# PHIL XXX: Feminist Philosophy (Writing Intensive) XXX Hall, Mondays and Wednesdays 9.30am - 10.45am Instructor: Michael L. J. Greer, she/her

mgreer@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 10.45am – 11.45am (in person) or by appointment (Zoom). Click here to book: https://calendly.com/mligreer/office-hours-for-phil2101

#### **Class Website and Blackboard:**

We will use Blackboard:

- 1. To find and download our readings, assignment instructions, extra resources, and materials we cover in class: All readings will be made available to you. Please print them out before class or bring them on a laptop or tablet (<u>not a phone</u>). I expect you to bring a copy of the reading to class with you. See "Readings," "Assignments," "Extra Resources," and "In-Class Materials" tabs on BB.
- 2. To hand in assignments. See "Hand In Assignments" tab on BB.
- 3. **To use the discussion boards**. This is where we'll keep an official record of our weekly guided Journals (more info below). See "Discussion Boards" tab on BB and then click on "Journals".
- 4. For important announcements. See "Announcements" tab on BB.
  - I will mostly be in touch with you via email, however I will repeat important announcements on BB.
  - Make sure you fill out the intro questionnaire with your preferred email address, as that is how I will usually contact the class. I will take your phone number at the end of our first class but will only use it if I am having trouble getting in touch with you via email.

#### **Course Description**

This writing-intensive course introduces students to feminist philosophy as a distinctive field of philosophy, introducing students to the philosophical concepts and skills needed to understand basic feminist theoretical problems, paradigms, arguments, and political strategies. It assumes some prior knowledge of philosophy or theory.

We begin the course by thinking about the political relationship between philosophy and feminism: Is philosophy important for feminism, and vice versa? Why should those who are interested in projects of social justice embark on a feminist philosophy journey? This moves us to think about the relationship between the personal and political. We then read seminal texts on oppression and intersectionality before ending our unit on feminist political philosophy by thinking about how gendered social oppression is enforced. We then move to a three-week unit on epistemology, thinking seriously about how knowledge is shaped by positionality. After the fall break we start thinking about the metaphysics of gender and gendered oppression. What does it mean to say that something (gender and sex, in this case) is a social construction? Where do gender, and sexed and gendered oppression come from? Is gender performance? How should embodiment feature in our thinking about gender? The topic for our last three classes is up to the students of the class. I provide a menu of possible topics in the syllabus, and on **November 1st** we will vote on which topic the class is most interested in.

Feminist thought is interdisciplinary and all sorts of writing have historically been a vehicle for feminist elucidation, communication, and documentation. Our course will embody the spirit of feminist writers by taking the power of writing for fueling and cultivating critical thought very seriously. Through our weekly guided journals and our scaffolded research project, we will write to think and write to learn.

# **Course Format and Expectations:**

This course will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays in XXX Hall from 9.30am - 10.45am. Attendance is expected: in-class participation is a significant part of your grade, and it will be hard for you to do well if you miss too much class. If you must miss class, I expect you to email me before class begins.

# **Course Overview**

The course is divided into four units, four topics, with each topic divided into smaller problems integral to feminist philosophy. For full lists of readings, assignments, and due dates, see the Course Schedule which can be found on BB or through hyperlink. The Units and problems are as such:

Unit	Week dates	Problems	Class Dates
	Week 1 8/22- 8/27	N/A	8/23
	Week 2 8/28 - 9/3	Is philosophy important for feminism? Is feminism important for philosophy?	8/28 and 8/30
	Week 3	Is the personal political?	9/4 and 9/6
Feminist Political	9/4 - 9/10	What is feminist injustice	, ,
Philosophy	Week 4 9/11 - 9/17	and gendered oppression?	9/11 and 9/13
	Week 5 9/18 - 9/24	What is intersectionality?	9/18 and 9/20
	Week 6 9/25 - 10/1	How is gendered oppression enforced?	9/25 and 9/27
	Week 7 10/2 - 10/8	How does oppression impact what you know?	10/2 and 10/4
Feminist Epistemology	Week 8 10/9 - 10/15	How can knowers be harmed?	10/9 and 10/11
	Week 9 10/16 - 10/22	What is a feminist epistemology?	10/16 and 10/18
Fall Recess	Week 10 10/23 - 10/29	N/A	10/23 and 10/25
The Metaphysics	Week 11 10/30 - 11/5	Is gender a social construction?	10/30 and 11/1

