

# **Feminist Philosophy: Feminism, Culture, Essentialism, Universalism**

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Rutgers University – New Brunswick

Spring 2022

Friday - 10:20 a.m. – 1:20 p.m.

5<sup>th</sup> Floor Seminar Room, 106 Somerset Building

## **Course Description**

This course will focus on seven classic works of feminist philosophy. The first three books are focused on the personal, moral, and social. The second three books extend that focus more explicitly to the political and global. We will also have a week focused on the work of bell hooks, which sits somewhat between these two. Common themes and concerns will emerge: questions about the historical and cultural specificity of sex, gender, and gender roles; questions about the different guises of patriarchy and hierarchy; questions about how individuals fit (or not) within the dominant cultural roles that would be assigned to them and how to balance respect for individuals with respect for cultures, particularly with respect to questions of feminism and autonomy; and questions about the role for states and other institutions with respect to settling and addressing these concerns. But these texts raise many other issues as well, and we hope to engage each text fully and on its own terms.

## **Required Texts**

- Mary Wollstonecraft, [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman](#) (1792)
- Simone de Beauvoir, [The Second Sex](#) (1949) (Borde and Malovany-Chevallier translation)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, [Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza](#) (1987)
- bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* (1981) (we will provide digital copies)
- Martha Nussbaum, [Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach](#) (2000)
- Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, [Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture](#) (2006) (we can provide digital copies)
- Serene Khader, [Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic](#) (2018) (available through Oxford Scholarship Online)

If you have any difficulty obtaining the texts, please let us know in advance and we can help make sure you get a copy. We will provide excerpts for the bell hooks as it is currently difficult to obtain.

We will provide digital copies of secondary readings and recommended readings in some cases, and those will be available on the course webpage.

## Course Plan

|      | Topic               | Readings   |
|------|---------------------|--|
| 1/21 | Mary Wollstonecraft | <p>-<a href="#">A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</a> (Dedication, Introduction, and Chapters One through Four)</p> <p><a href="#">Wollstonecraft Handout 1</a></p>   |
| 1/28 | Mary Wollstonecraft | <p>-<a href="#">A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</a></p> <p>-<a href="#">Wollstonecraft Handout 2</a></p> <p>(Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13.6 (section 6 only))</p> <p>-additional readings: Sylvana Tomaselli, <a href="#">Wollstonecraft: Philosophy, Passion, and Politics</a></p>   |
| 2/4  | Simone de Beauvoir  | <p>-<a href="#">The Second Sex</a></p> <p>"Introduction," pp. 3 - 17</p> <p><a href="#">Part One, "Destiny," Chs. 1, 2, and 3, pp. 21 - 68</a></p> <p>Additional readings (all available in <a href="#">Companion to Beauvoir</a>, Hengehold and Bauer, eds.):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sandra Reineke, "The Intellectual and Social Context of <i>The Second Sex</i>" (pp. 28-36)</li> <li>2. Kathryn T. Gines (now known as Kathryn Sophia Belle) "Simone de Beauvoir and the Race/Gender Analogy in <i>The Second Sex Revisited</i>" (PP. 47-58)</li> <li>3. Ruth Groenhout, "Beauvoir and the Biological Body" (PP. 73-86)</li> <li>4. Nancy Bauer, "Simone de Beauvoir on Motherhood and Destiny" (pp. 146-159)</li> <li>5. Tanella Boni, "Why is the Woman Other?" (pp. 174-184)</li> </ol> |

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| 2/11 | Simone de Beauvoir | <p>-<u>The Second Sex</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vol. II, "Introduction" (279) (this is just one long paragraph, but it serves as a kind of summary manifesto -- puts her on record with respect to one of the main questions from yesterday's discussion)</li> <li>2. Vol. II, Part Two, Ch. 10, "Women's Situation and Character". (638-664) This is more or less a review of the main points of Part One, and a good set-up for the next chapters I want us to read.</li> <li>3. Vol. II, Part Four, Ch. 14 "The Independent Woman" (721-751)</li> <li>4. "Conclusion" (753-766)</li> </ol> |
| 2/18 | Gloria Anzaldúa    | <p>-<u>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</u></p> <p>Preface to the First Edition, Chapters 1-4</p> <p>-<a href="#">Anzaldúa Handout One</a></p>  |
| 2/25 | Gloria Anzaldúa    | <p>-<u>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</u>, Chapters 5 and 7</p> <p>-<a href="#">Anzaldúa Handout Two</a></p> <p>-Theresa Martinez, "<a href="#">The Double-Consciousness of Du Bois &amp; the 'Mestiza Consciousness' of Anzaldúa</a>" (2002)</p> <p>-Andrea Pitts, "<a href="#">Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Autohistoria-teoría as an Epistemology of Self-Knowledge/Ignorance</a>" (2016)</p>  |
|      | Martha Nussbaum    |   |

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| 3/4  |                      | <p>-<u>Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach</u>, pp. 1-110</p> <p>Additional reading (not required):</p> <p>-Martha Nussbaum, "<a href="#">Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism</a>," Political Theory (1992)</p> <p>-Louise Antony, "<a href="#">Natures and Norms</a>," Ethics (2000)</p>  |
| 3/11 | Martha Nussbaum      | <p><u>Women and Human Development</u></p> <p>Chapters 2 and 4 (pp. 111-166, 241-303)</p> <p>Additional reading:</p> <p>-Uma Narayan, <a href="#">Minds of Their Own: Choices, Autonomy, Cultural Practices, and Other Women</a></p> <p>-Bat-Ami Bar On, "<a href="#">Marginality and Epistemic Privilege</a>"</p> <p>-Christie Hartley and Lori Watson, <a href="#">Chapter 6 from Equal Citizenship and Public Reason: A Feminist Political Liberalism</a></p> |
| 3/25 | bell hooks           | <p><u>Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism</u> (1981), <a href="#">Chapter 5</a></p> <p><u>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</u> (1984), <a href="#">Preface, Chapter 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, and 12</a></p>   |
|      | Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu | <p>-<u>Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture</u>, Introduction, Chapter One, Chapter Two (pp. 1-102)</p>   |

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| 4/1  |                          |  |
| 4/8  | Nkiru Uwechia<br>Nzegwu  | <u>-Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture, Chapter Four, Chapter Five, Conclusion (pp. 157-247)</u> |
| 4/15 | Serene Khader            | <u>-Decolonizing Universalism</u>  |
| 4/22 | Serene Khader            | <u>-Decolonizing Universalism</u>  |
| 4/29 | Student<br>Presentations |  |