

MORAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES OF GENDER IN SOCIETY

PHIL/WGST 275.001 Fall 2023

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



JOHN OLSON/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

COURSE INFORMATION

Credit Hours: 3

Pre or Co-Requisites: N/A

Ideas in Action Gen-Ed: FC-POWER or FC-VALUES

Making Connections Gen-Ed: PH, US

Target Audience: All undergraduates

Meeting Pattern: MWF 9:05 A.M.-9:55 A.M.

Instructional Format: In-person

Classroom or Location: Phillips (PH) 265

Course Website: https://uncch.instructure.com/courses/37438

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Meredith Sheeks

Email Address: msheeks@unc.edu

Office Location: 210D Caldwell Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:45am-12:45pm, Wednesdays 9:55am-11:55am, and by appointment (via Zoom or in-person)

Zoom Room ID: https://unc.zoom.us/j/3862140885

COURSE CONTENT

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to philosophical ways of raising and addressing core feminist questions, critiques, and concerns. It focuses on five practical areas of ongoing feminist interest: work and care, reproductive rights, pornography, sex work, and sexual violence and harassment.

Course Texts & Materials

Students will need ready access to the course's <u>Canvas site</u>. All <u>required</u> texts will be made available on Canvas. For interested students, a recommended reading list will also be accessible on Canvas.

Class Expectations

Successful students should plan to attend class, to actively participate in class, and to spend an additional average of 6 to 9 hours each week reading and critically engaging with assigned course materials outside of class.

Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

All UNC philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophic skills.

One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge.

These basic philosophical skills involve being able to:

- Think critically;
- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness;
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic;
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis;
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions;
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions
 presented them.

In addition, PHIL-275 satisfies the **value theory** requirement for our philosophy major and minor, and as such aims at developing the following learning outcomes:

- familiarity with some of the leading normative theories in philosophy, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics;
- being able to identify and explain the various contexts in which philosophical questions of justification arise;
- being able to assess ethical values in terms of the philosophical and non-philosophical reasons offered;
- being able to recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value;
- being able to evaluate ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities;
- being able to analyze and evaluate the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic domains.

This course, in particular, will equip students with the ability to:

- Challenge or otherwise expand their view of the role gender plays in our social and ethical relations;
- Identify the role of gender in past and current power structures;
- Develop various critical thinking skills, including argument analysis and evaluation;
- Explore the role theorizing plays in our analysis of everyday life and society; and
- Develop their writing and ability to provide clear and concise arguments while still maintaining depth and nuance.

As part of the IDEAs in Action General Education Curriculum, this course satisfies the following Focus Capacities:

Focus Capacity #1—Power, Difference, & Inequality

Description: Students engage with the histories, perspectives, politics, intellectual traditions, or expressive cultures of populations and communities that have historically been disempowered, and the structural and historical processes by which that disempowerment has endured and changed.

Student Learning Outcomes:

These are the learning outcomes that are expected of students after completing a course.

- Recognize the relationship between inequality and social, economic, and political power.
- 2. Analyze configurations of power and the forms of inequality and bias they produce.
- 3. Evaluate dynamics of social, economic, and political inequality in relation to specific historical contexts.
- 4. Interrogate the systemic processes by which forms of inequality are sustained and how these processes have been and are resisted and transformed.

Questions for Students:

These are the types of questions you should be able to answer after completing a course.

- 1. What are the relevant structures, institutions, ways of thinking, and practices that create, maintain, and change social, economic, and political inequalities?
- 2. What practices have been implemented and institutionalized to address social, economic, and political inequalities?

Focus Capacity #2—Ethical and Civic Values

Description: What does it mean to be a part of a community? How do our decisions, and those decisions of our leaders, affect those around us and society at large, not only now but in the future? Learn how different perspectives can influence our idea of what is ethical and how to think critically about how we make and justify private and public decisions and evaluate the actions of public leaders.

Student Learning Outcomes:

These are the learning outcomes that are expected of students after completing a course.

- 1. Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
- 2. Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered.
- 3. Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.
- 4. Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.

Questions for Students:

These are the types of questions you should be able to answer after completing a course.

- 1. How can people think fruitfully, individually and together, about how they should live their lives?
- 2. What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?
- 3. How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?
- 4. What considerations—stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, et cetera—can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?

