

# TOPICS IN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

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Judy Chicago, *Earth Birth*, 1983

## Course description and objectives

This is an upper division course on feminist philosophy, yet it does not require you to have any prior knowledge of feminist philosophy. We will start with some core readings which will provide the necessary background to understand the contemporary readings we will read in the rest of the course as well as the guest lectures that will be given on the current issues.

Feminist philosophy is a dynamic field. This dynamism results from its responsiveness to changing social and political conditions and the self-reflexive nature of feminist thought. This course aims to give you a synoptic view of this dynamism by exploring debates on the sex-gender distinction, structures of various types of injustices, and the relations between sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia.

In this course, your lived experience will inform your engagement with the body of philosophical work we will be covering. Aside from developing a foundation for assessing philosophical theories and arguments, one of the main objectives of this course is to provide an opportunity for you to (a) use the theoretical frameworks you are learning to analyze your own experiences and current events and (b) use your own experiences to reflect back on and assess the theories themselves. Among the ways of doing so, you will be keeping a personal journal, engaging in class discussions over zoom, contributing to a forum, and taking on a collaborative creative project.

Every week's lectures will be made available on Canvas each Monday at 1 pm. Although the content will be delivered asynchronously, I will hold synchronous Zoom meetings on Wednesdays from 1:30 pm to 2:00 pm to answer any questions you might have. You have the option of submitting your questions on Canvas at the latest at 9 am on Wednesdays and I will answer them during the meeting. Or you can just show up

and ask me your question(s) directly during the meetings. The discussions sessions will take place synchronously over Zoom.

Throughout the quarter, while learning about feminist philosophy, you will be progressively developing the following skill-set:

- ▶ Ability to read moderately difficult philosophical texts closely;
- ▶ Ability to ask good critical questions about a philosophical text;
- ▶ Ability to analyze your own experiences or an event by identifying and interpreting key issues on the basis of the philosophical theories we will study;
- ▶ Ability to analyze a philosophical theory on the basis of your personal experiences and daily events by identifying and explaining the import of these experiences and events, and assessing the degree to which the theory is sensitive to them;
- ▶ Ability to unpack complex philosophical positions and to construct step-by-step arguments in their defense, or to raise strong and charitable objections;
- ▶ Ability to represent and communicate complex ideas in short, succinct, accessible pieces of writing;
- ▶ Ability to be a feminist killjoy.

**All the Readings are available on Canvas.**

## Grade distribution

Reading quizzes	10%
Personal journal and Killjoy Survival Kit	10%
"This Week in Patriarchy" entries	20%
Attendance and active participation	15%
Essay (+Revisions)	20%+5%
2-stage peer-review	2+3%
Collaborative creative project	15%

## Expectations and evaluation

**Reading quizzes (RQs) (10% [1% each]):** Reading philosophical texts is a skill that you will be cultivating in this course. Assigned readings are not long but they demand attention. To offer some guidance, reading questions will be provided on Canvas on a weekly basis on Fridays. Every Monday, you will submit answers to multiple-choice, true-or-false and short-answer questions about the readings, prior to the posting of lectures on those readings. The first RQ that is due on October 5 is a practice one and you will receive full points for that as long as you submit it. After that, your answers will be graded on the basis of correctness.

**Personal journal (PJ) and Killjoy Survival Kit (10%):** You will be keeping a personal journal throughout the quarter to write



*All grading rubrics are available on Canvas.*

your reflections on what we do in this class (readings, lectures, discussions, assignments) and how they inform your own experiences and interpretation of current events, things that you encounter, see, or hear. Additionally, you can use this space to write down your notes on the readings. You are expected to make at least two journal entries every week, but you are encouraged to use this space as often as you like. Your grade will be based on how well you relate your entries to the issues discussed under the rubric of feminist philosophy and how often you make journal entries. This assignment aims to provide you the opportunity to try out some ideas without worrying about getting it right and to keep track of your ideas and analyses which you can later use to inform what you say in class discussions, in your essay, and in the creative project.

In the meantime, you are encouraged to make a list of things that you find empowering and good for your self-care as a feminist. Particularly, if you end up identifying as a feminist killjoy, preparing a killjoy survival kit comes highly recommended. If you decide to do so, make sure to submit your survival kit at the latest by December 17th. For reference, Sara Ahmed's killjoy survival kit will be accessible on Canvas.

