

POLITICAL SCIENCE/WGS 594/ PH494, Fall 2019

HISTORICAL TRADITIONS OF FEMINIST THEORY

Please note: This pdf version of the syllabus will not be updated after the beginning of the semester. Only the tabbed versions on the Blackboard site are authoritative.

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Class: T 3:30-6:15, PHO202
Office Hours: W 2-4 pm

For as long as recorded history there have been women and sometimes men who struggled against the confines of how cultures, societies, and institutions defined women and men *as* women and men. For most of recorded history in most places, men's apparent attributes, their actions, ambitions, rules, and creative vision have been defined as the core of what constitutes humanity, while women have been understood as contingent, auxiliary, subservient, and "other." But there has always been resistance and redefinition.

In this course we will explore the history of resistance as it has been expressed through theoretical or theory-based texts. We will read and discuss the work of these theorists as they tried to understand what we now call *gender*, addressed the situation of women, puzzled about causes and sought to identify solutions.

We will analyze each of these theorists in context of the larger traditions and families of political and social theory of which their work was a part and with which each argued. Examples of these families of thought include the Enlightenment and liberalism, American transcendentalism, Marxism and socialism, anarchism, evolution, psychoanalysis, and existentialism. We will study the relationship between the creation of theory and the changing historical conditions in which it is created. We will consider how the changing analysis of gender was – and wasn't – linked to explicit statements about the contingencies of gender with sexuality, race, class, and other critical definers of human situation. And we will ask, at all times, how these theories might link to action, and how this history might inform our future.

What is the point of studying the history of feminist theory? It is a tragedy that because of a lack of historical knowledge of feminist thought, the suppression of that knowledge, its exclusion from libraries and educational curricula, each generation has had to start from scratch in seeking to understand. Each has had to do largely without the benefit of hearing and learning from their predecessors. As a result, even those who think deeply about structures of gender have often ended up being short-sighted, thinking they or their generation might be the first to explore these questions, or come to important conclusions.

What is the point of studying the history of feminist theory framed by historical traditions? Because the study of women and gender has not, by and large, been integrated into the study of historical philosophy or social theory, it is often treated as though it is off to a side, its own thing. Kind of quirky. But in fact, each generation of theorists who have probed these questions did so from within important theoretical frames of their day, and they did so in dialog or argument with important frames of their day. It is crucial for us to understand feminist theory not as a weird planet at the edge of the solar system, but as part of the cross-currents of culture of its day.

The aims of the course are to help you:

- develop an understanding of some of the major historical traditions of feminist theory and their relationship to broader trends in social theory;

- become familiar with some of the major feminist theorists, understand what difference they made, and be able to compare and contrast their contributions;
- gain skills of reading and understanding social theory from different schools of thought;
- gain skills of engaging in critical but constructive discussion and debate across difference of opinion and understanding;
- understand the implications for action and solution of theoretical writing in different historical periods;
- understand the relationship between social theory and the historical conditions in which it was produced;
- grow an appreciation for the duration and depth of intellectual efforts women, and sometimes men, have brought to bear in the project of understanding women as full human beings;
- become more modest about the wonders of our own generation in relation to our predecessors; and
- become more capable of creating useful, intelligent, satisfying theory.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Preparation, Attendance and Participation: All students are expected to attend all classes and come to class prepared, which means completing any assigned readings, activities, or other assignments. Because this course is focused on understanding the texts we are reading, students must read the texts carefully in advance of class rather than just “get through them.”

Most of most class periods will be devoted to discussion, and all students are expected to remain engaged and participate in the full length of all class meetings – this means no use of the web or social media during class time that is unrelated to the current discussion. Not even under the table in your lap.

Each week I will spend the final 30-45 minutes of the class introducing and framing the following week’s work, so we will jump right into discussion at the beginning of class.

See additional requirements for graduate students, below.

PO/WGS 594 Blog: Every student is required to take part in a class-wide blog posted on the course website and available (only) to all participants in the course. *All students should submit at least one significant entry each week* (you can submit more). You may meet the minimum requirement either with a new topic or response to someone else. The entries should be thoughtful, well written (regular English, not twitter English or emoticons), and should address important issues, questions, or observations that either (a) arise from the discussion in the previous class or (b) arise from the current week’s reading. During the course of the semester, at least six of your blog entries must concern the current week’s readings.

We will start a new blog each week; the blog week runs from Monday at noon to Monday morning at 11:59 a.m. That is, it is due by noon the day before class.