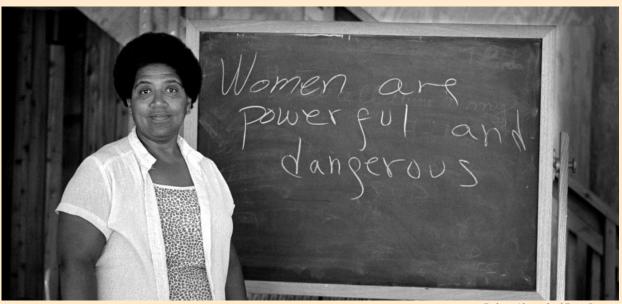
Recurring Capacities

Every focus capacity course includes the following activities: ·

- Writing, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent;
- Presenting material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means; and
- Collaborating in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research.

These activities are designed to help students practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENTS



Robert Alexander/Getty Images

Assignment Descriptions

Reading Responses and Discussion (30%)

Students will have the opportunity to raise questions, criticisms, compliments, or reflections about the assigned readings once per week (for credit) in an <u>online discussion forum</u>.

The primary purpose of the forum is to motivate participants in the class to not only read the assigned course readings, but to also engage with these readings critically. These forum posts will also serve to guide class discussion and to offer inspiration for argumentative paper topics.

Students are required to contribute a minimum of 12 posts to the forum. Each post should approximate 150 words. (Together, these posts will amount to ~6 pages of writing, since 150 words amounts to around half a page double-spaced, 12pt., Times New Roman font.) For the first week of classes, posts will be due by the time class begins. After the first week, posts for a given reading will be due by 5 A.M. on the day that the reading is due.

Students will receive full credit for their posts, as long as they substantively engage with the assigned course readings for the week. Posts that substantively engage with the relevant readings demonstrate that a student has (i) read the assigned reading for the week and (ii) reflected upon it. During the first week of class, the professor will offer model responses to indicate which kinds of posts are expected for full credit.

The 12 required reading responses contribute to 30% of the final grade.

Reflection and Application Papers (10%)

Students will be asked to write one short reflection paper towards the beginning of the course and another short reflection paper at the end of the course. Neither of these papers will require use of outside sources. Their purpose is to prompt students to reflect upon key concepts and methods in the course and to apply them to their own life and experience. Each paper submission should be between one and two pages in length, double-spaced, 12pt., Times New Roman font.

Approximately two weeks before each paper is due, the professor will provide a specific prompt for the assignment. Students can expect the first paper to be about the characterization of feminism itself and the

second to concern the concept and practice of silencing. The first short paper will be due on September 8th, 2023. The second will be due on the day of the final assessment.

Collectively, these short papers will contribute to 10% of the final grade.

Group Presentation (15%)

During the first week of class, students will be placed into groups of three to four students. Each group will be assigned a future presentation date and asked to prepare a 15-to-20-minute presentation on <u>one</u> of the five practical points of interest in the course: (1) work and care; (2) reproductive rights; (3) pornography; (4) sex work; and (5) sexual violence and harassment.

The goal for each group will be (i) to find an interesting and actual case example regarding their assigned practical point of interest and (ii) to creatively tie that case study to a philosophical concept discussed in class (e.g., consent, objectification, speech acts, adaptive preferences, misogyny, etc.).

Excellent presentations will show, in an engaging way, that students understand the details of a given case and of its relationship to relevant philosophical concept(s).

Since collaboration on this assignment is crucial, students will be required to anonymously assess their team's individual and collective efforts on the assignment immediately following their presentation day.

The group presentation contributes to 15% of the final grade.

Argumentative Paper (30%)

Throughout the semester, students will develop a sustained case for a view on a relevant topic of their own choosing. Papers should be between 5 and 7 pages—double-spaced, 12pt., Times New Roman—in length.

The purpose of the assignment is to expose students to the unique style and technique of philosophical writing and to offer students the occasion to develop and apply critical reasoning skills, concerning a view that they themselves find worth defending.

As the due date for the paper approaches, the professor will provide a list of sample topics, alongside various tips and resources for success.

The assignment will be due at the end of the day (11:55 P.M.) on Monday, December 4th.

The argumentative paper contributes to 30% of the final grade.

Four-Sentence Draft (5%)

Several weeks before the argumentative paper for the course is due, students will be required to submit a brief paper topic proposal. The purpose of the assignment is to prepare students for success on the argumentative paper for the course. The professor will provide more specific instructions about the assignment several weeks before it is due.