of Gender and Gendered Oppression	Week 12 11/6 - 11/12	Where do gender and gendered oppression come from?	11/6 and 11/8
	Week 13 11/13 - 11/19	Is gender performance?	11/13 and 11/15
	Week 14 11/20 - 11/26	What are some problems with theorizing gender?	11/20 and 11/22
	Week 15 11/27 - 12/3	Gender and Embodiment	11/27 and 11/29
Students' Choice	Week 16 12/4 - 12/10	Potential Topics:  Fatness & Diet Culture  Feminism and Disability  Black Feminism  Asian Feminisms  Muslim Feminisms  Sexual Violation, Justice for Survivors, & Prison Abolition  Ecofeminism  Gynocentrism  Decolonial/Postcolonial Feminisms  Desire, Sex, and Porn  Can Men be Feminists?  Feminist Ethics  Feminist Aesthetics  Emotions	12/4 and 12/6
	Week 17 12/11 - 12/15	Student Research Project Presentations	12/11 and 12/13

# **Learning Objectives**

This course has three main learning objectives:

- (1) To give you a foundation in feminist philosophy so that you may comfortably and confidently engage with issues in feminist philosophy and theory outside of the classroom.
- (2) To help you develop your own ideas around issues in feminist philosophy.
- (3) To develop your general argumentation, research, and communication skills. This learning objective may be partitioned into smaller goals:
  - (a) Improve reading comprehension and efficiency.
  - (b) Identify arguments, specifying premises and conclusions.
  - (c) Critically examine arguments (test consistency among claims, test limits, or test capacity to address a relevant issue or problem).
  - (d) Practice active listening, including the skill of charitable interpretation.

- (e) Interrogate the weaknesses of one's own view and the strengths of alternative views.
- (f) Practice formulating original arguments and foresee (and respond to) strong objections.
- (g) Cultivate critical writing and communication skills.

## **Written Assignments**

The assignments in this course work towards the learning objectives. There are two types of assignments.

<u>Weekly Guided Journal:</u> This assignment works towards goals (1) and (2) by free-write journaling in response to that week's problem(s).

<u>Graded:</u> P/F. You will pass as long as you show substantial, good-faith genuine engagement with the course content. Instructions on BB under "Assignments."

**<u>Due:</u>** Group A and B submit on Monday and Group C submits on Wednesday.

<u>Scaffolded Assignments Related to Final Research Project:</u> This assignment works towards goals (2) and (3). Your end goal is a research project, a "deconstructed research paper". Over the course of the semester you will complete assignments that culminate in this end goal, which you will present to your peers on the last day of class. This research project is scaffolded in such a way that it will reflect a semester's worth of work. Click here to see a showcase of curation assignments that were done across disciplines.

These smaller, scaffolded assignments are:

(1) In-class exploratory microtheme

Graded: P/F

Due: In Class 9/29. No assignment details on BB: I will give you instructions in class.

(2) Thesis-seeking exploratory essay

**Graded: According to a One-Point Rubric** 

Due: Monday 10/9

(3) Submit Curation Sources

Graded: P/F

Due: Monday 10/30

(4) First draft of research project

**Graded: P/F** 

Due: Monday 11/27

(5) Peer review (in the form of "tweets")

Graded: P/F

Due: Wednesday 12/6

(6) Class presentation of research project

**Graded: According to a One-Point Rubric** 

Due: Wednesday 12/13

(7) Final draft of research paper, incorporating peer review

**Graded: Self-graded using reflection** 

Due: Friday 12/15

#### **Non-Written Assignments**

**Participation** 

(Credit to Rima Basu) This class is heavily discussion based and

you are expected to do the required readings, listen to the podcasts, and watch the relevant media before each live session and come prepared to discuss the material. The vibrancy of the class discussion, which is extremely important for you to get the most out of this class, relies on you spending a good amount of time working through the materials every week.

During class, you should make an effort to listen carefully to each other as your peers have much to say that is insightful, and their points of view deserve careful attention. Email me a picture of a cat if you've read carefully enough to notice this. Additionally, the better classroom dynamic and community we build, the better our learning outcomes will be. For this class to work well, it will require a lot of flexibility, patience, and empathy from all of us.

Additionally, please note that on the first day of class I will assign you to a learning pod (A, B, or C). Your learning pod will affect when your journal assignments are due, and sometimes which articles you read for class.

