

Philosophy 1107

Instructor: Thomas Meagher (thomas.meagher@uconn.edu)

University of Connecticut, Stamford, Room 215

Thursdays 6:30-9:00

Office Hours: Thursday, 1:15-3:15

This course is an introductory philosophical inquiry into gender. We will begin by examining the subject in terms of perhaps the most classic philosophical work on gender, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. We will then work through a variety of phenomenological treatments to test, question, and/or augment Beauvoir's work. These will begin first with phenomenological treatments of lived experience before moving on to raise genealogical questions of the relationship between gender, subordination, and modernity, before finally examining philosophical problems that emerge out of efforts to challenge domination.

The main purpose of this course is to encourage students to challenge the way they reason about the human world in which they live. As such, I implore you to read the assigned texts both critically and charitably. What this means is that, on the one hand, you should be actively asking, does this argument ring true? What kind of evidence would be needed to support this claim, and has the author presented that evidence? Yet on the other hand, you should also be asking, am I rejecting the author's argument out of prejudice? What do I believe that leads me to not take this argument seriously, and am I truly warranted in believing as such?

Assessment:

*First essay:* Your first essay will concern our readings from Simone de Beauvoir, Peter Caws, and (optionally) Iris Marion Young. You will assess Beauvoir's arguments in terms of your own lived experience. 1200-1800 words. Due: February 18<sup>th</sup>. **20% of grade.**

*Second essay:* Your second essay will be a phenomenological examination of any topic that arises in the readings from Beauvoir, Caws, Young, Martinez, and/or Ahmed, or of any topic of your choosing that you can adequately relate to one or more of these readings. 2000-4000 words. Due: March 24<sup>th</sup>. **30% of grade.**

*Take-home exam:* This exam will involve you responding to one or more essay prompts. Due: May 5<sup>th</sup>. **30% of grade.**

*Quizzes:* Three pop quizzes of variable formats. If participation is robust, these will be waived and you will receive a grade of 100% for each quiz not issued. **10% of grade.**

*Participation:* Students who comment, answer questions, or raise questions will receive an A if they do so 1.5 times per session on average, a B if they do so about once per session, or a C if they do so on average .5 times per session. Students with participation below this level will receive a D, or, if they do not speak more than three times over the course of the semester, an F. **10% of grade.**

Schedule and required readings (all available on HuskyCT):

January 21<sup>st</sup>: Introduction

January 28<sup>th</sup>: Biology and gender. Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, "Biological Data."

February 4<sup>th</sup>: Gender and human inquiry. Reading: Peter Caws, "Natural and Intentional Structures of Sexuality."

February 11<sup>th</sup>: Considering men and women existentially. Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, “Introduction.”

February 18<sup>th</sup>: **First essay due.** Gendered embodiment. Reading: Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality.”

February 25<sup>th</sup>: Communicative crossings. Reading: Jacqueline M. Martinez, *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience & Identity*, pp. ix-xiv, 6-19, 81-101.

March 3<sup>rd</sup>: Queer phenomenology. Reading: Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, chapter 2.

March 10<sup>th</sup>: The sexual contract. Reading: Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, chapter 3.

March 24<sup>th</sup>: **Second essay due.** Gender as colonial project. Reading: Maria Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System.”

March 31<sup>st</sup>: Phenomenology of gendered/colonized world(s). Reading: Lewis R. Gordon, “Sex, Race, and Matrices of Desire in an Antiblack World.”

April 7<sup>th</sup>: Teleological suspension of feminism? Reading: Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Un/silencing the ‘Demonic Ground’ of Caliban’s ‘Woman’”; Tommy Curry, “Michael Brown and the Need for A Genre Study of Black Male Death and Dying.”

April 14<sup>th</sup>: Preservation through transformation. Reading: Reva Siegel, “Why Equal Protection No Longer Protects: The Evolving Forms of Status-Enforcing State Action.”

April 21<sup>st</sup>: Liberation. Reading: He-Yin Zhen, “On the Question of Women’s Liberation,” “Economic Revolution and Women’s Revolution,” and “On Feminist Antimilitarism.”

April 28<sup>th</sup>: Concluding remarks and questions for further consideration. *No reading.*

**May 5<sup>th</sup>: Take-home final due.**