**"This Week in Patriarchy" entries (TWiP) (20% [4% each]):** By contributing to "This Week in Patriarchy," you will be working on your skills of applying theory to practice and thinking with others critically. You are asked to make discussion posts on Canvas about stories on feminism and sexism that caught your attention during the week and critically analyze them with your classmates using the tools you are learning in this class. You will be divided into groups of 4-5 and every two weeks your group will discuss at least one piece of story you all deem noteworthy. Each member of the group is expected to post at least one story throughout the quarter (failure to do so will cost a reduction of 5% of your grade) but you are expected to make substantial comments that will carry the discussion further on each story your group decides to discuss. For reference, you can check Arwa Marvani's "The Week in Patriarchy" column in the Guardian. Especially, I recommend reading her discussion of [the Jessica Krug case](#) and [conservative responses to WAP](#) to get an idea of what a good analysis entails.

**Attendance and active participation (15%):** This course is team-taught. One of its most important components is the weekly discussion sessions which will be led by a teaching assistant. Your attendance and active participation grade will be at your teaching assistant's discretion and she will inform you of the expectations.

**Essay (+Revisions) (20% (5%)) and 2-stage peer-review :** You will write a 2000-2500 word response on a question you select from a list of topics assigned by me. The point of this exercise is to apply the skills you will be cultivating throughout the course to one assignment where you have the opportunity not only to respond to philosophers' arguments but to construct your own. The essay topics will be posted on Canvas on November 11, and the first



Rebecca Belmore, *Fringe*, 2007

“As an Indigenous woman, my female body speaks for itself. Some people interpret the image of this reclining figure as a cadaver. However, to me it is a wound that is on the mend. It wasn’t self-inflicted, but nonetheless, it is bearable. She can sustain it. So it is a very simple scenario: she will get up and go on, but she will carry that mark with her. She will turn her back on the atrocities inflicted upon her body and find resilience in the future. The Indigenous female body is the politicized body, the historical body. It’s the body that doesn’t disappear” (Rebecca Belmore, in conversation with Kathleen Ritter, Vancouver Art Gallery, April 19, 2008).

topics will be posted on Canvas on November 11, and the first essay draft (**ED 1**), which will consist of an introductory paragraph and outline, is due on November 16 at 1 pm. A second full draft (**ED 2**) is due on November 27 at 1 pm. No late submissions of ED 1 and ED 2 will be accepted since otherwise your classmates will not have enough time to work on their peer-review of your essay draft.

To encourage collaboration, you are asked to peer-review the first and second draft of your classmates’ essay. **PR 1** is due on November 20 at 1 pm and **PR 2** is due on December 4 at 1 pm. I will provide a checklist to use to do the peer-review. Since most writers—whether they are neophytes or professionals—struggle with the same sorts of problems, you will find the peer review pertinent to your own work. Indeed, responding to your peers’ work will help you become a sharper critic of your own writing.

The final draft of your essay (**ED Final**) is due on December 16. The final draft will be partially evaluated on the basis of how well you responded to your classmate’s comments on your drafts and the improvements you made on them.

Essay drafts that are handed in late will be docked 5% per day. Essays will not be accepted more than 5 days after the deadline. So please make sure to hand the assignments in on time. Please make use of the office hours to discuss drafts of your essays with the members of the teaching team.

**Collaborative creative project (15%):** The goal of this project is for students to collaborate together in groups of 3-4 to form a creative critical response to representations of sexes, genders, and/or sexualities. The project has two parts - one **creative**, one **written**.

For the **creative** portion of this assignment, you will as a group select an artifact that represents sexes, genders, and/or sexualities in any capacity. You can select an artwork, a philosophical text, a religious parable, an advertising campaign, a news story, a television program, a YouTube video, a tweet, or any other relevant artifact. Your goal in the creative component of this project is to find some creative way to disrupt the story told about sexes, genders, and/or sexualities by the artifact you have chosen. For the **written** portion of the

assignment, you will submit a short report as a group, which will involve (a) an explanation of your choice of artifact, (b) a discussion of how you understand the representations of sexes, genders, and/or sexualities it supports or creates, and (c) an explanation of how your project disrupts conventional representations of sexes, genders, and/or sexualities that draws on the theoretical frameworks explored in class. This report should not be more than 2 pages in length and is due on December 14. Each group is also expected to make a class presentation of their project during the last week of classes. It is recommended to include the feedback you get from your classmates in your report. Get started on this project early! Don’t miss the info session on Oct 28, following the Q&A! Keep in mind that members of the teaching team are available to discuss your ideas during office hours.

