

# Gender & Philosophy

Fall 2015 | Phil 222



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## BACKGROUND

This course will be conducted in association with Project Vox, an international, web-based, collaborative effort to bring neglected ideas and writings by women in the early modern period into colleges and universities worldwide. We currently have colleagues working on the project in six countries. Students may be able to contribute to the content on Vox through their work in this course.

## TEXTS

1. Émilie Du Châtelet, *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, ed. by Judith Zinsser, 2. University of Chicago Press
3. Roger Ariew (editor), *Correspondence/Leibniz & Clarke*, Hackett Press
4. Recommended: Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press
5. All other readings will be posted online in advance.

## REQUIREMENTS

Students must attend, and participate in, each class. Since this is a seminar, participation is important. Please note that participation in our discussion of research proposals is especially important; students will provide and receive important feedback on that day worth 10% of their grades.

Two short essays on assigned topics = 20% each

Each student will conduct research on one philosopher working between 1600–1800 who has been excluded from the canon. Research papers will involve both archival and library research and targeted research online.

An outline of the research paper = 10%

The research paper = 40%

## PART ONE: GENDER, THE CANON, AND ARCHIVES

- Lecture 1            Introduction: gender and the canon  
Focus:  
1. Learning to use the archives  
2. Learning to be savvy about online sources  
Archive: *Foundations of Physics*
- Lecture 2            Where did the canon come from?  
Reading: 1. Eileen O’Neill, “Disappearing Ink.”
- Lecture 3            Londa Schiebinger, “The exclusion of women and the structure  
of knowledge (last chapter of *The Mind Has No Sex?*)  
Archive: *La Mettrie*
- Lecture 4            Canonical background for all projects, part I  
Readings:  
1. Descartes, *Meditations*, 1<sup>st</sup> meditation  
Optional reading: 2. Jacqueline Broad, introduction to *Women  
Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (on Cartesianism)
- Lecture 5            Canonical background for all projects, part II  
Readings:  
1. Descartes, *Meditations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> meditation  
Optional reading: 2. Lisa Shapiro, “Princess Elisabeth and  
Descartes” (from *Feminism and the history of philosophy*)

## PART TWO: CASE STUDY – MADAME DU CHÂTELET

- Lecture 6            Who was Madame Du Châtelet?  
Readings:  
1. *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, editor’s  
introduction; preface to the Mandeville translation.  
2. Erica Harth, selection from *Cartesian Women* on Châtelet  
Archive: *Foundations of Physics*; Algarotti text  
Due: first short essay

- Lecture 7            Historical background: What was the Enlightenment?  
Readings:  
1. Darnton, “Philosophers trim the tree of knowledge.”  
2. D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia*,  
selections  
3. J.B. Shank, “Science” in *Camb. Comp. to the French  
Enlightenment*  
4. Dorinda Outram, “Enlightenment thinking about gender.”  
Archive: Diderot & D’Alembert’s *Encyclopedia*; Algarotti text
- Lecture 8            Discussion of research techniques in archives and online  
Focus: Intensive study of Project Vox materials to learn  
archival and online research techniques
- Lecture 9            Break / make-up class
- Lecture 10           Philosophical background: Leibniz & Clarke  
Readings:  
1. Sarah Hutton, “Between Newton & Leibniz: Emilie du  
Châtelet and Samuel Clarke.”  
2. Ariew, editor, *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*  
Archive: Des Maizeaux  
Due: second short essay
- Lecture 11           Madame Du Châtelet’s Philosophy, Part I  
Readings:  
1. *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, 105-150  
Archive: *Foundations of Physics*
- Lecture 12           Madame Du Châtelet’s Philosophy, Part II  
Readings:  
1. *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, 150-201  
Archive: *Foundations of Physics*  
Due: Brief outline of research proposals
- Lecture 13           The afterlife of Madame Du Châtelet’s Philosophy  
Readings:  
1. Review D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, selections  
2. Voltaire et al., excerpts  
Archive: compare *Encyclopedia* & *Foundations of Physics*

**PART THREE: RESEARCH TECHNIQUES FOR NON-CANONICAL FIGURES**

- Lecture 14      Review research techniques & discuss research proposals  
Due: Discuss all research proposals in class
- Lecture 15      Reconsidering the canon in light of new research  
Readings:  
1. Mary Ellen Waithe, “From cannon fodder to canon formation,”  
2. Joan Scott, “Gender: a useful category of historical analysis”
- Lecture 16      Last class: Wrap-up & final review of research projects
- Lecture 17      ALL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE