6AANB039 Gender and Philosophy

Syllabus – Academic year 2015/16

Basic information

*Credits*: 15

*Module Tutor*: Dr Eleanor Knox (Convenor), Dr Sarah Fine, Dr Sacha Golob, and Dr Raphael Woolf.

*Office*: Dr Eleanor Knox: 413.

*Consultation time*: For general module issues please see Dr Eleanor Knox at Mon 1600-1700 or Weds 1100-1200 in 413, 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*: Monday 1500-1600, Strand S-2.08

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 30th.
  Deadline for second essay: Fri Dec 11th.

- **Summative assessment**: two x 2,500-word essays (100%)
  Deadline for summative essays: May (exact date TBC).

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

**Week One: Dr Fine <<Gender, the family, and justice>>**
*The relationship between gender roles, the family, and justice.*

Required reading:

**Week Two: Dr Fine <<Abortion>>**
*Abortion: a feminist issue?*

Required reading:

**Week Three: Dr Fine <<Marriage>>**
*Marriage: for better or worse?*

Required reading:

**Week Four: Dr Fine <<Gender and culture>>**
The politics of identity, difference, and recognition.

Required reading:


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

*Sex, consent, and the market*

Required reading:


**Week Six: Dr Golob << Trans Issues >>**

*Examining philosophical responses to the political and conceptual issues raised by trans identities.*

Required reading:


**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.*

Required 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.)*

Required 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.*

**Required Reading:**


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

*Examining Plato's characterisation of women.*

**Required reading:**

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

1. “Gender roles are the main barrier to the achievement of sex equality.” Discuss.

2. What limits (if any) are there to the rights of women over their pregnant bodies?

3. Should marriage be abolished?

4. “Multiculturalism and feminism [are] allies engaged in related struggles for a more inclusive conception of justice” (Kymlicka). Do you agree?

5. Is there anything wrong with selling sex?

6. “Does a Black person who wants to be white suffer from the ‘disease’ of being a ‘transracial?’” (Raymond). Discuss. OR How useful, if at all, is the idea of being ‘trapped in the wrong body’ in thinking about trans issues?

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


Trans Issues


Butler, Judith, 1990, Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity, New York: Routledge


Gender and Pornography


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


**Knowledge and Gender**


**Plato and Gender**