

PHM 4125: Philosophy of Gender and Race

Céline Leboeuf — Fall 2020

Information

- Course Number: PHM 4125-U01
- Location: Online via Zoom (Links are in the Zoom section of our course website.)
- Time/Days: Tu/Th 11:00-12:15
- Instructor: Professor Céline Leboeuf
- Email: cleboeuf@fiu.edu
- Office Hours: T/W/Th 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Description

Gender and race are social categories that shape our lives on a daily basis. This course will offer an introduction to metaphysical and ethical issues pertaining to gender and race. It will address such topics as: definitions of gender and race (including the sex/gender and color/race distinctions); differences between the structures of gender and race; definitions of racism and sexism; intersectionality; and the claims of theories of social justice which aim to combat racism and sexism. We will study the classical descriptions of gendered and raced experience found in the works of W.E.B. du Bois, Simone de Beauvoir, and Frantz Fanon, as well as the views of contemporary philosophers such as George Yancy, Linda Martín Alcoff, Sally Haslanger, and Martha Nussbaum.

Course Promises

This course makes a set of promises to you (assuming you fulfill the expectations below). By the end of the semester, you should be able:

1. **To understand core concepts in the philosophy of gender and race.** You will develop a thorough understanding of philosophical concepts relating to the study of gender and race.
2. **To read arguments:** you will learn how to read philosophical texts.
3. **To write and speak clearly:** you will be able to express your understanding of philosophical texts clearly and accurately, both orally and in writing.
4. **To engage arguments critically:** you will be able to engage philosophical texts critically, analyzing them for strength and weaknesses, presenting objections, as well as responses to those objections. This activity should develop the rigorous critical thinking and writing skills central to philosophy, as well as afford you the opportunity for original and creative thinking.
5. **To analyze and evaluate contemporary discussions of these topics in mainstream media:** you will learn to engage with mainstream media through in-class discussions of articles concerning contemporary social trends.
6. **Learn to write a research paper:** students will learn to locate, analyze, and evaluate sources that comment on an assigned text in order to deepen their understanding and evaluation of that text.

Course Expectations

This course will only fulfill these promises if you promise the following in return:

1. **To attend class.** Philosophy is largely concerned with dialogue — one person presents a view to others, who respond with questions or objections, after which the first person replies, and so on. Progress is made through these exchanges. Such exchanges occur in class. Thus, in order to be able to learn how to practice philosophy well, you must attend the class! **Students may miss three meetings without penalty. I need no documentation or explanation for these first three absences. For each class missed beyond three, however, I will lower the student's participation grade by 10 points.**
2. **To read the assigned materials.** The philosophical texts we read will provide us with the common ground upon which we will base our conversations. Without that common ground, our conversations will lose some of their richness. We will have in-class writing exercises to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading, and to help stimulate class discussion.
3. **To be attentive and participate in class.** Participation does not simply mean speaking aloud in class, although that is essential. You should participate by actively following the discussion, and by contributing to our semester-long conversation through the insights you present in your papers and projects.
4. **To complete the required assignments in a timely fashion.** The assignments provide you with both the informal and formal opportunities to articulate your responses to the issues we'll be discussing. You will get the most out of the course if you turn in your work on time. **Extensions require one full day's advance approval from me. Late papers will be marked down 10 points every 24 hours that they are late.**

Texts

All readings for this course are provided as PDFs via hyperlinks under the "Modules" tab on Canvas.

Evaluation

- Expository Paper (2-3 pages): 150 points
- Argumentative Essay (4-6 pages) : 250 points
- Research Paper (6-10 pages): 300 points
- Participation (based on in-class participation and written exercises): 150 points
- Discussion Board Participation: 150 points

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

A: 950-1000 points

A-: 900-949 points

B+: 870-899 points

B: 830-869 points

B-: 800-829 points

C+: 770-799 points

C: 700-769 points

D: 600-699 points

F: 599 points or lower

For the expository essay, you will be asked to reconstruct and explain an argument from one of our authors. Doing so will provide students practice toward Goals 1-3, above. For the argumentative essay, you must reconstruct and explain one of our arguments, consider objections to the view, and then defend the view from the objections. Doing so will provide students practice toward Goals 1-4. The research paper will provide you further practice toward Goals 1-4, but also toward Goal 6. Finally, in-class discussions and written exercises, as well as the discussion board, will help give you further practice towards Goals 1-5. Grading rubrics for the papers, in-class participation, and the discussion board are available on Canvas.