## Office Hours Requirement

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This is pass/fail. In order to pass this requirement, you must meet with me in my office hours, at least once, before October 4th XXXX. Office hours are on the first page of this syllabus. You may book with me here: https://calendly.com/mligreer/office-hours-for-phil2101.

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#### **Course Grading**

Office Hours Requirement	5%	
Weekly Journal	20%	
Participation	10%	
Research Project Assignments	65%	
Final Draft of Research Project		10%
Presentation of Research Project		10%
Peer Review		5%
First Draft		5%
Thesis-seeking exploratory essay		20%
Curation		10%
Writing-to-Think Microtheme		5%

#### **Expectations**

Expectations I have of you:

- Read the assigned text(s), watch assigned video, listen to assigned audio
- Attend class with a copy of the texts in tow (either printed out, on your laptop, or on a tablet)
- Check your email regularly for updates (please make sure you have proper access to it, and that you give me the correct email address in the intro questionnaire).
- Due dates are calculated by EST assignments are due by midnight EST on the date.
- If and when issues arise (be they technical or personal) that interfere with your studies, communicate with me as soon as possible. I am happy to make any necessary accommodations

and work with you. <u>Online learning in a pandemic is not normal!</u> We will all have to be kind to <u>ourselves and one another, as well as flexible with our self-expectations. I am here to help in any</u> way I can.

- Grades will not be curved.
- This is an inclusive space for all students, and absolutely no discrimination in any form will be tolerated. If you ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe throughout the course, please let me know via email or in office hours (see password and zoom information above). I am not a mandated reporter.
- Plagiarism is unacceptable. I would rather grant an extension than receive plagiarized work. If
  you find that you need more time to complete an assignment, please talk to me. If you are
  wondering whether something counts as plagiarism, see the handout (on the <u>class website</u> and
  Blackboard). If you are still unsure, feel free to ask me!
  - I have a "two-strike" policy. The first time any work is plagiarized, I will fail the
    assignment. The second time I will bring the matter to the office of academic integrity
    and recommend course failure no exceptions and no questions asked.

### Expectations you may have of me:

- I aim to get you feedback on written work within two weeks of handing it in.
- My office hours are on 10.45am 11.45am (in person) or by appointment (Zoom). You can sign up for a slot here: <a href="https://calendly.com/mljgreer/office-hours-for-phil2101">https://calendly.com/mljgreer/office-hours-for-phil2101</a>. Note: I require that you attend my office hours at least once before October 4<sup>th</sup> so start thinking about when you're going to sign up!
- The best way to reach me is via email (mgreer@gradcenter.cuny.edu). I generally respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, but I do not check my emails over the weekend. I will respond to emails sent over the weekend on Monday.

#### Health and well-being

University life can be challenging, and I understand that your physical and mental health may be impacted. If you feel that you are struggling, please reach out to me and we can work something out.

#### **Lateness and absences**

Try to arrive to class on time. This respects other students' time as well as mine. Saying that, I would rather you come late than not at all.

If you cannot make it to class, <u>please email me before class letting me know</u>. You will not be penalized for being absent, however, not coming to class will make it difficult for you to absorb the material and get a good grade. <u>If you are having consistent trouble making it to class and want to talk to me about your progress</u>, send me an email or come to my office hours.

If you test positive for COVID-19 or are otherwise ill but want to attend class, I can make our classroom hybrid-accessible. Please email me for details.

#### **Technology Support**

If you need help accessing Blackboard or your email, you can get in touch with the Brooklyn College Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk (718.951.4357), Monday—Thursday, 8 a.m.—8 p.m.; Friday 9 a.m.—5 p.m.

#### **CUNY Rules, Regulations, and Services**

Accessibility

The Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS) will be working remotely for the fall semester. See <a href="here">here</a> for more details. In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with CSDS. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to schedule an interview by calling (718) 951-5538 or emailing testingcsds@brooklyn.cuny.edu. If you have already registered with CSDS, email Josephine.Patterson@brooklyn.cuny.edu or testingcsds@brooklyn.cuny.edu to ensure the accommodation email is sent to your professor.

Note: I assume that all of us learn in different ways and live in very different circumstances. I understand that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, or you might prefer to articulate ideas via email or chat/discussion/comments. While I hope that you will all engage and participate generously, please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. (Credit to <a href="Lessie Male">Lessie Male</a>). Your access to our class matters to me—matters a lot. While I work hard to make our class accessible, I understand that you may have access needs I have not addressed. Access is an ongoing process. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs.

