

Phil/GWS 232: Sex Roles A Feminist Philosophy Course

Instructor: Dr. Annette Martín (she/her)
Meeting Times: TR 2:00-3:15pm
In-Person Location: Taft Hall, Room 216
Virtual Location: [Zoom Classroom Link](#)
CRNs: 30017, 33747; 31795, 33748

Email: am92@uic.edu
Drop-In Hours: R 3:30-4:30pm, or by appt
Physical Office: University Hall #1402
Virtual Office: [Zoom Office Link](#)
Class Dates: Jan 11- Apr 28

Course Welcome

Welcome to Phil/GWS 232!

Why do we have female birth control, but no male birth control? What does it mean to say that gender is "socially constructed"? Can words really be oppressive?

In this course we will touch on these and other questions as we discuss feminist contributions to core areas of philosophy. Topics will include theories of oppression, debates in the metaphysics of gender, varieties of epistemic injustice, silencing and other forms of speech injustice, and who is responsible for addressing systematic injustice. We will focus on demystifying key concepts like intersectionality, oppression, and social construction, while also working on strengthening your philosophical reading and writing skills. Ultimately, the goal is for you to develop a critical understanding of these topics that can inform your own nuanced views about gender and the social world.

These topics and questions are important ones, and I hope we will make good progress on them this semester. But I also want to acknowledge that it can be difficult to balance coursework with work, family care, mental health, and other unexpected issues that may emerge, particularly in the context of an ongoing pandemic. *If unexpected challenges arise, or you are struggling to keep up with coursework, or you are having trouble accessing resources, please come talk to me.* Likewise, if there are aspects of the course that result in barriers to your achievement, please let me know as soon as possible. This way we can make a plan to get you what you need.

Below you will find an overview of the major components of the course, and you will find more detailed information about policies on the Blackboard site. Depending on how the semester progresses, I may decide that I need to make changes to the syllabus. When that happens, I will post the new syllabus on Blackboard. The Weekly Contents section of Blackboard will always reflect the latest updates to help you stay on top of everything you need to be successful in this course.

My hope is that, working together, we can make this a meaningful, enriching experience for all of us.

Materials

Pre-Requisites: None

Readings: There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, readings will be made available online through the [Course Box](#), and posted in the Weekly Contents section of the Blackboard site.

Technology: Review the “Getting Started” section of our Blackboard course site for specific information about technological requirements for the course.

Method Of Instruction

This course will meet in-person from 2:00-3:15pm Central Time on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For the first two weeks we will be meeting virtually in our “Zoom Classroom”:

<https://uic.zoom.us/j/85972173032?pwd=aGNUdWpGbUN3YUg4T2dSV0VldkdOZz09>

When we meet in person it will be on the Chicago campus in Taft Hall, Room 216.

Additionally, I will have regular student drop-in hours on Thursdays from 3:30-4:30pm Central Time. While classes are being held virtually we will meet in my “Zoom Classroom”:

<https://uic.zoom.us/j/89939897463?pwd=SC84Q2xqaGV2cE5pVU1GYndUUUtSUT09>

If meeting in-person we will meet in my physical office, University Hall #1402.

What You Will Learn In This Course

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Critically annotate a philosophy paper. This includes being able to read a philosophical text and:
 - Identify the author's thesis statement
 - Identify the author's arguments in support of their view
 - Identify where the author considers and responds to potential objections
 - Critically engage with the text (e.g. note parts that are confusing, assess the plausibility of the author's argument, and formulate potential objections)
2. Write a well-organized paper that:
 - Formulates a clear and specific thesis statement
 - Clearly and accurately describes an author's philosophical position
 - Clearly develops a critical response to that position
3. Clearly explain concepts like oppression, intersectionality, and social construction in your own words
4. Articulate at least one way in which feminist philosophy has contributed to other areas of philosophy, or is relevant to your own life

How You Will Acquire These Skills

Daily Reading: Unless otherwise specified, there will be a reading assignment for every class session. You can find the assigned reading in the course schedule at the end of this document, or on the Weekly Contents section on Blackboard. You should do the reading before class, and give yourself enough time to be able to complete the daily reading assignment (see below). We will discuss how it is that you should approach these readings in class, but in general you

should read with an eye to understanding what the author is arguing for and what their argument is. But you also want to read with a critical lens – for example, is the author’s position plausible? Can you think of any counterexamples? Are there possibilities that the author overlooks? How successfully does this capture your own experiences? Aside from doing the reading before we meet, *you are also expected to bring the readings with you to class* in case we need to reference a particular portion of the reading in class.