The four-sentence draft contributes to 5% of the final grade.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Students will learn a great deal in this course by actively participating in discussion. By way of listening to others and contributing their own voice to the conversation, students will be challenged to critically assess their own views and to critically engage with alternative viewpoints.

For this reason, attendance and participation contributes to 10% of the final grade.

Grading Scale & Schema

Late Work

In general, late work will not be accepted.

The professor will regularly remind students of upcoming assignments throughout the course. Students will be expected to work ahead on assignments and to plan accordingly, in light of other coursework, extracurricular activities, and additional commitments. Exceptions may be made in cases of emergency at the discretion of the instructor.

Grading Scale

| Numeric Grade (%) | Letter Grade |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 93.5 and above | A |
| 89.5 – 93.4 | A- |
| 86.5 – 89.4 | B+ |
| 82.5 – 86.4 | В |
| 79.5 – 82.4 | B- |
| 76.5 – 79.4 | C+ |
| 72.5 – 76.4 | С |
| 69.5 – 72.4 | C- |
| 66.5 – 69.4 | D+ |
| 59.5 – 66.4 | D |
| 59.4 and below | F |



Image Source: Emma Holmes, "What Is Intersectional Feminism?," Naked Truths, 1/30/19.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Groundwork

| Date | Topic(s)/Guiding Questions | | Readings & Assignments Due |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Monday, August 21 st | Introduction to the Course: What is philosophy? And what in the world does it have to do with feminism? | | |
| Wednesday, August 23 rd | What is feminism? What is feminism not? | 0 | Catharine MacKinnon, "Not by Law Alone" bell hooks, selections from Feminism is for Everybody |
| Friday, August 25 th | Who are we to speak for women? On Cautionary Confidence & Intersectionality | 0 | Audre Lorde, selections from Sister Outsider |
| Monday, August 28 th | What is oppression? | 0 | Carol Hay, "Oppression: Four Metaphors" |
| Wednesday, August 30 th | What is sexism? | 0 | Marilyn Frye, "Sexism" |
| Friday, September 1st | Review and Application Day | 0 | Application Paper #1 Due (at 9 A.M.) |
| Monday, September 4 th | Labor Day—No Class | | |
| Wednesday, September 6 th | What is misogyny? | 0 | Kate Manne, "Threatening Women" |
| Friday, September 8 th | Are sexism and misogyny interrelated? If so, how? | 0 | Kate Manne, "Ameliorating Misogyny" and "Discriminating Sexism" |

Unit 2: Work and Care

| Date | Topic(s) | | Readings & Assignments Due |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Monday, September 11 th | Working Women: Labor Trappings | 0 | Susan M. Okin, "Vulnerability by Marriage" |
| Wednesday, September 13 th | Women Overworked, Overlooked, Over time: What's so great about work? | 0 | bell hooks, "Rethinking the Nature of Work" |
| Friday, September 15 th | Connection and Application Day | | |
| Monday, September 18 th | On Ideology | 0 | Sally Haslanger, "But Mom, Crop-Tops Are Cute!" |
| Wednesday, September 20 th | On Stereotypes | 0 | Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images" |
| Friday, September 22 nd | Connection and Application Day | | |
| Monday, September 25 th | Well-Being Day—No Class | | |
| Wednesday, September 27 th | On Adaptive Preferences | 0 | Martha Nussbaum, selections from Women and Human Development |
| Friday, September 29 th | Presentations and Review | 0 | 1st Round of Presentations: Work and Care |

Unit 3: Reproductive Rights

| Date | Topic(s) | Readings & Assignments Due |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Monday, October 2 nd | Tying Rights to Abortion | o J.J. Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" |
| Wednesday, October 4 th | Beyond Abortion | Angela Davis, "Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights" |
| Friday, October 6 th | Connection and Application Day | |
| Monday, October 9th | What is objectification? | o Elinor Mason, "Objectification" |
| Wednesday, October 11 th | Objectification, all dressed up? | Anne Eaton, "What's Wrong with the (Female) Nude?" |
| Friday, October 13 th | Presentations and Review | 2nd Round of Presentations: Reproductive Rights |
| | Unit 4: Pornography | |
| Class (Date/Week) | Topic(s) | Readings & Assignments Due |
| Monday, October 16 th | Is there a new porn problem in our midst? | Amia Srinivasan, "Talking to my Students about Porn" |
| Wednesday, October 18 th | Diversity? Education? Imagination? Novel solutions to a novel problem | Amia Srinivasan, "Talking to my Students about Porn" |
| Friday, October 20 th | Fall Break—No Class | |
| Monday, October 23 rd | Pornography and Speech Acts | Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts" |
| Wednesday, October 25 th | Weaponizing Speech, Endorsing Silence | Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts" |
| Friday, October 27 th | Presentations and Review | o 3 rd Round of Presentations: Pornography |

