

Feminist Political Theory: From Early Modern to Post-Modern

Political Science 119
Fall 2014

Mondays and Wednesdays, 4-6
Haines A18

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Bunche Hall 4258
Office hours: Mondays, 12-2

Course description

This course will survey a selection of major works in feminist political theory from the early modern period to the present. As a discipline, political theory concerns itself with questions of authority, fairness, justice, and power (among others), yet historically, women's interests have been routinely ignored or subordinated to those of men. Feminist political theory challenges women's absence, or assumed subservience, in political life. It seeks to provide a philosophical foundation for the pursuit of "real world" goals and the improvement of women's lives - and, oftentimes, men's as well. In doing so, feminist theory's primary method has entailed critical engagement with the western canon of political philosophy. Nonetheless, feminism has always been motivated by a concern for inequality and injustices in everyday life.

Yet feminist political theory is not monolithic - there are many diverse and conflicting strands, based in disparate notions of what constitutes "the good life." Liberal feminism, conservative feminism, radical feminism, marxist feminism, women of color feminism, Chicana feminism, queer feminism, continental feminism, existentialist feminism: these varieties, and others, introduce different concerns into debates over the relationship between the public and the private; the variety of possible relationships between men and women; the complex interplay between sex, gender, and the body; the roles of class and race and how they interact with gender; to say nothing of what unifies and complicates the category of "woman."

Because feminism understands itself to be fundamentally liberatory (that is, concerned with increasing liberty, specifically of women), our readings will focus on the theme of freedom. Specifically, we will consider 1) what it means to be a free political actor, 2) whether freedom is the highest political good, 3), whether, and how, freedom is compatible with other values, such as equality and justice, and 4) how different forms of government and political structures contribute to, or detract from, attempts to increase freedom.

Reading schedule

All reading needs to be done before that day's lecture. Readings marked with an asterisk are either posted on, or linked to via, the course website.

Week 1: Introduction and background

Monday, October 6

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), chapter XIII ("Of the natural condition of mankind..."), chapter XIV ("Of the first and second natural laws, and of contracts"), chapter XV ("Of other Laws of Nature"), chapter XVII ("Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Common-Wealth"), chapter XIX ("Of the several Kinds of Common-Wealth..."), chapter XX ("Of dominion paternal and despotical"), and chapter XXI ("Of the Liberty of Subjects")*

Wednesday, October 8

John Locke, *Second Treatise* (1689), chapters 1-8

Week 2: Marriage, choice, and liberty

Monday, October 13

Mary Astell, *Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700)

1704 edition: 5-30 (using the PDF page numbers, not those on the manuscript)

Cambridge edition: 7-31

Wednesday, October 15

Astell, *Reflections Upon Marriage*, finish

1704 edition: 31-121

Cambridge edition: 32-80

Week 3: Freedom through education

Monday, October 20

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education* (1762), excerpt*

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), chapters 1-4

Wednesday, October 22

Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chapters 6-9, 13

Week 4: Rights-based theories of freedom

Monday, October 27

Harriet Taylor Mill, "The Enfranchisement of Women" (1851)*

J.S. Mill, "Speech Before the House of Commons," May 20, 1867*

Wednesday, October 29

John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869)

Week 5: American emancipation(s)

Monday, November 3

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Seneca Falls "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848)*

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851)*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1892), excerpts*

Optional: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Great Schism" (2011)*

Wednesday, November 5

Midterm exam in class

Week 6: Existentialist freedom from a feminist perspective

Monday, November 10

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), introduction*

Wednesday, November 12

de Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom" and "Personal Freedom and Others" in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947)

Week 7: Toward comprehensive theories of liberation

Monday, November 17

The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)*

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979), "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (1980) and "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" (1981) in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984)*

Wednesday, November 19

bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," "The Significance of Feminist Movement," "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Among Women," and "Rethinking the Nature of Work" in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984 and 2000)*

Week 8: Intersectionality and complex freedoms

Monday, November 24

Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-1299*

Wednesday, November 26 - class cancelled - Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 9: Queer theory's challenge to feminism

Monday, December 1

J. Jack Halberstam, "On Pronouns," blog post (2012)

<http://www.jackhalberstam.com/on-pronouns/>

Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (2012), preface, introduction, chapters 1 and 2

Wednesday, December 3

Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*, chapters 3-5

Week 10: Global feminisms and transnational freedom

Monday, December 8

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 333-358*

Antonia I. Castañeda, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics, and Decolonization of History," *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992): 501-533*

Wednesday, December 10

Amrita Basu, "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements," *Meridians* 1 (2000): 68-84*

Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs* 28 (2003): 499-535*

Exam week

Tuesday, December 16

Take-home final exam due by 12pm

The instructor reserves the right to alter any readings or written assignments throughout the quarter.

Required texts

These four books are available at Ackerman, though feel free to purchase them through your favorite bookstore; to borrow them from the library; or whatever's most convenient. They will be available for two-hour borrowing at the College Library. *You do need these specific editions*, though whether you have paper copies or digital is up to you. The remaining readings will be available through the course site.