Daily Reading Assignment: Unless otherwise specified, *for every daily reading there will be a Daily Reading Assignment (DRA) that will be due by 4pm the day before each class.* These assignments are designed to help you practice the skills we are developing in the course and to get you started engaging actively with the material in preparation for our discussion.

Participation in Class Discussion: Learning philosophy requires doing philosophy. This involves not only reading and writing, but also engaging in dialogue. As such, you are expected to come to class and be an active member of our discussion – ask questions, make suggestions, listen to your peers, and respond to your peers’ contributions. Contributing to discussion does not require having a perfect grasp of the material. Rather, these discussions should be an opportunity to seek clarification, solidify your understanding of the material, and begin testing and refining your critical responses to the reading. Note that you should *expect to be called on even if you are not raising your hand* – if this happens, you can answer ask a question, admit that you are confused, or offer a response. You should refer to the “Participation Rubric” on Blackboard for more information about how participation grades will be determined.

Writing Assignments: There will be three writing assignments, apart from the final paper project, that will be due over the course of the semester (see the semester schedule at the end of this document for deadlines). These writing assignments will ask you to demonstrate mastery of progressively more challenging critical reading and writing skills that we will be practicing in class and in your daily reading assignments. I will provide prompts and instructions for each writing assignment, as well as a rubric that specifies what I will be looking for when grading the assignment, in advance of each writing assignment. You are welcome to come to my student drop-in hours or to set up an appointment with me to discuss your assignments before you submit them. However, to allow for anonymous grading, I will not read drafts in advance.

Final Paper Project: You will write a final paper of ~1250 words (5 pages) that responds to a final paper prompt that I will make available near the end of the course. Your final paper should make use of the skills you have developed in class and through working on the writing assignments throughout the semester. As part of the final paper project you must also submit an outline of your paper, and you are expected to incorporate the feedback you receive on the outline into the final paper. *The final paper outline will be due by 5pm on April 27th, and the final paper will be due by 5pm on May 5th.*

Self-Assessments: There will be two kinds of self-assessment in this course.

- **Pre- and Post- Course Assessments:** These assessments will ask you to evaluate and demonstrate your mastery of course skills and contents as a way of measuring your growth at the end of the course and assessing the effectiveness of the course. These assessments will not be graded on accuracy. You just need to put the effort into completing them to receive credit.

- **Check-In Assessment:** Partway through the course, you will also be asked to check-in about how the course is going for you overall. This is to help me assess whether any changes need to be made to the course, and whether you need any additional support. At this point you will also be invited to report on your general well-being (optional) and to sign up for an optional, short check-in with me.

How Your Learning Will Be Evaluated

For detailed information about the expectations for each kind of assignment and the criteria by which your work will be evaluated, refer to the Rubrics section on Blackboard. *The grading system is set up so that (i) it should be easy to get a B in the course if you are regularly putting in effort into improving your work, and (ii) so long as you submit something for an assignment by 5pm on May 6 (and you adhere to standards of academic integrity), the worst grade you will receive for that assignment is the equivalent of a D grade.*

Grade Breakdown

- **Daily Reading Assignments**— 29% (1% each)
- **Writing Assignments (Papers 1-3)**— 30% (10% each)
- **Final Paper**— 18%
 - Outline - 5%
 - Final version - 13%
- **Participation**— 18%
- **Course Assessments**— 3% (1% each)
- **Syllabus Quiz**— 2%

To make this easier to calculate, I will make the course worth a total of 1000 points, and assign points to each component of the course according to this breakdown. You must then earn at least 900 points to receive an A in the course, 800 to receive a B, 700 to receive a C, and 600 to receive a D.