Blog discussion should be lively and even contentious, but it must be civil, intelligent, and informed. This blog is meant to advance all of our knowledge about the history of feminist theory. If you are unsure about whether an entry you plan to write is acceptable for the blog, or if you want to write things you would prefer not to share with the whole group, you may use the journal format to write privately to Professor Sapiro, but you must participate in the collective blog as specified.

Your blog participation will be graded through crowd-sourced assessment, and you will be required to participate in the collective assessment process.

Final Paper: Every student will hand in a final 20-page final paper on a topic of your choice relevant to this course no later than **Friday, December 13 at noon**. You must submit a brief proposal for that paper no later than **Friday, November 8 at 6pm**. You would be very wise to consult with me before you construct your proposal. You can do this in person or electronically.

Your ***paper proposal*** is due no later than **Friday, November 8 at 6pm**. Feel free to submit it as soon as you can -- that will give you more time to work on the paper. You can give me a draft in advance, but not at the last minute. Your proposal should be brief -- no more than the equivalent of one page, 12-point font. It should include

- Tentative title of the paper
- A one-paragraph description of the main question(s) or problem(s) your paper will address
- A brief description of the major method(s) and types of sources you will use for your investigation
- A brief statement about why this topic is worth pursuing
- A list of any questions or problems for which you would like some help or advice

To submit your paper proposal: Your paper should be composed in **Word** format with the document title, "YOURLASTNAME Paper Proposal" and submitted through the course website.

You have wide scope for the topic of your paper. Some examples:

- Pick one of the authors we have studied and pursue them in more in depth than we could cover in this course, including writings we did not discuss.
- Pick another feminist theorist we did not study in the course and identify a good question or theme to pursue in a reading of that theorist.
- Choose a question, topic or concept of interest and compare, contrast, or integrate the work of multiple theorists on that topic.
- Analyze and discuss select autobiographies as feminist theory.
- The themes and concepts you might choose are wide open: gender, sexuality, femininity/masculinity, rights, obligations, family, work, feminism, intersectionality, violence, war, creativity, leadership, and so many more!

The completed paper should be about 20 pp. in length and use proper research paper form, including complete and accurate bibliography and foot/endnotes. (I don't care which form you use as long as it is a standard one and you use it properly and consistently.) You may submit a draft for my consideration, but your draft must be submitted more than a week before your due date and you have to give me 2 days to get a chance to read your draft.

You may do a joint final project with another student in the course. The paper should be double the size and all co-authors will receive the same grade regardless of what each individual put into the project.

You may create a final project in a form other than a research paper – for example, a video or audio documentary, but only if you have real expertise in the alternative form and it truly is appropriate for the task. Please seek permission in order to take this option.

To submit your final paper: Your paper should be composed in **Word** format with the document title, "YOURLASTNAME Final Paper" and submitted to the course website.

Final Examination: You will have a final examination covering all course material during the regular examination period.

Added Requirements for Graduate Students

Each graduate student will consult with me early in the course to make sure that the course is tailored to the needs of your program. The expectations for reading – and critical reading – will be higher than for the undergraduates. Where undergraduates are asked to read portions of books, graduate students will read the whole book. Further, the expectations for critical analysis will be higher for graduate students.

Graduate students are required to discuss with me their ideas for their proposal before and after submitting the proposal. The expectations for the quality of the final paper in terms of the review of relevant literature, the quality of analysis, and possible original contributions to the literature are higher for graduate students.

GRADING

The weight of each element in the final grade:

- Final Paper (including 5% for the Final Paper Proposal): 30%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Blog Participation: 20%
- Final Examination: 30%

If you believe that the assessment I made of a particular piece of work -- for example, the answer to an exam question, or a comment on your paper -- was a mistake, I may reassess the entire piece of work, which means the grade could go up, down, or stay the same. But I do grade very carefully.

Please note that your work will not be assessed by a machine. I reserve the right to use my discretion in assessing the quality of your work and achievements in the course.

EXPECTATIONS

Your work should be submitted on time. Plan now to make sure this happens without panic. If you find that you will submit an assignment late, you must submit it with a written excuse. I will grade both the assignment and the excuse, and the value of the assignment can be weighted down (only) by the quality of the excuse. "I was really busy" or "I had a lot of work" is not a good excuse. It is true of everyone else in class.