### Grading scale

Percentage	Letter grade	Grade point value	Description
97-100	A+	4.00	
94-96	A	4.00	Excellent
90-93	A-	3.70	
87-89	B+	3.30	
84-86	B	3.00	Good
80-83	B-	2.70	
77-79	C+	2.30	
74-76	C	2.00	Adequate
70-73	C-	1.70	
67-69	D+	1.30	
64-66	D	1.00	Needs work
61-63	D-	0.70	
0-60	F	0.00	Unsatisfactory

# Schedule

WEEK	DATE(S)	TOPIC	READINGS	SYNCHRONOUS MEETINGS	WHAT'S DUE
1	Oct 1 - 4	Introduction		F - 1:20 - 2:25 pm	
2	Oct 5-11	Structures of Injustice	Marilyn Frye, "Oppression" (1983) Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" (1990)	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 1 - Oct 5</b> <b>PJ, TWiP1</b>
3	Oct 12 -18	Gender/ Race/Class	bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" (1984) Maria C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'" (1983) Audre Lorde, " <u>The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House</u> " (1979) Kimberlé Crenshaw, TED Talk: <u>The Urgency of Intersectionality</u> (2016) Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1988) Pat Parker, " <u>For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend,</u> " (1978) Gina Crosley-Corcoran, " <u>Explaining White Privilege to A Broke White Person</u> " (2017)	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 2 - Oct 12</b> <b>PJ, TWiP1</b>
4	Oct 19-25	Sex/Gender	Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough" (1993) and "The Five Sexes Revisited" (2000) Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex" (1982) Judith Butler, Selections from <i>Gender Trouble</i>	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 3 - Oct 19</b> <b>PJ, TWiP2</b>
<b>Colloquium talk: Talia Mae Bettcher, [Title TBA], Oct 22 (Th) 3:15 - 5:00 pm</b>					
5	Oct 26- Nov 1	Race/ Gender/ Science	Sally Haslanger. "Gender & Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" <b>Info Session on the Collaborative Creative Project, Oct 28 (W)</b> <b>Esther Rosario, talk on Gender-based Brain Science, Oct 30 (F)</b>	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm W 2:00 - 2:25 pm F 1:20 - 2:25 pm	<b>RQ 4 - Oct 26</b> <b>PJ, TWiP2</b>
6	Nov 2-8	Trans* Issues	Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto" (2001) Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trans Identities and First-Person Authority" (2009)	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 5 - Nov 2</b> <b>PJ, TWiP3</b>
7	Nov 9-15		Cressida Heyes "Changing Race, Changing Sex: The Ethics of Self-Transformation" (2009) Recommended movie: Flavio Alves, <i>The Garden Left Behind</i>	F 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 6 - Nov 9</b> <b>PJ, TWiP3</b>
Nov 11 (W) - Veterans Day Nov 11 (W) <b>Essay Topics</b> will be posted.					
8	Nov 16-22	Feminist perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic	Kimberlé Crenshaw, (Pt 5) <u>Under the Blacklight: The Intersectional Vulnerabilities that COVID Lays Bare</u> (2020) NPR: " <u>The Majority of Children Who Die From COVID-19 are Children of Color</u> " (2020) <b>Catherine Clune-Taylor, Talk on COVID-19 pandemic [Title TBA], Nov 20 (F)</b>	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 7 - Nov 16</b> <b>PJ, TWiP4</b> <b>ED 1 - Nov 16</b> <b>PR 1 - Nov 20</b>
9	Nov 23-29	Epistemic Injustice	Miranda Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice" (2007)	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 8 - Nov 23</b> <b>PJ, TWiP4</b> <b>ED 2 - Nov 27</b>
Nov 26-27 (Th - F) - Thanksgiving Holidays					
10	Nov 30- Dec 6		Jose Medina, "Imposed Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities" (2013) Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing" (2011)	W 1:30 - 2:00 pm	<b>RQ 9 - Nov 30</b> <b>PJ, TWiP5</b> <b>PR 2 - Dec 4</b>
11	Dec 7-11	Happiness	Sara Ahmed, "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness" <b>Collaborative Creative Project Presentations</b>	MWF 1:20 - 2:25 pm	<b>RQ 10 - Dec 7</b> <b>PJ, TWiP5</b> <b>CP Presentation</b>
Dec 14					<b>CP Report</b>
Dec 16					<b>ED Final</b>
Dec 17					<b>Killjoy Survival Kit</b>

## Policies & Resources

**Zoom:** The synchronous meetings will be held over Zoom. If you have the means, please make sure to keep your video on during meetings.