Unit 5: Sex Work

| Date | Topic(s) | Readings & Assignments Due |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Monday, October 30 th | Problems with Prostitution | o Elinor Mason, "Sex Work" |
| Wednesday, November 1st | Two Takes on Sex Work: Liberal Feminists & Essentialists | Read EITHER Scott A. Anderson, "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy" OR Martha Nussbaum, "Whether from Reason or Prejudice" *The instructor will assign the Anderson article to one half of the class and the Nussbaum article to the other half of the class* |
| Friday, November 3 rd | Debate Day | Review the reading materials from earlier in the week. Prepare to defend one of the views above in class. |
| Monday, November 6 th | On Consent and Policy | o Tom Dougherty, "Affirmative Consent and Due Diligence" |
| Wednesday, November 8 th | Beyond Consent? On Sexual Negotiation | o Quill R. Kukla, "That's What She Said" |
| Friday, November 10 th | Presentations and Review | 4th Round of Presentations: Sex Work Four-Sentence Draft Due (at 11:55 P.M.) |

Unit 6: Sexual Violence and Harassment

| Date | Topic(s) | Readings & Assignments Due |
|---|---|--|
| Monday, November 13 th | Where even to begin? The Complexities of Sexual Violation | Linda Alcoff, selections from Rape and Resistance Catharine MacKinnon, "Sex and Violence" |
| | | |
| Wednesday, November 15 th | The Ethics of Sexual Harassment NDAs | o Scott Altman, "Selling Silence" |
| Friday, November 17 th | Connection and Application Day | |
| Monday, November 20th | Presentations and Review | 5th Round of Presentations: Sexual Violence and Harassment |
| Wednesday, November 22 nd | Thanksgiving Break—No Class | |
| Friday, November 24 th | Thanksgiving Break—No Class | |
| Monday, November 27 th | An Introduction to Epistemic Injustice | o Kristie Dotson, "A Cautionary Tale" |
| Wednesday, November 29 th | The Trickiness of Calling out Silencing | o Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing" |
| Friday, December 1st | Connection and Application Day | |
| Monday, December 4 th | Writing Workshop | O Argumentative Paper Due (at 11:55 P.M.) |
| Wednesday, December 6 th | Last Day of Class: Taking Care of Some Loose Threads | |
| Tuesday, December 12 th at 4:00 P.M. | Final Assessment Period: Where do we go from here? | Application Paper #2 Due (at 4:00 P.M.) |

POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Policies

University Class Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's <u>Class Attendance Policy</u>, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

- 1. Authorized University activities: <u>University Approved Absence Office (UAAO) website</u> provides information and <u>FAQs for students</u> and <u>FAQs for faculty</u> related to University Approved Absences
- 2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by <u>Accessibility Resources and Service</u> and/or the <u>Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office</u> (EOC)
- 3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview, illness/ flu or club activity), instructors are encouraged to work directly with students to determine the best approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

Honor Code Statement

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me, or consult studentconduct.unc.edu.

Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates.

These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the Safe Computing at UNC website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Grade Appeal Process

If you have any concerns with grading or feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our director of undergraduate studies or department chair.

Services & Student Support Policies

Accessibility Resources & Services (ARS)

Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS – ars@unc.edu) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities. ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations. Faculty and instructors with any concerns or questions about accommodations and/or their implementation, are invited to reach out to ARS to discuss.

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The <u>Heels Care Network</u> website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/ or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/ or the Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu). Confidential resources include Counseling and Psychological Services and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu). Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email reportandresponse@unc.edu or see additional contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate any suggestions.

Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/.

Learning Center

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's Learning Center at http://learningcenter.unc.edu to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit http://writingcenter.unc.edu.