Further Policies and Student Responsibilities

- **Civil behavior is required in class.** Those who fail to meet a reasonable standard of behavior will be asked to leave.
- **Most problems can be avoided by contacting me as soon as possible,** preferably before any deadlines, to alert me to your difficulty. Please feel free to contact me via email (cleboeuf@fiu.edu), or to come by my office, whenever you have questions, comments, or concerns.
- **FIU seeks to provide equal access** to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Disability Resource Center (DRC), Graham Center (GC) 190. DRC will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements and accommodations.
- **Finally, I would also like to remind you about FIU's Code of Academic Integrity,** as well as the definition of plagiarism. Please consult: <http://integrity.fiu.edu/> and <http://integrity.fiu.edu/plagiarism.html> .

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment Due
Tu 8/25	What is the philosophy of gender and race? Personal introductions. Syllabus overview.
	UNIT ONE: WHAT ARE GENDER AND RACE?
Th 8/27	What is a woman? Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , "Introduction"
Tu 9/1	What are sex and gender? Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's <i>Second Sex</i> "
Th 9/3	What if gender were a performance? Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" Judith Butler, "Your behavior creates your gender," Interview http://bigthink.com/videos/your-behavior-creates-your-gender
Tu 9/8	What is sex exactly? What if there were more than two sexes? Anne Fausto-Sterling, selections from <i>Sexing the Body</i> Expository Essay Assigned
Th 9/10	What is race? Sally Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race"
Tu 9/15	What are gender and race? Social Constructionism. Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"
Th 9/17	What are gender and race? Social Constructionism. Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" (CONTINUED)
Tu 9/22	What is the relationship between gender and gender identity? Katherine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of <i>Woman</i> "
	UNIT TWO: LIVED EXPERIENCE
Th 9/24	What is it like for trans women to experience stereotype threat? Rachel McKinnon, "Stereotype Threat and Attributional Ambiguity for Trans Women" Expository Essay Due
Tu 9/29	What is it like to experience anti-Black racism? (1) Frantz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> , "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" (pp. 89-98) Ralph Ellison, selection from <i>Invisible Man</i> W.E.B. DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , Chapter 1 http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment Due
Th 10/1	What is it like to experience anti-Black racism? (2) George Yancy, “Elevators, social spaces and racism: A philosophical analysis”
Tu 10/6	What is it like to be perceived as racially ambiguous? Adrian Piper, “Passing for White, Passing for Black”
Th 10/8	What is it like to inhabit two racial or cultural worlds? María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception”
Tu 10/13	Can femininity be alienating? Sandra Bartky, “Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation” Argumentative Essay Assigned
Th 10/15	How can we resist alienating standards of beauty? Céline Leboeuf, “Anatomy of the Thigh Gap”
	UNIT THREE: WHAT ARE GENDER- AND RACE-BASED OPPRESSIONS?
Tu 10/20	What is oppression? What is sexism? Marilyn Frye, <i>Politics of Reality</i> , “Oppression”
Th 10/22	What is oppression? What forms does it take? Iris Young, <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> , “Five Faces of Oppression”
Tu 10/27	What is epistemic oppression? Podcast with Kristie Dotson on epistemic oppression: https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/elucidations/2017/01/14/episode-92-kristie-dotson-discusses-epistemic-oppression/
Th 10/29	What is objectification? Martha Nussbaum, “Objectification” Argumentative Essay Due
Tu 11/3	What is self-objectification? Is it problematic? Nancy Bauer, “Simone de Beauvoir on the Allure of Self-Objectification”
Th 11/5	What is racism? Jorge L. Garcia, “The Heart of Racism” (pp. 1-29) Research Paper Assigned
Tu 11/10	What is intersectionality? (1) Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (Sections I&II) (pp. 1241-1282)

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment Due
Th 11/12	What is intersectionality? (2) Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" (Section III) (pp. 1282-1299) Jane Coaston, "The Intersectionality Wars" https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination
Tu 11/17	Why does intersectionality matter to feminism? Anna Carastathis, "The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory" Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
	UNIT FOUR: HOW ARE WE TO RESPOND TO GENDER- AND RACE-BASED INJUSTICES?
Th 11/19	If we are unaware of our implicit biases, can we transform them to be more egalitarian? Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias"
Tu 11/24	How can we combat sexism and respect cultural differences? Martha Nussbaum, <i>Sex and Social Justice</i> , "Women and Cultural Universals"
Th 11/26	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Tu 12/1	Can anyone speak on behalf of the oppressed? Linda Martín Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"
Th 12/3	Gender and Race: Topics to be determined by popular vote
Th 12/10	Research Paper Due