

COURSE OUTLINE
PHIL 242A INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEORY

Fall term 2014: MW 10:35 – 11:25 (plus a mandatory discussion conference, for which you must register separately on Minerva)

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Office Hours: M 13:30-15:30

This course is an introduction to feminist theory, with an emphasis on political theory. The aims of the course are to acquaint students with the diversity of feminist theories, to introduce certain concepts basic to feminist theory (e.g. feminist consciousness, oppression, and social construction), and to indicate some of the issues on which feminists differ. The first part of the course will consider liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, and radical feminism. These theories all provide some account of the practices that maintain the inequality between men and women. The various feminist theories differ, however, both in their analyses of these practices, and in their recommendations for political change. Some of the questions we will address are: If we could ensure that women had opportunities equal to those of men, would we thereby ensure the equality of women with men? Can the unequal status of women be analyzed as an instance of, or a function of, some other political or economic inequality? How are we to understand equality? Does radical feminism offer a viable political strategy? In the first part of the course we will also consider criticisms of feminist theory's history of exclusion with respect to class, race, and sexuality. In the second part of the course we will consider two sets of issues of concern to feminists: (1) sex, gender and sexuality and (2) feminism, multiculturalism, and postcolonialism.

Be advised that written work for this course may be submitted to text-matching software.

Grading criteria: To do excellent work in this course you need to be able to do more than just reiterate what various authors have said in your reading or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand and comprehend the material, but that you have thought critically about it, fully fleshing out its subtleties and implications so that you can creatively apply the material at many levels. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; however, "B" work does not capture the complexity of the issues and tends toward accurate summary rather than independent analysis. A "C" suggests a struggle