“Woman” and the Political (Fall 2015)

Feminist theorists have critiqued the canonical works of political theory as implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) premised on the exclusion of “woman” and the “feminine.” The “feminine” (private, domestic, passive) has been seen to be in opposition to the “masculine” political sphere (active, public, rational). In this course we will read works from the canon of political theory alongside feminist critiques. The question we will consider is: how does feminist critiques of the absence of “woman” and the “feminine” in discourses of the political affect our ideas of not only the private and public, but also those of citizenship, equality, freedom, the individual, and community?

Course Objectives/Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester:

- students will have gained an overall understanding of the major concepts within political thought as well as the various (sometimes contested) feminist critiques of these concepts

- students will have developed the analytic tools to critique the language and ideas of political philosophy from a feminist perspective(s).

Required Texts:


**Required Assignments:**

Students are required to write a two-page response paper to each week’s readings. These essays are due at the beginning of each class session. The aim of the papers is to allow students to develop their thoughts and reactions to the reading assignments in preparation for class discussion. The intention is also to give students the opportunity to improve their critical writing skills. As students will be continuously writing throughout the term, no final seminar paper will be due. As a seminar based largely on class discussion, active participation and attendance are imperative. More than one unexcused absences will adversely affect the final grade.

**Grading:**

Weekly Papers: 70% (the lowest two grades will be dropped)

Participation and Attendance: 30%

**Academic Integrity:**

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)”

**Electronic Devices:**

Laptops and Tablets are allowed for note taking. Cell phones should be turned off.
**Weekly Schedule**

**September 4:**

Introduction

**September 11: Feminist Interventions in the “Conversation” of Political Theory**


Publisher(s): Sage Publications, Inc.
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/191664

Publisher(s): Yale University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2930321

Publisher(s): The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/648513

Publisher(s): University of Illinois Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40545771

**Sept 18: Reading Plato (Ancient Political Philosophy)**


Plato. *Republic*. Book V (pp. 122-157)

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/191379
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/191435

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3809786


October 1: Modern Political Theory and Contract Theory (Locke); Internal Critique (Rousseau)

John Locke. Second Treatise on Government. Chaps I-IX, XV.

Rousseau. Discourse on Inequality (entire text)

October 8: Woman as Spectacle (Rousseau)?

Rousseau. Politics and the Arts: Letter to d’Alembert (entire)

October 15: Feminist Readings/Critiques of Rousseau

Publisher(s): The Johns Hopkins University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566327

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/191902

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035319

**October 23: Nietzsche’s (Ambivalent) Feminist Readers**


**October 31: Nietzsche’s Ambiguity**


**November 6: Feminist Readings of Arendt**


**November 13: Arendt and the (Gendered) Private/Public Divide**


**November 20: Psychoanalysis**

Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Freud. “Femininity”

**November 27: Thanksgiving**

**December 4: Rethinking the History of Sexuality contra Freud**

Foucault. *History of Sexuality, vol. I*

**December 11: Rethinking Sex and Gender**

Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. 1-97 and 194-203