6AANB039 Gender and Philosophy

Syllabus – Academic year 2014/15

Basic information

Credits: 15

Module Tutor: Dr Sacha Golob (Convenor), Dr John William Devine, Dr Eleanor Knox, and Dr Raphael Woolf.

Office: Dr Sacha Golob: 705.

Consultation time: For general module issues please see Dr Sacha Golob at Mon 1000-1100 or Fri 1500-1600 in 705, Philosophy. For issues concerning a specific topic or lecture please check the relevant lecturer’s staff page for details of his or her office hours.

Semester: 1

Lecture time and venue: Thurs 1200-1300, Strand S-1.27

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

This module offers students the opportunity to think critically and analytically about gender. It is also an opportunity to consider the ways in which critical analysis of gender-related issues might contribute to philosophy as a discipline. In pursuing these aims, it will engage with a wide selection of philosophical debates relating to gender across a range of areas within the discipline.

Aims

- To offer the knowledge, skills and opportunity to think critically and analytically about gender.
- To examine how specific philosophical debates across multiple areas including Political Philosophy, the History of Philosophy, and Philosophy of Science, might be transformed or advanced by examining their relation to gender and gender issues.

Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment**: two x 1,500-word essays (check with seminar leaders re details)
  
  Deadline for first essay: Fri Oct 31st.
  
  Deadline for second essay: Fri Dec 12th.

- **Summative assessment**: two x 2,500-word essays (100%)
  
  Deadline for summative essays: Thurs May 14th at 1200 Noon.

NB Please note that for semester I only Study Abroad students, assessment requirements may vary.
Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

**Week One: Dr Devine <<Gender, the family, and justice>>**

The relationship between gender roles, the family, and justice.

Suggested reading:

**Week Two: Dr Devine <<Abortion>>**

Abortion: a feminist issue?

Suggested reading:

**Week Three: Dr Devine <<Marriage>>**

Marriage: for better or worse?

Suggested reading:

**Week Four: Dr Devine <<Gender and culture>>**

The politics of identity, difference, and recognition.

Suggested reading:

**Week Five: Dr Devine <<Prostitution>>**

Sex, consent, and the market

Suggested reading:
• Martha Nussbaum (1999) Sex and Social Justice (New York: Oxford University Press), chapter 11, "'Whether from Reason or Prejudice': Taking Money for Bodily Services"

**Week Six: Dr Golob << Gender, Foucault, and Critical Theory >>**

Examining two philosophical approaches which have provided the conceptual apparatus for many recent analyses of gender: Adorno's Critical Theory, and Foucault's genealogical method.

Suggested reading:
- Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, widely reprinted (e.g. in John Richardson and Brian Leiter eds.) (2001) *Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

**Week Seven: Dr Golob: << Gender and Pornography >>**

Examining one of the central political issues within modern feminism: the status of pornography. The focus in particular will be on the relationship between pornography, agency, and identity.

Suggested reading:

**Week Eight: Dr Knox <<Women in Science (and maths, and philosophy…)>>**

In many scientific disciplines (for example maths, physics and engineering), women are severely underrepresented. We’ll look at the possible causes of this phenomenon, including implicit bias, some of its consequences, and some possible responses.

(Nb. It goes without saying that women aren’t the only group underrepresented in academic disciplines. Several of the readings focus on race, rather than gender, and you’re welcome to answer the questions with a focus on e.g. race if you prefer.)

Suggested Reading:
- You should also have a go at the Harvard Implicit Bias tests, available here: [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html) - The tests for gender and career and gender and science are the most obviously relevant.

**Week Nine: Dr Knox <<Knowledge and Gender>>**

In a knowledge-gathering enterprise like science, does a lack of gender diversity simply mean that potential talent is going to waste, or are there more serious consequences? Feminist Standpoint Epistemology emphasises the role of the situated knower, claiming that some knowledge is only accessible to certain groups.

Suggested Reading:

**Week Ten: Dr Woolf <<Women in Plato>>**

Examining Plato’s characterisation of women.

Suggested reading:

- Plato, *Republic* V 449a-466d
Suggested Essay Questions

1. Is the family an obstacle to the pursuit of social justice?

2. What is the strongest argument in defence of abortion?

3. Should the state promote marriage?

4. Is feminism compatible with ‘respect for cultures’?

5. Is there a morally relevant difference between sex for free and sex for a fee?

6. Critically assess what, if anything, the concepts of ideology and/or genealogy can contribute to a philosophical understanding of gender.

7. “Pornography is gender hate speech.” Discuss.

8. What’s the best explanation for the underrepresentation of women in the sciences? What should we do about it?

9. Does evidence for implicit bias and/or stereotype threat justify affirmative action?

10. What version of standpoint epistemology can best be defended?

11. What are the epistemic consequences of a lack of gender diversity in the sciences?

12. Was Plato a feminist?
Suggested Additional Reading

General interest
*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (various entries)


Gender, the Family and Justice


Abortion


Marriage


Gender and Culture


Prostitution


**Gender, Foucault and Critical Theory**


Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (various editions), part III, chapter 3: Panopticism

Sandra Lee Bartky (1988) 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power’ in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds.) *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Northeastern University Press).


**Gender and Pornography**


**Women in Science (and maths, and philosophy...)**


### Knowledge and Gender


### Plato and Gender