To illustrate, each DRA will be worth 10 points. There will be 29 DRAs, for a total of 290 points in this category. Likewise, each of papers 1-3 will be worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points in the writing assignments category.

Grading Policies

Anonymous Grading: In an effort to reduce the effects of implicit and explicit biases, I will, whenever possible, grade assignments anonymously (that is, without knowing whose assignment I am grading).

Late and Missing Assignments: *If you are experiencing challenges that will affect your ability to complete work on time, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan.* Unless we work out an alternative arrangement, late assignments will be deducted 3% of the total possible points for each day the assignment is late, with a maximum deduction of 40% of points (i.e. until the highest possible grade for the assignment, given the late penalty, becomes the equivalent of a D grade). For example, a writing assignment (worth 100 points) will be deducted 3% of those 100 points (which is 3 points) for every day that it is late, up to the point that the highest score the paper could receive is 60 points. However, as long as *something*

is handed in for an assignment, and you adhere to standards of academic integrity, the worst grade any assignment will receive is the equivalent of a D grade, or 60% of the total possible points for that assignment. Late assignments will be accepted until 5pm on May 6. Missing assignments will receive zero points.

Grade Changes: If you think that an assignment has been graded unfairly, you have one week after it is graded and returned to request a re-evaluation of your work. Note that I will freshly evaluate your work, and your grade could increase, decrease, or stay the same. If you think some arithmetic error has been made in calculating your grade, you must notify me by 5pm on May 3rd. *To be fair to all students, I will not make changes to your overall grade unless there is an arithmetic error.*

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: In order for UIC to be a place where research and learning can thrive, we all share a responsibility to uphold the highest academic standards. Accordingly, you are expected to adhere to the [Community Standards](#) of integrity, accountability, and respect.

If you are struggling to keep up with course work, have doubts about how to properly cite sources, or are uncertain about how to meet academic standards, please come and talk to me so that we can come up with a plan. If I do have evidence that you have plagiarized or otherwise violated Community Standards in my course, I will submit an incident report to the Office of the Dean of Students. They will investigate and determine an appropriate outcome. Please review the [UIC Student Disciplinary Policy](#) for additional information about the process by which instances of academic misconduct are handled.

Creating An Inclusive, Accessible Learning Environment

My goal, and the goal of this institution, is to create learning environments that are equitable, inclusive and welcoming. This will require all of us to do our part to be thoughtful, listen to one another, and engage respectfully with each other.

If there are aspects of the instruction or design of the course that result in barriers to your inclusion or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible.

Disability Accommodation Procedures: UIC is committed to the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of university life. If you face or anticipate disability-related barriers while at UIC, please connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc.uic.edu, via email at drc@uic.edu, or call (312) 413-2183 to create a plan for reasonable accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to disclose the disability to the DRC, complete an interactive registration process with the DRC, and provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Upon receipt of a LOA, I will gladly work with you and the DRC to implement approved accommodations.

Content Warnings: The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage sexism, misogyny, and related forms of oppression every week. At times this may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will do my best to flag especially graphic or intense content in the Weekly Contents section of Blackboard. If you suspect that specific material is

likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student, or come see me individually to discuss the situation.

Civility: A major part of doing and learning philosophy is engaging in dialogue. It is important that we engage with each other in respectful and constructive ways, especially when dealing with subjects that are of great practical and political import. That doesn't mean that we can't disagree – disagreement is also essential to philosophy! – but that we must engage thoughtfully and respectfully. If you are uncivil or behave disrespectfully, you may be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. (See the [UIC Student Disciplinary Policy](#).)

Slurs: Occasionally, our authors may use, mention, or refer to slurs. We will have a policy in class of not uttering slurs (even if only mentioning them, and not using them).

