

# Feminist Philosophy

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Sample Syllabus

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will begin by exploring how Western feminist philosophical thought was developed, from early responses to Rousseau's *Emile* to contemporary accounts of oppression, sexism, misogyny, and intersectionality. Some of the areas that we will touch upon include: **feminist epistemology** (especially challenges to the traditional notion(s) of *objectivity* and gendered knowing), feminist accounts of **oppression** and **domination**, feminist conceptions of the **self** (especially relational autonomy and intersectional identity), feminist understandings of **race** and **racial hierarchies**, and feminist conceptions of **gender** and **gender hierarchies**. We will then move on to discuss transnational feminism and **transnational challenges** to Western feminist thought. Some of the topics we will touch upon include: **multiculturalism** and its relationship to feminism, **imperialism** and its relationship to global feminist movements, and the notion of **idealism** – can there be more than one “right” way to be a feminist? In exploring these topics, our class will be introduced to historical and contemporary feminist thought, as well as ongoing debates within feminist philosophy.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goals of this course are to provide students with a wide-ranging (though certainly not exhaustive) understanding of Western feminist thought, as well as important challenges it must consider when it is extended to transnational contexts. Through this exploration, students will engage deeply with the selected materials and develop an understanding of the nature of philosophical debates.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Recognize, explain, and reflect upon the major philosophical arguments covered in this class, and critically compare them.
2. Understand the major goals of Western feminist philosophy and transnational feminist philosophy.
3. Hone critical thinking skills by analyzing philosophical arguments.
4. Refine writing skills through course assignments, papers, and exams.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 >> *What is Feminism? History and Feminist Thought*

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, Book V

- Mary Wollstonecraft**, *“Of the Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society”*
- Week 2 >> *What is Feminism? History and Feminist Thought*  
**John Stuart Mill**, *The Subjection of Women* (selections)  
**Simone de Beauvoir**, *The Second Sex* (selection)
- Week 3 >> *What is Feminism? History and Feminist Thought*  
**bell hooks**, *“Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory”*  
**Sally Haslanger**, *“Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do we Want Them to be?”*
- Week 4 >> *What is Gender?*  
**Judith Butler**, *“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”*  
**Linda Alcoff**, *“Gender Identity and Gender Differences”*
- Week 5 >> *Is Knowledge Gendered?*  
**Lorraine Code**, *“Taking Subjectivity into Account”*  
**Elizabeth Anderson**, *“Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense”*
- Week 6 >> *Is Knowledge Gendered?*  
**Jane Roland Martin**, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman* (selection)  
**Jennifer M. Morton**, *“The Educator’s Dual Role: Expressing Ideals While Educating in Nonideal Conditions”*
- Week 7 >> *What is Sexism? What is Oppression?*  
**Ann Cudd and Leslie Jones**, *“Sexism”*  
**Iris Marion Young**, *“Five Faces of Oppression”*
- Week 8 >> *What is Sexism? What is Oppression?*  
**Kate Manne**, *“Threatening Women”*  
**Kate Manne**, *“Ameliorating Misogyny”*
- Week 9 >> *What Is A Self?*  
**Marilyn Friedman**, *“Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women”*  
**Anita Allen**, *“Forgetting Yourself”*
- Week 10 >> *Feminism, Culture, and Identity*  
**Jennifer C. Nash**, *“Re-thinking Intersectionality”*  
*Watch In Class: Kimberlé Crenshaw: The Urgency of Intersectionality*

- Week 11 >> *Feminism, Culture, and Identity*  
**Susan Moller Okin**, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”  
**Serene Khader**, “*Toward A Decolonial Feminist Universalism*”
- Week 12 >> *Feminism, Culture, and Identity*  
**Serene Khader**, “*Toward A Decolonial Feminist Universalism*”  
**Serene Khader**, “*Autonomy and the Secular: Do Muslim Women Need Freedom?*”
- Week 13 >> *Transnationalism and Care*  
**Serene Khader**, “*Autonomy and the Secular: Do Muslim Women Need Freedom?*”  
**Virginia Held**, “*The Ethics of Care and Civil Society*” and “*The Caring Society*”
- Week 14 >> *Transnationalism and Care*  
**Fiona Robinson**, “*Care Ethics and the Transnationalization of Care: Reflections on Autonomy, Hegemonic Masculinities, and Globalization*”