Civility is an essential ingredient in the process of learning in an academic environment, especially when the subject is as provocative, contentious, and occasionally uncomfortable as the topics that arise in feminist theory. Civility requires respect but *not* either being silent or silencing others. Conversations about difficult topics are not always very comfortable, nor should they be, but they must be respectful. Name calling, trolling, being quick to take offense, assuming one has “natural” knowledge that is better than other people’s knowledge are all toxic to civility.

You can use laptops or tablets in class for purposes of taking notes or referring to reading or bringing other material to bear on the class discussion. Your phones should be fully off and out of sight. Using your electronic equipment to do anything but work relevant to the class is simply rude to anyone who is talking and working on the subject at hand. Rude. Don’t be rude. If people abuse the privilege of using electronics in class I may revoke the privilege for everyone.

Participation. There are no pure observers in the classroom; everyone should participate (at least none who will do well here); everyone should participate in a manner that will have a positive impact on the quality of

the class. For a rubric on how to evaluate your impact on class discussion, see the tab on the course website on *Evaluating Class Contributions*.

Academic Integrity. *By remaining in the course you are tacitly agreeing to follow standard principles of academic integrity in this course.* Academic dishonesty is a serious offense because it undermines the bonds of trust and honesty among members of the community and defrauds those who may eventually depend upon our knowledge and integrity. Such dishonesty consists of cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. Examples of academic dishonesty include using someone else's words or ideas without proper documentation; copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of indebtedness; borrowing another person's specific ideas without documenting their source; turning in a paper written by someone else, an essay "service," or from a web site. It also includes giving or selling your work to be used by someone else as their work. *Any assignment that is generated in whole or part through academic dishonesty will be failed with no "do-overs."* If you think you may not understand what constitutes academic integrity or the lack of it, consult with me in advance. [Wording provided largely by Jeffrey Henriques years ago.] For the university policy on academic conduct, see <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>. For a good guide to quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing and other issues of staying on the right side of academic integrity see https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html

Disabilities. Students have a right to reasonable accommodations to take account of certain physical or cognitive disabilities and allow them to pursue success in their education at BU. Students who believe they require such accommodations must go through the formal process of application in a timely way. For more information, see <http://www.bu.edu/disability/policies-procedures/academic-accommodations/beginning-academic-program/>.

Other Support Services. In this course we will handle subjects and issues that can touch sensitive and even painful issues for some people related to gender and sexuality. Consider in advance whether this course is appropriate for you. If you find that you need help dealing with personal repercussions of any issues raised in this course (or any other), the Dean of Students Office offers many resources here: <http://www.bu.edu/dos/resources> or you can go there or to Marsh Chapel to find good referrals and help.

READINGS

General Explanation: You will find the readings in 3 different forms: Books which you should purchase, readings that are on line, and readings that are attached as files to this course site.

This is a text-based course: We will be analyzing writings. Therefore it is important that you have the readings with you in class to review, discuss, and analyze. You can print out the articles or bring an electronic device (*not a phone*) on which to read them -- whatever you find easiest. But you will want to be able to mark up the texts or make notes on them, so you should choose a method that will allow you to do that.

We will read significant portions of these books. The cheapest way to get all of these them is through amazon.com (or, of course, on reserve at the library), so I have not ordered them through the local bookstore.

Alice Rossi, ed. 1974. *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. It doesn't matter what edition you buy.

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The WW Norton edition (1962) is available new and used at amazon.com as is the newer reprint (2010). Use the *Norton* edition so we have common pagination.

Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*, 1892. Reprinted by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

Alfreda M. Dunster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*.

Sojourner Truth and Nell Painter, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Penguin Classics).

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. NY: Vintage. Get the Vintage re-issue of the 1974 version, with the white cover.

Graduate students, philosophy majors, political theory specialists, etc. should read whole books in some cases rather than the excerpts in *The Feminist Papers*. This would include purchasing:

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Margaret Fuller, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*.

The other required readings are available on the course site on Blackboard.

OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT

I have walk-in office hours Wednesdays, 2-4 pm in my office. Please let me know if you need to talk to me privately; otherwise, everyone who shows up is welcome to join in. Students can often learn from each others' questions. If these hours do not work in your schedule, contact me to find another time. I want to meet with all students in the course individually, so please find excuses to come by.

I am nearly always available by email and I respond quickly, but be patient and considerate. I don't use my office phone, so even if you discover the number, don't call it. I don't check messages.

WEEK BY WEEK AGENDA AND ASSIGNMENTS

9/3: The Course and Its Project: An Introduction

Audre Lorde, "Poetry is not a luxury" (1977) and "The transformation of silence into language and action" (1978), both from *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Penny Weiss, "The politics of the canon: Gatekeepers and gate-crashers" (2009), Ch 1 in *Canon Fodder: Historical Women Political Thinkers*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.3-29.