**Emails:** I do my best to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them. Only after that, please feel free to send me a reminder email.

**Content Advisory:** In this course we will be discussing difficult subjects. If any subject elicits trauma or panic in you, please do not hesitate to discuss the issue with me.

**Note on Accessibility:** I aim to create a learning environment that supports its diverse student body. This means that I am committed to providing accessible materials and opportunities for different kinds of engagement. If you experience a barrier to your participation, please bring this to my attention and I will gladly work with you to ensure accessibility. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me by email, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact the DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).

**Note on Community:** Indicators of successful participation include the ability to think theoretically and express theoretical ideas in an accessible way but also openness to diverse perspectives and engaging in thoughtful conversation and sometimes respectful criticism, and quite possibly self-criticism. I try hard to make sure the classroom is a positive environment for students of all genders / sexualities and cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and this effort cannot be successful without the good faith, compassion, and generosity of all participants.

**Note on Academic Honesty:** To use others' ideas either directly or by paraphrasing them without giving proper references constitutes plagiarism. To copy text or ideas from your own previously or concurrently submitted coursework, without providing references also constitutes a case of plagiarism. I have a very strict plagiarism policy. I report each instance without any exceptions to the Academic Tribunal in order to maintain fairness to each student. If you are under stress and not sure what to write or how to write it, come to me directly or consult other resources within the university, such as the writing center or other centers that can provide the help you need to deal with the issues that are preventing you from performing your best. The best way to avoid last minute panic is not to leave things to the last minute but be prepared. If you explain to me what you are going through, I will do my best to help you. Personal problems, the difficulty of the material or the course in general are never excuses for plagiarism. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please feel free to talk to me.

For additional information on plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and how to avoid it, here are some additional resources:

- ▶ The [UCSC policy](#) on Academic Dishonesty
- ▶ The UCSC library resources on [source citation](#), [tutorials](#) on how to avoid plagiarism, [checklists](#) for ensuring that you have properly cited your sources

**Title IX and CARE:** UC Santa Cruz is committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under Title IX. If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, know that you are not alone. The Title IX Office, the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) office, and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) are all resources that you can rely on for support.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.

Confidential resources are available through CARE. Confidentiality means CARE advocates will not share any information with Title IX, the police, parents, or anyone else without explicit permission. CARE advocates are trained to support you in understanding your rights and options, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can contact **CARE** at (831) 502-2273 or [care@ucsc.edu](mailto:care@ucsc.edu).

### **Student Success and Engagement Hub**

The Division of Student Success provides campus-wide coordination and leadership for student success programs and activities across departments, divisions, the colleges, and administrative units.

### **Tutoring and Learning Support**

At Learning Support Services (LSS), undergraduate students build a strong foundation for success and cultivate a sense of belonging in our Community of Learners. LSS partners with faculty and staff to advance educational equity by designing inclusive learning environments in Modified Supplemental Instruction, Small Group Tutoring, and Writing Support. When students fully engage in our programs, they gain transformative experiences that empower them at the university and beyond.

### **Slug Support Program**

College can be a challenging time for students and during times of stress it is not always easy to find the help you need. Slug Support can give help with everything from basic needs (housing, food, or financial insecurity) to getting the technology you need during remote instruction.

To get started with SLUG Support, please contact the **Dean of Students** Office at 831-459-4446 or you may send us an email at [deanofstudents@ucsc.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@ucsc.edu).

### **Slug Help/Technology**

The ITS Support Center is your single point of contact for all issues, problems or questions related to technology services and computing at UC Santa Cruz. To get technological help, simply email [help@ucsc.edu](mailto:help@ucsc.edu).

**DISCLAIMER:** Information in this syllabus is subject to change and any changes will be announced on Canvas.