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PHL 351.01: Philosophy and Feminism

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PHILOSOPHY AND FEMINISM
PHL 351

Professor: Christopher J. Preston
E-mail: Christopher.Preston@umontana.edu
Class time: Tues, Thurs: 2.10 – 3.30 p.m.
Office hours: Tues, 3.30 – 5 p.m., Wed, noon – 2 p.m.

Classroom: LA 146
Office: LA 157

1. Course Introduction:

This course explores what is distinctive about feminist approaches to philosophical thinking. Our focus will be on work that has emerged since the early 1980's as a reaction to the way philosophy (and ethics more specifically) had been practiced in the western philosophical tradition since Plato. We will be looking primarily at a different *method* for approaching philosophical thinking. At its best, this method is more engaging, more true-to-life, and more practical for solving real world problems.

Before spring break we will learn about the feminist turn towards the concrete and the particular, towards the importance of relatedness, dependence, emotional experience, and narrative. After spring break, these notions will provide lenses through which to examine contemporary issues including international politics, environmentalism, and social justice. Students will have the opportunity to apply the feminist tools we encounter to a gender related issue of their choice.

2. Reading Material:

Lindemann, Hilde. *An Invitation to Feminist Ethics* (HL)(McGraw Hill: New York, 2006)(selections) (Available at the UM bookstore)

Materials on Moodle (*The materials on Moodle will form the bulk of your required reading this semester. In addition to required readings, I will be posting weblinks and other curricular material there. Please be sure you know how to utilize Moodle).

3. Reading Assignments (provisional):

Week 1 (Jan 28-30): Introductions and Reflections on Locatedness (Hooks "Feminist Scholarship," start HL 6-18, Talbot "About a Boy).

Week 2 (Feb 4, 6): Understanding feminist/feminine, sex/gender? (continue HL 6-18, Fausto-Sterling "Continuum," Foss "Gender Binaries").

*****Essay on location due (Feb 6th)*****

Week 3 (Feb 11-13): 'Malestream' Philosophy and Ethics (Canon selections, Kant Selections, HL 59-72, Tuana "Maleness" (start)).

Week 4 (Feb 18-20): Feminist Critique of the Tradition (Tuana "Maleness" (ctd.), Frye "Loving Eye," Peterson "Lived Experience").

Week 5 (Feb 25-27): Traits of Oppressive Thinking (HL 20-38, Frye "Birdcage," Plumwood "Centric Thinking"). *Visit by city councilwoman Caitlin Copple.*

Week 6 (Mar 4, 6): Forging a New Approach (HL 39-58, 72-84, Trebilcott "Stories," Hooks "Theory").

Week 7 (Mar 11-13): Care Ethics and Dependency (Rachels "Justice and Care," Noddings "Care," Kittay "Dependency").

Week 8 (Mar 18-20): Care Ethics under Scrutiny (HL 94-98, Tong "Critiquing Noddings," Halwani "Care and Virtue" (161-168)).

Week 9 (Mar 25-27): Feminist Virtue Ethics (Halwani "Care and Virtue" (168-186), Tessman "Feminist Virtue Theory").

*****Mid-term take-home exam due in class. March 27th*****

*****SPRING BREAK*****

Week 10 (Apr 8-10): International Considerations (Jagger "Global Responsibility," Lindemann "Globalization").

Week 11 (Apr 15-17): Knowing Others (Ortega "Loving Ignorance") and *Student Readings*.

Week 12 (Apr 22-24): Justice and the Public Sphere (Clement "Health," Held "Market Forces") and *Student Readings*.

Week 13 (April 29-May 1): Ecofeminism (Warren "Ecofeminist Overview," Gaard & Gruen "Global Environment") and *Student Readings*.

*****Deadline for submission of extra credit campus talks, Thursday, May 1st*****

Week 14 (May 6-8): Storied Ethics (Anon "Pigs and Stories," Warren "Power and Promise") and *Student Readings*.

***** Term paper deadline, noon, Tuesday May 13th *****

4. General Expectations:

I expect you to come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that day. This is a small class with a seminar feel. As we move through the reading, we will have the opportunity to informally discuss the topics and try to probe the reasons why they matter. Please be prepared to share your thoughts about issues and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention.

I also want you to have a stake in the topics we cover. For this reason, I will be asking you to bring at least one essay, news story, or discussion topic to our class after spring break. You should think about ways that your chosen issue can connect to some of the themes we will be covering. I'm hoping you will bring something about which you feel "this simply **must** be talked about in a feminism class." We will all benefit from seeing what is important to you.

I expect everyone to contribute **positively** to a community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. You are expected to attend every class, to not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to stay for the duration of each class period. Use of smart phones or other web-enabled devices is prohibited during class time. We all need to be focused on reading and discussion. I also expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course.

5. Course Requirements:

a) Attendance and participation (15 points). Attendance and participation are required in this class. I do not plan to formally take attendance but the class is small enough that I can see if someone is not there. I will be keeping an eye on participation. Even if you tend to be quiet in class, be ready to speak up when you can.

b) Essay on Location (10 points). On Thursday, February 6th you will be expected to turn in a three-page (typed, double-spaced) biographical essay detailing the various positions you occupy in "the social matrix of power." This essay is designed to cause you to reflect on the ways that your locatedness privileges or disempowers you in various ways.

c) Extra Curricular Event (5 points). Throughout the semester, there are numerous talks and events on campus and in the wider community that touch on issues in feminist ethics. You are required to attend one of these events and submit a brief write-up. To get these points, you are required to turn in a two-page paper on the **content** and **quality** of the talk. You must also include **some analysis** of the talk that touches feminist philosophy.

d) Midterm Exam (30 points). In order to ensure that you are reading the course materials closely, there will be a take-home mid-term examination on the reading and lecture. At the end of each week, I will put up a document on Moodle reminding you of the topics we have discussed during the week. These topics will form the basis of the

mid-term. The actual exam questions will be handed out 10 days before the mid-term is due.

d) Student Readings (10 points). From weeks 11-14, each participant in the course will have the opportunity to assign a piece of reading or a news topic that we will all discuss. Readings should be submitted to me on or before the previous class period so that I can post them on Moodle or make copies for the class. Ideally, this reading will connect to your term paper. As part of facilitating a discussion of your chosen topic, you should prepare at least 5 questions prompted by your reading. At the end of class, you should turn in a one page outline of what might become your term paper.

e) Term Paper (30 points). Students should complete an 8-10 page term paper on a practical feminist issue of your choice. You should adopt a position on the issue and support the position with some feminist theory we have covered. You should include in your paper a description of how this feminist approach provides a distinctive and helpful lens through which to view the issue. Term papers are due by noon on Tuesday, May 13th as an attachment to an e-mail.

Extra Credit:

i) Campus talk (4 points). Up to 4 extra credit points are available if you attend additional extra-curricular talks or events that have a connection to feminist issues and write them up according to the criteria above (2 points per talk).

ii) Office visit (2 points). It is almost always helpful to attend an office hour or two. You will get one extra credit point (up to a maximum of 2) for any office visits you make to discuss topics from our class. Remember, I am paid to help you think through our subject! Feel free to stop by during an office hour (or make an appointment) to discuss the material in the class. Use e-mail to keep in touch.

6. Additional remarks:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. Please let me know as soon as possible about any assistance I might be able to offer. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. All of us need to put effort and enthusiasm into engaging with the material. Please do your part to make our time together as productive and enjoyable as possible. I guarantee you that I will be doing the same.