#### *Plagiarism*

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for policy implementation can be found at www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation. Students should be aware that faculty may use plagiarism detection software.

#### Nonattendance because of religious beliefs

NY State Education Law provides that:

- (1) Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.
- (2) It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.

Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

Student bereavement policy

Students who experience the death of a loved one must contact the Division of Student Affairs, 2113 Boylan Hall, if they wish to implement either the Standard Bereavement Procedure or the Leave of Absence bereavement procedure. The Division of Student Affairs has the right to request a document that verifies the death (e.g., a funeral program or death notice). See the following: http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/initiatives/policies/bereavement.php.

# **Local and National Mental Health Resources**

- <u>Brooklyn College Personal Counseling Services</u>: 0203 James Hall 718.951.5363, 718.951.5734.
   Or email <u>bcpersonalcounseling@gmail.com</u>
- Personal counseling is available to Brooklyn College undergraduate and graduate students. A
  staff of psychologists, counselors, and social workers are available to assist you with personal
  issues or problems you may experience during your academic years. Reach out via email with
  your name and EMPLID.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (1.800.273.8255)
- Safe Horizon 24/7 Domestic Violence Hotline: 1.800.621.4673
- Safe Horizon 24/7 Rape and Sexual Assault Hotline: 1.212.227.3000
- Samaritans 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 212.673.3000
- Trans Lifeline: 877.565.8860
- NYC Anti-Violence Project English/Spanish hotline: 212.714.1141 (AVP empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education and supports survivors through counseling and advocacy.)

# Course Schedule PHILXXX, Fall 2023

Instructor: Michael L. J. Greer, she/her mgreer@gradcenter.cuny.edu

# **Important Dates to Keep in Mind**

August 24<sup>th</sup> – Last day to <u>drop</u> for 100% tuition refund
August 31<sup>st</sup> – Last day to <u>add</u> a course
September 9<sup>th</sup> – Last day for pass/fail
December 13<sup>th</sup> – Last to withdraw with W
December 15-21 – Final exam week
December 21<sup>st</sup> – End of Fall Term

Topic	Week	Problems	Reading	Assignment
Syllabus review & intro to class	Week 1	Ν/Δ	<b>Wednesday 8/23</b> Syllabus Day	
Feminist Political Philosophy	Week 2	Is feminism important for feminism?  Is feminism important for philosophy?  How can theory be important for social justice movements?  How does our own lived experience serve as an important academic tool?  How can our lived experience limit us as academics interested in social	Monday 8/28 Read one of the following (depending on whether you are group A, B, or C):  (A) Sally Haslanger, "Changing the Culture and Ideology of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)" (10 pages)  (B) Linda Alcoff, "Of Philosophy and Guerilla Wars" (9 pages)  (C) Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" (3 pages)  Wednesday 8/30  (1) "Gender Trouble on Mother's Day" by Jordy Rosenberg (online)	

	How should reproductive labor be viewed?  How should marxists view women's	Monday 9/4 Read: (1) bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (17 pages)  (2) Silvia Federici, Wages Against Housework (5	Monday 9/4  First journal entry is due.  You must submit this every
Week 3	rights?  Is thought important for social  liberation?	pages)	Monday!
	What is feminist injustice and gendered oppression?	Wednesday 9/6  (1) Marilyn Frye, "The Politics of Reality: Oppression" (8 pages)  (2) Catherine MacKinnon, "Sex Equality: On Difference and Dominance" (13 pages)	
Week 4	What role should differences between people play in a political state?  Can women's choices be considered	Monday 9/11  (1) Carole Pateman "Contracting In" excerpt TBD  (2) Nancy Fraser, "Beyond the Master/Subject     Model: Reflections on Carole Pateman's Sexual     Contract" (8 pages)  Wednesday 9/13  (1) Iris Marion Young, "Five faces of oppression"     (14 Pages)	

