

PHL 335: Feminist Philosophy  
Fall 2007

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Office Hours: 2:15-3:30 MW  
1:00-2:15 Tues. & by appt.  
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[www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/philosophy/heikes](http://www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/philosophy/heikes)

Course Texts:

**Required:**

*Feminist Epistemologies*, Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds.  
*Knowing the Difference*, Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford, eds.

**On Reserve at the Library:**

*Meditations on First Philosophy*, Rene Descartes  
*Feminism and Science*, Nancy Tuana, ed.  
*A Mind of One's Own*, Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt, eds.  
*Discovering Reality*, Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds.

Course Description:

Reason and objectivity are two of the most fundamental concepts of Western philosophy. Nevertheless, these concepts have undergone serious attack in the past half-century. Some of the most strongest and most vociferous attacks have come from feminists' efforts to expose and eliminate sources of sexism and oppression. Feminist philosophers have judged the Cartesian framework, the framework which underlies most of Western philosophy for the past three centuries, as sorely inadequate and incomplete. In challenging this framework, feminist philosophers have been eager to re-evaluate central philosophical assumptions and concepts with the goal of eliminating that which contributes to the exclusion and oppression of women. However, despite the common political goal of subverting oppression, feminists have been deeply torn over how much of the tradition to overthrow. Feminist philosophy clearly defines itself in opposition to the male dominated philosophical tradition; yet the issues of feminist philosophy are deeply interconnected with the mainstream philosophy. In fact, feminist criticisms raise serious philosophical challenges for mainstream philosophical position, especially in epistemology and philosophy of science.

In this course, we will begin by examining Descartes' *Meditations* and the feminist criticisms of "male dominated" reason which Descartes has come to represent. From there, we will discuss whether there is or can be a feminist methodology that stands apart from more general philosophical methods. What is the concept of 'woman', and does it offer any "special insight" to philosophical issues of morality and knowledge? In the remainder of the course, we will discuss various epistemological issues and how they related to feminism's explicitly stated political goals. Can there be a feminist epistemology? And if so, would this be different from "non-feminist" epistemologies? Is the idea of "women's experiences" a useful epistemic tool? How are we to theorize about morality in the absence of some universal notion of objectivity? Or, even more pressing, how are we to think about science and its role in the oppression of women if science cannot be objective?

Requirements:

**Bi-weekly essays:** 60% (2-3 page essays)

**Paper proposal/outline:** 10% (a two page proposal/outline of your final paper—due October 31)

--I will not accept your final paper unless you have a proposal that has been approved in writing.

--I may downgrade late proposals. Get them in on time.

**Paper:** 30% (10-12 page paper on some topic covered in class—due November 28)

Course Outline: (dates for specific reading assignments will be announced in class)

Introduction: Cartesian Conceptions of Reason (3 weeks)

Descartes, *Meditations I & II*

Atherton, "Cartesian Reason and Gendered Reason" (*A Mind of One's Own*)

Lloyd, "Maleness, Metaphor, and the 'Crisis' of Reason" (*A Mind of One's Own*)

Grosz, "Bodies and Knowledge: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Feminist Methodology and the Concept of 'Woman' (3 weeks)

Harding, "Is there a Feminist Method?" (*Feminism and Science*)

Moulton, "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method" (*Discovering Reality*)

Tanesini, "Whose Language?" (*Knowing the Difference*)

Feminist Epistemology (3 weeks)

Longino, "Subjects, Power, and Knowledge" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Fricke, "Knowledge as Construct" (*Knowing the Difference*)

Barwell, "Towards a Defense of Objectivity" (*Knowing the Difference*)

Lazreg, "Women's Experience and Feminist Epistemology" (*Knowing the Difference*)

Moral Epistemology (2 weeks)

Addelson, "Knower/Doer and Their Moral Problems" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Thompson, "Moral Difference and Moral Epistemology" (*Knowing the Difference*)

Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Feminist Philosophy of Science (4 weeks)

Nelson, "Epistemic Communities" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Longino, "Can There Be a Feminist Science?" (*Feminism and Science*)

Keller, "The Gender/Science System" (*Feminism and Science*)

Addelson, "The Man of Professional Wisdom" (*Discovering Reality*)

Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege" (*Feminist Epistemologies*)

Alcoff, "Justifying Feminist Social Science" (*Feminism and Science*)