

Feminist Theory

Preliminaries

1. Logistics I would like you to write six essays (around 1,800-2,000 words each) for me across the term. It is up to you in which weeks you write these essays. For each topic I have suggested an essay question. It is up to you whether you answer this question or come up with your own. In weeks when you do write an essay, I would appreciate it if you could email it to me at least a couple of hours in advance of our tutorial to give me a chance to read through it before we meet. In the two weeks in which you do not write an essay, you should still aim to do the reading for that week's topic. If for any reason (illness, a pileup of other commitments, etc.) writing an essay proves to be difficult in a week when an essay is due, do not worry: just email me and we can sort something out (e.g. writing the essay in week 9, or whatever works best). I am conscious that Oxford terms can be very demanding at the best of times, and your well-being is much more important than any given week's work.

2. Reading A majority of the texts are taken from the faculty reading list, links to which can thus be found on ORLO. I recommend reading the texts for each topic in roughly the order I have listed them. Aim to get through a majority (not necessarily all) of the texts each week.

3. Writing Rachel Fraser maintains three excellent short guides to different aspects of essay-writing on her website: "How to Write a Philosophy Essay", "What Not to Do" and "A Taxonomy of Finals Questions": <http://www.rachelelizabethfraser.com/teaching.html>. I strongly recommend reading these before writing your first essay.

Week 1: Standpoint Epistemology

QUESTION: Are women, as women, epistemically privileged?

Alison Wylie, "Why Standpoint Matters" in Robert Figueroa and Sandra G. Harding eds., *Science and other cultures: issues in philosophies of science and technology* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.26-48.

Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" in Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka eds., *Discovering Reality* (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983), pp.283-310.

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2000), Ch.11 "Black Feminist Epistemology".

Uma Narayan, "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist" in Sandra G. Harding eds., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.213-224.

Olúfémi O. Táíwò, "Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference" in *The Philosopher* Vol.108 no.4 (2021).

Nora Berenstain, "Epistemic Exploitation" in *Ergo* Vol.3 no.22 (2016), pp.569-590.

Week 2: Epistemic Injustice

QUESTION: What can be done to prevent epistemic injustices?

Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chs.1, 2, 4, and 7.

Kristie Dotson, "A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression" in *Frontiers* Vol.33 no.1 (2012), pp.24-47.

José Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice: Differential Epistemic Authority and the Social Imaginary" in *Social Epistemology* Vol.25 no.1 (2011), pp.15-35.

Katharine Jenkins, "Rape Myths and Domestic Abuse Myths as Hermeneutical Injustices" in *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol.34 no.2 (2017), pp.191-205.

Michael Doan, "Resisting Structural Epistemic Injustice" in *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* Vol.4 no.4 (2018).

Week 3: Oppression/Intersectionality

QUESTION: "Feminist thinking ought to begin from women's shared experiences of oppression." Discuss.

Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1983), Ch.1 "Oppression".

Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (1977), available at: <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour" in *Stanford Law Review* Vol.43 no.6 (1991), pp.1241-1299.

Naomi Zack, *Inclusive Feminism* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), Ch.1 "Beyond Intersectionality".

Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality" in *Feminist Review* Vol.89 no.1 (2008), pp.1-15.

Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (London: Penguin, 2019 [1981]).

Week 4: Sex and Sexuality

QUESTION: “No one can choose what they sexually desire. So feminists ought not to criticise people for what they sexually desire.” Is this a good argument?

Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987), Ch.7 “Occupation/Collaboration”.

Ellen Willis, *No More Nice Girls: Countercultural Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), Ch.1 “Lust Horizons: Is the Women’s Movement Pro-Sex?”.

Amia Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), Chs.3 and 4.

Robin Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes” in *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* Vol.2 no.3 (2016), pp.400-419.

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2000), Ch.6 “The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood”.

C. Jacob Hale, “Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex without Women or Men” in *Social Text* Vol.16 nos.3-4 (1997), pp.223-236.

Week 5: Sex Work

QUESTION: Legalise the selling of sex, criminalise the buying of sex: right in theory, wrong in practice?

Catharine MacKinnon, “Prostitution and Civil Rights” in *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* Vol.1 no.1 (1993), pp.13-32.

Juno Mac and Molly Smith, *Revolt Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Rights* (London: Verso, 2018).

Ann Cahill, “The Difference Sameness Makes: Objectification, Sex Work, and Queerness” in *Hypatia* Vol.29 no.4 (2014), pp.840-856.

Sonya Aragon, “Whores at the End of the World” in *n+1* (Spring 2020).

Sophia Giovannitti, *Working Girl: On Selling Art and Selling Sex* (London: Verso, 2023).

Week 6: Reproduction

QUESTION: Should women’s reproductive labour be treated differently from other forms of labour?

Elizabeth S. Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.19 no.1 (1990), pp.71-92.

Debra Satz, "Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.21 no.2 (1992), pp.107-131.

Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now* (London: Verso, 2018), Introduction and Ch.1.

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015 [1970]), Chs.1, 4, and 10.

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2000), Ch.8 "Black Women and Motherhood".

Jacqueline Rose, *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018).

Week 7: Queer/Feminism

QUESTION: "Feminism is the theory of gender oppression. To automatically assume that this makes it the theory of sexual oppression is to fail to distinguish between gender, on the one hand, and erotic desire, on the other." (GAYLE RUBIN) Discuss.

David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Ch.1 "The Queer Politics of Michel Foucault".

Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in Carole S. Vance ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.267-319.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (2nd ed., Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), "Introduction: Axiomatic".

Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" in *GLQ* Vol.3 no.4 (1997), pp.437-465.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (London: Penguin, 2019 [1984]), "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power".

Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer* (2nd ed., London: Zed, 2016), Chs.8 and 9.

Week 8: Trans/Feminism

QUESTION: What can feminism learn from the experiences of trans people?

Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto" (2001), available at <https://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf>.

Sandy Stone, "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" in *Camera Obscura* Vol.10 no.2 (1992), pp.150-176.

Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance" in *Signs* Vol.39 no.2 (2014), pp.383-406.

Andrea Long Chu, "On Liking Women" in *n+1* (Winter 2018).

Cameron Awkward-Rich, "Trans, Feminism: Or, Reading like a Depressed Transsexual" in *Signs* Vol.42 no.4 (2017), pp.819-834.

Noah Zazanis, "On Hating Men (And Becoming One Anyway): Transmasculinity, Feminism, and the Politics of Online" in *The New Inquiry* (December 2019).