	Week 5	What is the difference between the additive view of identity and the intersectional view of identity?  Is Nash's critique of intersectionality fair?  What are examples of the differences between structural, political, and representational intersectionality?	Monday 9/18  (1) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Kimberle Crenshaw (31 pages)  (2) "There is no hierarchy of oppressions," Audre Lorde (youtube video)  Wednesday 9/20  (1) "A Love Letter from a Critic, or Notes on the Intersectionality Wars," Jennifer Nash (25 Pages)	
	Week 6	How is gendered oppression enforced?  What does femininity have to do with patriarchy?  What does shame have to do with patriarchy?	Monday 9/25  (1) Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" (23 pages)  Wednesday 9/29  (1) Bonnie Mann, "Femininity, Shame, and Redemption" (15 pages)	Wednesday 9/29 Writing-to-think microtheme due in class. If you miss class, email me to make this up. Start thinking about a problem in feminist philosophy that you'd like to focus on.
Feminist Epistemology	Week 7	How does gendered oppression impact what you know?  Does it follow from standpoint epistemology that social location is sufficient for social knowledge?  How has your own viewpoint been shaped by your positionality?  Do you agree with Lugones' critique of Frye?	Monday 10/2  (1) Read: Marilyn Frye, "The Politics of Reality: To Be and Be Seen" (15 pages)  (2) Read: Nancy Hartson, "The feminist standpoint: towards a specifically feminist historical materialism" (9 pages)  (3) Listen to: Identity matters: Standpoint epistemology with Briana Toole (25 mins)  Wednesday 10/4  (1) Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, World-Traveling, and Loving Perception" (25 pages)  In class discussion about curation assignment, research skills, etc.	Wednesday 10/4: Deadline to meet for office hours. Worth 5% of overall grade.

	Week 8	someone can be harmed qua knower?  How can marginalized knowers be harmed or wronged? (and what's the difference)	Monday 10/9  (1) Rachel McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice" (9 pages)  (2) Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice," Chapter 1 excerpt (9 pages)  Wednesday 10/11  (1) Mariana Ortega, "Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color" (20 pages)	<b>Monday 10/9</b> Thesis-seeking formal essay due
	Week 9	epistemology?  How could we incorporate Hill Collins'	Monday 10/16  (1) Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology" (21 pages)  Wednesday 10/18  (1) Excerpt from Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer	
Fall Recess	Week 10		Monday 10/23 & Wednesday 10/25 No class	
The Metaphysics of Gender and Gendered Oppression	Week 11	Is gender a social construction?  Is sex a social construction?	Monday 10/30  (1) Sally Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction" (30 pages)  (2) Wittig, "The Category of Sex" (8 pages)  Wednesday 11/1  (1) Luce Irigary,  (A) "Human Nature is Two" (6 pages)  (B) "Sexual Difference is Universal" (6 pages)  (C) "Sexual Difference" (12 pages)  (2) Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How to Build a Man" (8 pages)  (3) Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender" (18 pages)	Monday 10/30 Submit your curation sources to prof for evaluation

Week 12	How does race impact gender?  What might decolonizing gender look like?  What role does and should culture have in gender?	Monday 11/6  (1) Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" (19 Pages)  Wednesday 11/8  (1) Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System" (20 pages)  (2) âpihtawikosisân, Language, Culture, and Two- Spirit Identity  (3) khari&malcolm, Decolonizing Gender Zine	
Week 13	What does it mean to say that gender is "performance"?  If gender were performance would that undermine its claim to being real?  If gender were performance, what political implications might that have for cis-people? For trans-people?	(1) Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (12 pages)	
Week 14	Is it politically or morally problematic to try to define "woman"?  What is genderqueerness, and is it a	Monday 11/20 (1) Elizabeth Spelman, Simone de Beauvoir and Women: Just Who Does She Think "We" Is? (22 pages)  Wednesday 11/22 (1) Robin Dembroff "Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as a Critical Gender Kind" (23 pages)	
Week 15	Is philosophy of gender is useful to the lived experience of gender?  What should the future of gender be? Should we destroy it? Queer it? Leave it alone?	Body: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance" (23 pages)	Monday 11/27 Complete first draft of research project and send to peer review partner

Students' Choice	Week 16	Monday 12/4 Wednesday 12/6 Potential Topics:  Fatness & Diet Culture  Feminism and Disability  Black Feminisms  Asian Feminisms  Muslim Feminisms  Sexual Violation, Justice for Survivors, & Priso Abolition  Ecofeminism  Gynocentrism  Decolonial/Postcolonial Feminisms  Desire, Sex, and Porn  Can Men be Feminists?  Feminist Ethics  Feminist Aesthetics  Emotions	n Complete peer review
	Week 17	Monday 12/11 Wednesday 12/13	Last day of class: students present research projects, including their peer review.