"What is feminist theory?" A selection from Mary Hawkesworth and Lisa Disch, "Introduction: Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World, in Disch and Hawkesworth, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.1-15.

Susan Moller Okin, "Aristotle: Woman's place in a functionalist world," (1979), Ch 4 in *Women in Western Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.73-98.

9/10: Mary Wollstonecraft: Enlightenment Liberalism & Republicanism

Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in *The Feminist Papers*.

9/17: Margaret Fuller: Romantic Liberalism: Transcendentalism

Margaret Fuller, 1845. *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, in *The Feminist Papers*.

9/24: John Stuart Mill & Harriet Taylor: Liberalism Updated

Harriet Taylor, 1851. *Enfranchisement of Women*, excerpted in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers* pp.188-239.

John Stuart Mill (and Harriet Taylor), 1869. *The Subjection of Women*, excerpted in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 188-239.

10/1: Friedrich Engels: Socialism

Friedrich Engels, 1884. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. (Paper: <\$10, electronic free), Or excerpted in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 472-95.

Clara Zetkin, 1896. "Only in conjunction with the proletarian women will socialism be victorious," Speech at the Party Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Gotha, October 16th, 1896. Berlin, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1896/10/women.htm> .

Clara Zetkin, "Lenin on *the Women's Question*," from *My Memorandum Book*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1920/lenin/zetkin1.htm>

Alexandra Kollontai, 1921. "Sexual relations and the class struggle," <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1921/sex-class-struggle.htm>

10/8: Emma Goldman: Anarchism

Emma Goldman, 1906. "The tragedy of women's emancipation," in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 506-16.

Emma Goldman, 1910, "The white slave traffic," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/goldman/ME/whiteslave.html

Emma Goldman, "The traffic in women," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/aando/traffic.html

Emma Goldman, 1911, "Marriage and love," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/aando/marriageandlove.html

Emma Goldman, "Woman suffrage," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/aando/suffrage.html .

Emma Goldmn, "Jealousy: Causes and possible cure." http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/jealousy.html

Emma Goldman, 1908. "What I believe," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/whatibelieve.html

10/15: Substitute Monday; No Class

10/22: Religion as Feminist Theory: Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Sojourner Truth

Sarah Grimké and Angelina Grimké, 1836, 1837, various, in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, pp. 282-322

Sojourner Truth and Nell Painter, 1850. *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. "Introduction," "Narrative of Sojourner Truth."

10/29: Antoinette Brown Blackwell: Evolution and Character

Antoinette Brown Blackwell, 1875. *The Sexes throughout Nature*, excerpted in Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 356-77

11/5: Race, Violence, and Gender: Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, and Idea B. Wells-Barnett

Anna Julia Cooper, 1892. *A Voice from the South* (1892), reprinted Negro Universities Press, 1969, pp.3-5, 80-145.

Alfreda M. Dunster, ed. 1928. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, Ch. 2,6,8,9,14,16,25,27,30,39. Sojourner Truth, "Ar'n't I a woman?" in *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, pp.117-18.

Friday, 11/8 @6pm: Last date for submitting paper proposal

11/12: Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Modern Urban Society and the Release from Functionality

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1898, *Women and Economics*.

11/19: Sigmund Freud: Psychoanalysis and Social Structure

Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

Sigmund Freud, 1930. *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

Karen Horney. 1926. "The Flight from womanhood: The masculinity-complex in women as viewed by men and by women," in Horney, *Feminine Psychology*.

11/26: Simone de Beauvoir: Woman as Other (Existentialism)

Simone de Beauvoir, 1949. *The Second Sex* (portions)

12/3: Gender and Sexuality: Ever More Complicated

Gayle Rubin, 1975. "The traffic in women: Notes on the 'political economy' of sex." In R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, pp.157-210. (attached)

Adrienne Rich, 1980. "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence." *Signs* 5: 631-61.

Judith Butler, 1988, "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory," *Theater Journal* 40 (4): 519-31. (Attached)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 1997, "Women workers and capitalist scripts: Ideologies of domination, common interests, and the politics of solidarity." In M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. (NY: Routledge). (attached)

A Finn Enke, ed. 2012. *Transfeminist Perspectives in and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, excerpts.

12/10: Conclusion

Friday, December 13, noon: Final paper due.

Scheduled exam time: Final Examination