

***PHL 356: Philosophical Aspects of Feminism***  
**Introducing Feminist Philosophy**  
**Spring 2011**

**MW 10:20 – 12:10 pm**  
**Prof: Kristie Dotson**  
**Office Hrs: MW 12:30-2pm & by arr.**

**NS 150**  
**dotsonk@msu.edu**  
**SKH 514**

**Required Text**

Bailey, Alison and Chris Cuomo. *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007.  
Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. Berkeley: Crossings Press, 2007.

**Catalog Description**

Conceptual and normative issues in feminist theory. Topics such as sexism, oppression, coercion, control, power, equality, personhood, respect and self-respect, rape, separatism, community, intimacy, and autonomy.

**Course Objectives:**

At the end of this course, students will have: 1) been introduced to several philosophically rich problems and 2) begun reading philosophy critically, and 3) have practiced skills necessary for offering critical and, yet, 'charitable' readings of theoretical writing.

**Course Method:**

The course objectives will be reached through a conglomeration of lecture, group work, exams, and written assignments. My view of my role as your professor is to use the text as a point of departure, so it will be imperative that you read what is assigned, but just as important that you do not miss class. The exams in this class reflect my role, so are very much based on what is done in class, rather than strictly from the text.

**Course Requirements**

**Writing Assignments**

**1. Exams:** There will be two exams for this course: a midterm and a final exam. Both of the exams are take home exams and consist in essay questions. Each exam is 20% of your grade.

**2. Philosophical Correspondence:** Each student is also required to complete a semester-long round of philosophical correspondences with another student in the class. Please see the "Philosophical

Correspondence Instructions" handout for detailed information on this assignment. This set of writings constitutes 20% of your grade.

**3. Media Project:** Media analysis. In this assignment, due in week 13, you will examine some media production (i.e. a movie, newspaper articles and/or a playlist of songs) that exemplifies some part of the course material. This assignment is 20% of your grade

**4. Class participation:** Participate in class discussion by, among other things, *engaging in group work*, providing thoughtful commentary, posing thought-provoking questions, replying, and paying close attention to your instructor and fellow students. Alas, listening alone will not count as participation.

**Please note:** class participation counts for 20% of your final grade in the course.

### **My Advice: Study**

Come to class having read carefully the material assigned for the day, as listed below and/or as amended in class. *Bring to class* the material assigned for the day and consult it as we examine it together in class. Please note: This course requires sustained, careful reading of dense, difficult, but rewarding material. In order to do well in the course, please note that, at times, you must be able to devote 2-4 hours to studying the assigned texts.

### **Grading**

Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade. Class participation is worth 20% of the final grade. Philosophical correspondences are worth 20% of your final grade. The media project is 20 % of your final grade.

### **Overall Grading Scale**

4 = 100-90%  
3.5 = 89-85%  
3 = 84-80%  
2.5 = 79-75%  
2 = 74-70%  
1 = 69-60%  
0 = 59-0%

## Course Policies

### **Attendance:**

It is your responsibility to be in class. I do not perform “make-up” lectures in my office to catch absent students up on material they were not in class to receive. Please take the time to get to know other students in the class with whom you can share class notes and direct inquiries concerning missed lectures. If you find yourself unable to understand certain points of a missed lecture, please feel free to arrange a meeting with me where I will answer *specific* questions about the course material.

### **Late Work:**

*I do not accept late work*, although I do accept work done in advance. You may not skip class and attempt to email me the work that is due – you must physically turn in your work to me if you have not made a previously agreed upon arrangement with me. You also may not come to class more than 5 minutes late and try to turn in the work. *All assignments will be collected in the first 5 minutes of class. No work will be collected after those initial 5 minutes.*

### **Disruptive Behavior:**

Article 2.3.5 of the Academic Freedom Report (AFR) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.3.10 of the AFR states "The student has a right to scholarly relationships with faculty based on mutual trust and civility." General Student Regulation 5.02 states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to ejection and/or disciplinary action through the Student Faculty Judiciary process.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities should provide me with a copy of her/his VISA. I will be happy to aid in any way I can to shape assignments and instruction to meet your academic needs. If you have yet to procure a VISA, please, contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a disability specialist, call 353-9642 (voice), 355-1293 (TTY), or visit [MyProfile.rcpd.msu.edu](http://MyProfile.rcpd.msu.edu).

