

Feminist Philosophy of Science  
Rocky 210, Tuesday/Thursday, 10:30AM-11:45AM

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Office Hours: Rocky 206, Thursday, 1:30PM-3:30PM

This course introduces students to a range of historical and contemporary issues in feminist approaches to science, knowledge, and human nature. Is there an essential difference between women and men? If so, what is the nature of this difference and what are its social and political implications? If not, what explains the apparent differences? Can assumptions about gender and sexuality compromise scientific objectivity? If so, should we rethink the nature of scientific objectivity and knowledge in general? Can social and psychological accounts of how we tend to sort people into distinct categories illuminate how we *ought* to understand these categories? How do questions about gender and sexuality intersect with questions about race and cross-cultural difference? How are these categories represented in popular scientific media? We will focus in particular on case studies from recent evolutionary biology, psychology, and neuroscience.

Required Readings

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*

Rebecca Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences*

Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*

Jennifer Saul, *Feminism: Issues and Arguments*

- All other readings on Moodle

Course Grading and Requirements: Participation (20%); 3 Papers (80%)

Attendance & Participation (20%): This includes attendance, participation, and pop quizzes. **Attendance to class is mandatory, as is arriving on time.** Excused absences require signed documentation from a doctor or dean. **Participation and preparation are crucial.** There are a variety of ways to participate, including: actively contributing to discussions, demonstrating reflection on the readings, listening carefully to others' contributions (not dominating discussion), and showing respect toward classmates. There will also be a number of pop quizzes to make sure students are keeping up with the assignments. **Laptops will not be permitted in class unless you clear it with me in advance.** All cell phones must be silent and put away.

3 papers:      1<sup>st</sup>: 3 pages (20%) – due Friday, 2/27  
                    2<sup>nd</sup>: 5-7 pages (25%) – due Friday, 4/10  
                    3<sup>rd</sup>: 8-10 pages (35%) – due during Exam Week (5/18-5/22)

Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity. Students in need of ADA/504 accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught plagiarizing will receive an F in the course and be referred to the Dean of Studies. I will not make any “judgment calls” to ascertain whether instances of plagiarism are intentional. A handout entitled “Plagiarism and Academic Integrity” will be distributed again with the first paper assignment, and signed by each student. See also Vassar’s guide on “Originality and Attribution”: [deanofthecollege.vassar.edu/documents/originality/](http://deanofthecollege.vassar.edu/documents/originality/).

## Topics, Readings, and Tentative Schedule

**Trigger Warnings:** In this course we will read about and discuss sexual assault, violence, and other potentially traumatic subjects on a number of occasions. Material that may trigger a harmful response in survivors or allies will be flagged below as: **(TW)**. If, for whatever reason, you find it too difficult to read or discuss one of these texts, just let me know. If you find any unflagged material to be a potential trigger, please let me know.

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### Week 1 Hello

1/29: *Genesis* 1-3

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### Week 2 History of Essentialism; Gendered Souls & Virtue

- 2/3: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, selections  
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, selections  
Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*  
John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, selections
- 2/5: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, selections  
Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, selections  
Emma Goldman, *The Traffic in Women*, selections  
Jennifer Saul, "Introduction," "The Politics of Work and Family" (pp.5-16, 20-30)

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### Week 3 Construction and Critique of Essentialism

- 2/10: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, selections
- ADD PERIOD ENDS
- 2/12: Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, selections  
Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, selections  
Saul, "Women's 'Different Voice'"
- 1<sup>st</sup> Paper Assignment Distributed

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### Week 4 Power, Science, and Sexuality

- 2/17: Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Parts 1 and 2  
2/19: Foucault, Parts 3 and 4

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### Week 5 Feminism and Foucault; The History of Sex Science

- 2/24: Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power"  
Saul, "Feminine Appearance"
- 2/26: Laqueur, *Making Sex*, Chs. 1-2, 3 (pp. 69, 82, 88, 98-99)
- 2/27: **1<sup>st</sup> Paper Due on Friday**

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### Week 6 Sex Science cont.; Performing Gender

- 3/3: Laqueur, Ch.5 (149-63), Ch.6 (193-207; 243)
- 3/5: Cristan Williams, "[Gender Performance: The TransAdvocate interviews Judith Butler](#)" and embedded video, "Your Behavior Creates Your Gender"  
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Prefaces (1999, 1990), Ch. 1 **(TW)**

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### Week 7 Gender, Race, and Class in Social Science

- 3/10: Butler, Ch. 3 (Concluding Unscientific Postscript (p.144) to End), Conclusion
- 3/12: Ron Mallon, "Social Construction, Social Roles, and Stability"  
Margaret Anderson & Patricia Hill Collins, "Race, Class, and Gender"
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Assignment Distributed
- 3/13: **DROP PERIOD ENDS**  
3/13-3/29: **SPRING BREAK**

Week 8                      Intersections of Race, Gender, and Class; The Global Context

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- 3/31: Gloria Steinem, "Women are Never Front-Runners"  
Elizabeth Spelman, "Woman: The One and the Many"  
Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color," up to p.1253 (TW)
- 4/2: Crenshaw, finish "Mapping the Margins"  
Uma Narayan, "Cross-Cultural Connections, Border Crossings, and Death by Culture" (TW)

Week 9                      Global Context cont.; Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Social Psychology

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- 4/7: Joseph Massad, "ReOrienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World" (TW)  
Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," up to p.217
- 4/9: Virginia Valian, *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*, selections  
Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias"  
John Jost et al., "ten studies that no manager should ignore," handout  
Nalini Ambady, video lecture, "How Subtle Cues Shape Behavior and Performance"  
David Pedulla, "The Positive Consequences of Negative Stereotypes: Race, Sexual Orientation, and the Job Application Process," pp.75-81, 89-91
- 4/10: **2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due on Friday**

Week 10                      Knowledge, Injustice, and Social Institutions

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- 4/14: Miranda Fricker, podcast interview for Philosophy Bites  
Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Preface, Intro, Ch.7 "Hermeneutical Injustice"
- 4/16: Elizabeth Anderson, "Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions"  
Alex Madva, "Biased Against Debiasing: On the Role of (Institutionally Sponsored) Self-Transformation in the Struggle Against Prejudice"

Week 11                      Diversity and Bias in Science

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- 4/21: Jennifer Saul, "Feminism, Science, and Bias"  
Joann Weiner, "Diversity is good. Why doesn't everyone agree?"  
Gerd Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*, "Winning Without Thinking"
- 4/23: Louise Antony, "Quine as Feminist: The Radical Import of Naturalized Epistemology"  
Antony, "'Human Nature' and Its Role in Feminist Theory"  
• 3<sup>rd</sup> Paper Topic Distributed

Week 12                      Feminist Epistemology; The Neuroscience of Sex Differences

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- 4/28: Antony, "Sisters, Please, I'd Rather Do It Myself: A Defense of Individualism in Feminist Epistemology"  
Elizabeth Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense"
- 4/30: Rebecca Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences*, Ch.1, Ch.3 (pp.48-54), Ch.8 (pp.228-236), Ch.9

Week 13                      Essentialism in Evolutionary Psychology and Popular Media

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- 5/5: Randy Thornhill & Craig Palmer, "Why Men Rape" (TW)  
Lori Oliwenstein, *Time Magazine*, "The Most Important Sex Organ"  
Sarah Richardson, "Y All the Hype?"
- 5/7: Ariel Levy, "Either/Or: Sports, Sex, and the Case of Caster Semenya" (TW)
- 5/12: Makeup Session

5/18-22: **Exam Week; 3<sup>rd</sup> Paper Due**