)	
Thur, 25-Oct	Friedman: "Beyond Caring: The De-Moralization of Gender" (V)	
Tue, 30-Oct	Lugones and Spelman: "Have We Got a Theory for You! Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'" (V)	
Thur, 1-Nov	Saul: "Feminism, Science, and Bias." (R)	2nd paper due Mon., Nov. 5, 5:00 p.m.
Tue, 6-Nov	Fehr: "Feminism and Science: Mechanism without Reductionism" (V)	
Thur, 8-Nov	Rhode: "Sex and Violence" (R)	
Tue, 13-Nov	MacKinnon: "Method and Politics" and "Rape: On Coercion and Consent" (R)	
Thur, 15-Nov	Rubin, "Thinking Sex," pp. 287-end (R); Dworkin, "What Feminist Jurisprudence Means to Me" (V)	
Tue, 20-Nov	Bordo: "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture" (R)	
Sexual Harassment		
Thur, 22-Nov	Morris: "Verbal Sexual Harassment," "The Laying On of Hands," and "Putting Up With It" (R)	3rd paper due, Mon., Nov. 26, 5:00 p.m.
Tue, 27-Nov	Siegel: "A Short History of Sexual Harassment" (V)	
Thur, 29-Nov	Bordo: "Can a Woman Harass a Man? Toward a Cultural Understanding of Bodies and Power" (R)	