### **Academic Honesty:**

In this class, **all** of your work is to be done only by yourself. All work is individual work. Plagiarism is presenting the work or ideas of another person as if they are one's own. I will not consider any instances of plagiarism to be 'accidental' or done 'with good will'. Examples of plagiarism include, but **are not limited to**: 1) Putting your name on group work to which you have not contributed equally; 2) Submitting work that has been purchased or given to you; 3) Turning in work that you have merely agreed with, but not thought of yourself; 4) Submitting work that was found online; and 5) Incorporating the words of an author without giving that author due credit. There is a minimum of one of two penalties for plagiarism in my class:

- 1.) You will receive a zero on the plagiarized assignment.
- 2.) You will receive a failing grade for the class and your academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

Subsequently, at my discretion, I reserve the option to pursue further university action against any student who commits plagiarism. If you have further questions see the Ombudsperson's web page <<https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestystud.html>>.

### **Misc. Policy**

1. Please ensure all cell-phones and noise-making-technological-devices are turned off.
2. Students are welcome to visit the instructor during office hours, but in order to do so, students must bring their class notes and books with them.

**Tentative Schedule**

SO = Sister Outsider; FPR = Feminist Philosophy Reader

**Week One**

1/10 – M Introduction

**I. Philosophical Issues: Theorizing Oppression (Weeks 1-4)**

1/12 – W Rubin, “The Traffic in Women” (FPR 13-26)

**Week Two**

1/17 – M NO CLASS

1/19 – W Frye, “Oppression” (FPR 41-48)

**Week Three**

1/24 – M Bartky, “On Psychological Oppression” (FPR 51-60)

1/26 – W Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling and Loving Perception” (FPR 69-80)

**Week Four**

1/31 – M McIntosh, “White Privilege” (FPR 61-69)

2/2 – W Lorde, “Sexism,” “Poetry is not a Luxury” & “The Transformation of Silence into Language” (SO 36-44; 60-65)

**Week Five**

2/7 – M Lorde, “Interview” and “The Master’s Tools” (SO 81-113)

**II: Philosophical Issues: Gender and Sex (Weeks 5-7)**

2/9 – W Beauvoir, Introduction to *The Second Sex* (FPR 83-96)

**Submit Correspondences in Class: Entries for weeks 2 - 4**

**Week Six**

2/14 – M Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (FPR 97-108)

2/16 – W Sterling, “Should There Be Only Two Sexes?” (FPR 124-143)

**Week Seven**

2/21 – M Halberstram, “Transgender Butch” (FPR 144-162)

2/23 – W Oyěwúmi, “Visualizing the Body” (FPR 163-176)

Administer Midterm Exam

**III. Philosophical Issues: Sexuality and Sexual Difference (Weeks 8-11)**

**Week Eight**

2/28 – M Irigaray, “The Sex Which Is Not One” (FPR 183-187)

3/2 – W Spillers, “Interstices: A Small Drama of Words” (ANGEL)

**Midterm Exam Due**

**SPRING BREAK – 3/7 – 3/11**

**Week Nine**

3/14 – M Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” & “Man Child” (SO 53-59; 72-80)  
3/16 – W Mackinnon, “Sexuality” (FPR 204-221)

**Week Ten**

3/21 – M Hoagland, “Separating from Heterosexualism” (FPR 519-525)  
3/23 – W Allison, “Public Silence, Private Terror” (ANGEL)  
**Submit Correspondences in Class: Entries for weeks 2-4, 6-9**

**Week Eleven**

3/28 – M Cuomo, “Claiming the Right to be Queer” (FPR 241-288)

**IV: Philosophical Issues: Essentialism (Weeks 11-14)**

3/31 – W Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You?” (Handout/ANGEL)  
& Lorde, “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” (SO 66-71) & “Uses of Anger” (SO 124-133)

**Week Twelve**

4/4 – M Spelman, “Gender & Race” (FPR 265-279); Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex” (SO 114-123)  
4/6 – W NO CLASS

**Week Thirteen**

4/11 – M Crenshaw, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Gender (ANGEL)  
4/13 – W Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (FPR 279-309)  
**Media Project Due**

**Week Fourteen**

4/18 – M Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts” (FPR 379-401)  
4/20 – W Spivak From *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (FPR 450-460)

**Week Fifteen**

4/25 – M Mayer, “A Return to Reciprocity” (ANGEL)  
Administer Final Exam  
4/27 – W Conclusion: Lorde, “Eye to Eye” (SO 145-175); Jordan, “Poem about my Rights” (ANGEL)  
**Submit Correspondences in Class: Entries for weeks 2-4, 6-9, 10-14**

**Final Exam Due May 4, 2010 by 12:00 pm**

***Have a great summer!***