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Citadel, 978-0806501604)
- J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon, 978-0807010976)
- John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Hackett, 978-0872200548)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford, 978-0199555468)
- *Optional but not in Ackerman*: Mary Astell, *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 978-0521428453). A PDF of our reading will be available online, but from a 1706 printing. If you'd prefer a modern edition, I suggest finding a used copy of the Cambridge edition (try bookfinder.com), as new copies, at \$40, are unnecessarily expensive.

Library reserves

Though I will provide some context during lectures, you may at times wish to fill in any remaining gaps in your historical knowledge. In addition to asking questions in class and during office hours, I encourage you to look at the texts on reserve at the College Library, which cover both feminist theory and women's history. If you are looking for something on a specific topic or period, just ask me!

- Amrita Basu, ed., *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*
- Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West, volume III: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*
- Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory, Fourth Edition: The Intellectual Tradition*
- Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West, volume IV: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*
- Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*
- Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*
- Arlene Saxonhouse, *Women in the History of Political Thought: Ancient Greece to Machiavelli*
- Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*
- Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*

Course requirements

- Reading quizzes (20%): Three or four unscheduled quizzes will be given via Moodle over the quarter.

- Midterm exam (35%)
- Final exam (45%)

There will be no make-up exams for the midterm and no extensions granted for the final exam, except in the case of an emergency. Please plan accordingly! Late exams will lose one-third of a letter grade (i.e., an A- becomes a B+) for every day that they are late, including weekends.

General grading rubric

- A (100-90): demonstrates careful and thorough reading of the text; answers all parts of the question(s); provides a clearly articulated thesis; outlines the way in which thesis will be explicated; defends and supports thesis in the body of the paper using textual evidence; considers counter-arguments, if appropriate; argues, does not summarize; structurally elegant; writing is clear and straightforward. Excellent work.
- B (89-80): demonstrates familiarity with the text, though may rely more on lecture and discussion than on own reading, or may demonstrate a cursory reading; provides a solid thesis but may not explain how it will be defended, support it thoroughly with textual references, or develop arguments as fully as they ought to; may make selective use of text to support claims; structurally, individual points may feel disconnected from one another. Writing is clear but with room for improvement. Good, but not excellent, work.
- C (79-70): a weak, if appropriate or topical, thesis that either does not require a strong defense or relate entirely to the original question(s); demonstrates minimal passing acquaintance with the material; evidence may be drawn primarily from lecture; substance of paper may tend toward summary of the text rather than critical engagement; does not attend to counter-arguments; individual paragraphs may be well-crafted but the paper overall lacks a sense of cohesion and attention to detail. Fair, but not good, work.
- D (69-60): does not provide a clear thesis; may not respond to the question(s); does not support claims with evidence; emphasizes opinion or summary over analysis; paper lacks structure; does not otherwise demonstrate mastery of the concepts presented and analyzed in class; lack of organization makes paper difficult to follow; neglect of grammar, style, and writing
- F (59-0): does not provide a thesis or respond to the question(s); may be purely opinion or summary of text(s); no attempt to convey an interpretation of the material; lacking structure, coherence; no attention paid to grammar, style, and writing

Practicing gender-neutral writing

Though academics have long defaulted to using “he” and masculine descriptors such as “mankind” in our writing, it is no longer considered good practice. Nor is using “she” exclusively the best alternative (though you may encounter it frequently.) Inclusive or gender neutral pronouns are preferred when generalizing (“him or her,” “they/their”, or any of the pronouns invented to address this issue, such as “hir/hirself”). When talking or writing about a specific person, use their preferred language (if it is known). On first reference to someone in writing, use their complete name and thereafter only their last name - refrain from referring to them by their first name. Lastly, be sure to tend to accents (Kimberlé Crenshaw, María Lugones) and capitalization (bell hooks).

Academic honesty

Integrity is essential to all of the work you do here at UCLA. I take academic honesty very seriously. *Anyone found cheating will automatically fail the related assignment(s). All issues of cheating and plagiarism will be documented and reported to the Dean of Students.* The best way to avoid any

trouble is simply to ask me any questions you have about what does and does not constitute plagiarism – it can seem like a very confusing subject, but we can get a handle on it rather easily. Please read the [UCLA Student Guide to Academic Integrity](#) as a primer.

Classroom decorum

It is to be expected that you will encounter a variety of arguments, opinions, and perspectives over the quarter, a number of which you may disagree with. Polite, reasoned disagreement is welcomed - even encouraged! - but please keep in mind the sensitive nature of some of the topics under discussion and maintain a respectful tone, particularly when addressing your colleagues.

The Office for Students with Disabilities

If you are registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), or are considering registering, and you wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. No accommodations will be granted for the course without notification from OSD. You can find out more about the OSD and the services they provide at their [website](#).