

# PHIL 275: Philosophical Issues in Feminism

**Instructor:**

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Caldwell 210B

Office Hours: M 11:30 AM-12:30 PM, R 2:30-3:30 PM (or by appointment)

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## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the philosophical issues raised in and by feminist theory. In it, we will examine some of the important concepts in feminist philosophy, such as oppression, sexism, and intersectionality. Using these concepts, we will address issues in three philosophical areas: metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. Such issues include the nature of gender and sexuality, objectification and consent, epistemic injustice, gaslighting, and standpoint epistemology.

No prior background in philosophy will be assumed. Class meetings will proceed through a mix of lecture and discussion, and participation will be a significant component of the course. Students will complete short writing assignments directed toward both understanding the various issues discussed in the course and becoming proficient in clear, concise philosophical argumentation.

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## Course Requirements

Four short papers (600-800 words each): 40%

Take home final exam: 20%

Participation: 20%

In-class presentation: 15%

In-class written reflections: 5%

### 1. Four short papers

Each course at UNC must include at least 10 pages of written work. The written work in this course will take the form of five short paper assignments (600-800 words each). Papers are due by 11:59 PM on the dates specified by the course schedule. Each paper is worth 10% of the total course grade.

### 2. Take-home final exam

There will be a take-home final exam worth 20% of the total course grade. This exam will be cumulative, covering material from throughout the course. Detailed information about the format of the final exam will be provided at least one week before the date of the exam.

### 3. Participation

Because philosophical discussion is essential to understanding course material, participation will be a significant component of the course (20% of the course grade). Students are expected to carefully read the material assigned for each class in advance and arrive prepared to participate in discussions of that material. Although attendance is required, even perfect attendance is not sufficient for an A-grade in participation. Students must not only attend class but regularly make valuable contributions to class discussions in order to earn an A in participation. Other forms of participation, such as attending office hours, will also be taken into consideration.

Students who feel that regular participation in group discussions will not be possible for them should contact the instructor with their concerns. Alternative methods of participation will be accommodated for such students to the best of the instructor's ability.

### 4. In-class presentation

Each student will give an in-class presentation on one of the assigned readings, introducing the reading and helping to facilitate class discussion on it. This presentation will be worth 15% of the course grade. Students can choose to present in pairs or on their own.

### 5. In-class written reflections

At the start of each class, students will be asked to complete brief written responses to the assigned reading(s) for that class. These written responses will be worth 5% of the course grade. Each student's three lowest grades on these assignments will be dropped, including grades of "0." Students who miss in-class written responses due to lateness or absence will not be permitted to make them up. The purpose of the course policy of dropping the three lowest grades on the responses is to provide leeway for a reasonable number of absences while also incentivizing attendance.

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## Course Policies

### 1. Late Papers

Each student will be given one "free late day," to be used once in the course, whenever the student requests it. Otherwise, unless special permission is obtained from the instructor **at least 24 hours before the due date**, late papers will not be accepted without a penalty. Permission will only be given in the event of unforeseen circumstances that prevent the student from completing the paper on time. In the event of such circumstances, the student is responsible for providing suitable documentation to the instructor. When a paper is turned in late without prior permission from the instructor,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade will be deducted from that paper's grade for each calendar day that the paper is late.

## **2. Academic Honesty**

The UNC Instrument of Student Governance defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” All students are expected to adhere to the UNC Honor Code, and plagiarism will be punished as severely as the university allows.

In general, using anyone else’s words in papers is discouraged in this course. If quoting from assigned readings is necessary in a paper, all quotations must appear in quotation marks, and an internal citation (such as a footnote or endnote) indicating their source must be provided in a standard format. It is also a form of plagiarism to closely paraphrase text from an external source, changing a few of the words but imitating the sentence/paragraph structure of the external source. Text that appears outside of quotation marks in a paper must be the student’s own words, and those words must be presented within the student’s own organizational and sentential structure.

In addition, plagiarism can be committed non-deliberately; if one is reckless in one’s use of other people’s words or ideas, then one has committed plagiarism even if one did not intend to do so. In borderline cases, students should err on the side of consulting the instructor, instead of hoping that they are not committing plagiarism. Students should also contact the instructor with any other questions or concerns about plagiarism-related issues.

## **3. Non-Discrimination**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to equality of educational opportunity. The University does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of race, color, gender, age, national origin, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

In addition, the instructor is committed to making the classroom a safe space for all students. Personal attacks or discriminatory treatment of others will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

## **4. Accommodations**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. If you have need of these services, please visit <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call 919-962-8300 or email [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). Please contact ARS as early in the term as possible.

## Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to revision. Readings may be added, removed and/or adjusted at the instructor's discretion. Any such changes will be announced both in class and via e-mail. Otherwise, students should come to class each day having read the reading assigned for that day.

There is no assigned textbook. All course readings will be posted on Sakai.

Week	Agenda	Assignments
<b>Unit I: Historical and Theoretical Underpinnings</b>		
Week 1: Historical Underpinnings	Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (selections) de Beauvoir, "The Second Sex" (selections)	
Week 2: Sexism and Oppression	Cudd and Jones, "Sexism" Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"	
Week 3: Oppression and Double Binds	Frye, "Oppression" Hirji, "Double Binds and the Limits of Autonomy"	Paper 1 assigned
Week 4: Intersectionality	hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" Crenshaw, "Intersectionality and Identity Politics"	
<b>Unit II: The Nature of Gender and Sexuality</b>		
Week 5: The Nature of Gender	Butler, "Gender Trouble" (selections) Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"	Paper 1 due
Week 6: The Problem of Inclusion	Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman" Dembroff, "Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender"	Paper 2 assigned
Week 7: Sexual Orientation	Behrensen, "The Metaphysics of Queer Liberation" Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"	
<b>Unit III: The Ethics of Sex</b>		
Week 7: Objectification	Nussbaum, "Objectification" Cahill, "Overcoming Objectification" (selections)	Paper 2 due
Week 8: Sexual Consent	Baker, "Understanding Consent in Sexual Assault" Conly, "Seduction, Rape, and Coercion"	Paper 3 assigned
Week 9: Pornography	Langton and West, "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game" Maitra and McGowan, "The Limits of Free Speech: Pornography and the Question of Coverage"	

Week 10: Commodification	Satz, "Markets in Women's Sexual Labor" Nussbaum, "Taking Money for Bodily Services"	Paper 3 due
<b>Unit IV: Feminist Epistemology</b>		
Week 11: Epistemic Injustice	Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice" (selections)	
Week 12: Epistemic Injustice and Rape Culture	Watch Episode 1 of "Unbelievable" Jackson, "Me Too": Epistemic Injustice and the Struggle for Recognition"	Paper 4 assigned
Week 13: Gaslighting	Abramson, "Turning up the Lights on Gaslighting" Stark, "Gaslighting, Misogyny, and Psychological Oppression"	
Week 14: Standpoint Epistemology	Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity?'" Toole, "From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression"	Paper 4 due
Week 15: Course-wrap up	No new reading – exam review	