“Woman” and the Political

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 feminist perspectives.

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 absence 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 6:**

Introduction

**September 13: (Some) Feminist Concepts and Interventions in the Discourse of the Political**

All of the following essays can be found in Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (2015) online through Bobst Library. The format allows you to convert individual chapters to a PDF and print if you wish.
Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth. “Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World” (Introduction).

Shatema Threadcraft. “Embodiment.”

Mary Beth Mills. “Gendered Divisions of Labor.”

Stacy Alamo. “Nature.”

Renee Heberle. “The Personal is Political.”

Linda Zerilli. “Politics.”

Mara Viveros Visoya. “Sex/Gender.”

**Sept 20: Reading Plato (Ancient Political Philosophy)**


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

Arlene Saxonhouse. “Eros and the Female in Greek Political Thought: An Interpretation of Plato's Symposium.” *Political Theory,* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Feb., 1984), pp. 5-27


**September 27: Modern Political Theory and Contract Theory (Locke); Internal Critique (Rousseau)**


Rousseau. *Discourse on Inequality* (entire text)

**October 4: Feminist Critique of Contract Theory.**


Charles Mills, “Racial Liberalism” (JSTOR).
Zenzele Isoke, “Race and Racialization” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*.

October 11: Woman as Spectacle (Rousseau)?


October 18: Feminist Readings/Critiques of Rousseau

Publisher(s): The Johns Hopkins University Press


**READ only up to page 96**


October 25: Nietzsche’s Ambiguity

Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Entire Text.

November 1: Nietzsche’s (Ambivalent) Feminist Readers


November 8: Arendt and the (Gendered) Private/Public Divide


November 15: Feminist Readings of Arendt


November 22: Psychoanalysis
Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Freud. “Femininity”


**November 29: Rethinking the History of Sexuality contra Freud**

Foucault. *History of Sexuality, vol. I*


Dean Spade and Craig Willse. “Norms and Normalization” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*.

**December 6: Rethinking Sex and Gender**