Other Course Policies and Campus Resources

The course Blackboard site has additional information about course policies, technological requirements, philosophical resources, and campus resources. Please review the site for access to this information. If you have any questions or need help accessing other resources, please come talk to me.

Course Schedule

Note that *there will be a daily reading assignment due by 4pm the day before each class* (unless otherwise specified; see above for guidelines). This schedule is subject to change as needed.

A '*' indicates that this reading mentions or discusses gendered and/or transphobic violence. Major deadlines (beyond standard daily reading assignments) are in bold.

Skill	Topic	Wk	Date	Assignment
Concepts	Oppression	1	Jan 11	Handouts 1-3 on Concepts
			Jan 13	*Frye, "Oppression"
			Jan 14	Syllabus Quiz and Pre-Course Assessment Due (5pm)
Claims	Oppression	2	Jan 18	Handouts 4-5 on Claims Bailey, "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression'"
			Jan 20	*Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other," Sects I-III (pp. 97-111)
		3	Jan 25	Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other" (to end)
	Intersectionality		Jan 27	The Combahee River Collective Statement, Sects 1&2 (pp.15-21) *Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," Intro- IIA (pp. 1241-1265) EXTRA CREDIT (10 pts): Come to my drop-in hours (or make an

				appt) and introduce yourself anytime before 4:30pm on Jan 27
Passage Exegesis		4	Feb 1	Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection"
			Feb 3	Spelman, "Woman: The One and the Many," Skip Sect 3 (pp. 133-153, 158-159)
Flagging	Social Construction	5	Feb 8	Hacking, "The Social Construction of What?" pp. 5-32, skip marked sections Concepción Handout on Reading Philosophy
			Feb 10	Haslanger, "Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground," Sects 1- 3 (pp. 1- top of 19)
			Feb 11	Paper 1 Due (5pm)
Naming vs. Explaining Objections	Gender Worries & Feminist Politics	6	Feb 15	Haslanger, "Ideology, Generics, Common Ground" (to end)
			Feb 17	Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," pp. 405-top of 422
			Feb 18	Mid-Term Assessment Due (5pm)
		7	Feb 22	Young, "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective," Intro-Sect II (pp. 713-722)
			Feb 24	Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of <i>Woman</i> ""
View Exegesis	Trans Identities	8	Mar 1	Mikkola, "Gender Sceptics and Feminist Politics"
			Mar 3	Dembroff, "Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender," Sects 1-3 (pp. 21-38)
		9	Mar 8	Dembroff, "Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender," (to end)
		Mar 10	*Betcher, "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance"	
	Feminist Epistemology	10	Mar 15	Toole, "Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology"
			Mar 17	Tuana, "The Speculum of Ignorance"
			Mar 18	Paper 2 Due (5pm)
	SPRING BREAK		Mar 22	SPRING BREAK
			Mar 24	
Writing Thesis Statements + Review	Epistemic Injustice	11	Mar 29	* "Briefly: Epistemic Injustice" through 18:24 (transcript here) McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice"
			Mar 31	Anderson, "Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions"
	Responsibility for Injustice	12	Apr 5	*Vasanthakumar, "Epistemic Privilege and Victims' Duties to Resist their Oppression"
			Apr 7	Zheng, "What is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice"
	Silencing and Speech Injustice	13	Apr 12	*Langton "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," Intro and Sect I (pp. 293-314)
			Apr 14	*Langton "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," Sects II-III (pp. 314-end)
		Apr 15	Paper 3 Due (5pm)	
Paper Structure	TBD By Vote	14	Apr 19	TBD By Vote
			Apr 21	E.g. Cancel culture, implicit bias, disability
		15	Apr 26	E.g. Grit, silencing, sexual orientation, objectivity in science
			Apr 27	Final Outline (5pm)
			Apr 28	N/A

		Apr 29	Post-Course Assessment Due (5pm)
Finals Week		May 5	Final Paper Due (5pm)
		May 6	Last chance to submit missing assignments (5pm)