

**Department:** Philosophy

**Course No:** 1107 [107]

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Philosophy and Gender

**Contact:** Donald Baxter

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Diversity:** CA4 Non-International

**Catalog Copy:** PHIL 107. Philosophy and Gender Either semester. Three Credits. No student may receive more than 6 credits for PHIL 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107. Topics concern social ethics and gender, such as gender equality and the impact of gender norms on individual freedom. Specific topics are examined in light of the intersections between gender and race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

**Course Information:** a. The course introduces students to important ideas in the history of philosophy and in contemporary philosophy that bear on gender and the relations between gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class. Different points of view on the issues and arguments for them are covered. Students are required to develop skills needed to critically assess arguments and to work out their own positions and arguments about them.

b. Course requirements: Students read two (sometimes three) philosophy articles per week or comparable readings from classic philosophy texts. They are required to participate in an informed, thoughtful way in discussion section and/or on the course website (20% of grade). Three in-class essay examinations are given. The two exams during the semester count 20% each. The final counts 40%. Two extra credit assignments, which are graded according to regular grading standards, are given. If the student does better on an extra credit assignment than s/he did on the preceding exam, the average of the exam grade and the extra credit grade count 20%.

c. Philosophical Argument; Classic Political Theories -- Liberalism and Marxism Liberal Approaches to Gender, Sexuality, and Justice Socialist Approaches to Gender, Race, and Justice Gendered and Racialized Appearance Ideals and Individual Freedom

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** 1. Become articulate: Opportunities for discussion are provided both in discussion sections and on the website. Both oral and written articulateness are strengthened in these discussions. Since all of the exams are essay exams, communication in writing is emphasized.

2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: Students exam issues both from the more familiar (to most of them) liberal point of view and from the Marxist point of view. Also they sample critical race theory and black feminist theory, which can be an eye-opener for the largely white UConn student body.

3. Acquire critical judgment: Philosophical argument relies on a dialectical process of raising objections and responding to them. Students are required to exhibit these skills in all written and oral coursework.

4. Acquire moral sensitivity: Throughout this course we study controversial views. I emphasize the importance of appreciating the strengths of positions and arguments that are opposed to one's own views and developing respect for diverse viewpoints. Most of the issues are ones students will face as they make moral decisions in the course of their lives.

5. Acquire awareness of their era and society: In teaching Locke and Marx, I underscore the historical context in which each wrote and the changes that have taken place in the intervening centuries e.g., anti-colonialist liberation struggles, the U.S. civil war, and the civil rights and women's movements. In order to build on arguments made in contemporary readings, I often supply relevant statistical and poll data about U.S. society today (on handouts).

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: This course focuses on gender issues in the U.S. However, to treat these questions adequately the course examines diversity within the U.S., especially with regard to race and sexual orientation.

7. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge: Extra-credit assignments are written outside of class. They may require a student to interview another student on a controversial topic and then to analyze the presuppositions and arguments the interviewee's interview embeds, to compare and contrast those presuppositions and arguments with her/his own, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of both points of view. Another possibility is to assign a special lecture (such as the Gladstein lecture) for students to attend and then to write a critical analysis of the lecture in light of course readings and lectures.

**CA1 Criteria:** 1. Critical analyses of human experience: Philosophical treatments of gender require attention to diverse voices, in-depth articulation of the positions represented by those voices, and critical assessments of the values and disvalues implicit in those positions. The readings and my lectures model this activity for students, and the written work requires proficiency in these skills.

2. Inquiries into philosophical and/or political theory: The course covers Lockean and Marxist political theory and contemporary philosophical readings concerning gender issues.

**CA4 Criteria:** 1. Varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity: The course exams the topics of justice, freedom, and equality in light of readings from philosophers of diverse backgrounds e.g., Charles Millss appropriation and reconfiguration of the feminist concept of patriarchy to illuminate white supremacy and bell hooks's critique of white, middleclass feminist theory.

2. Interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations: The course includes analysis of how and why gender norms, homophobia, and racial attitudes are enforced by social structures yet

subject to critique and change e.g. Noel Carroll's account of how racist and other bigoted discourses rely on bestial representations of Others.

5. Awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of 1 and 2: The combined dynamics of social, economic, and political power vis-a`-vis gender comes out once it is recognized that, as second-wave feminists stressed, the personal is political. For example, assigned readings include Ann Cudd's analysis of how contemporary economic forces reproduce the gendered breadwinner/homemaker distinction and Susan Bordo's analysis of how masculinity is being contested in contemporary advertising.

**Role of Grad Students:** Graduate assistants teach weekly 50 minute discussion sections and grade the work of students in their sections. Faculty lecture notes provide guidance for planning discussions. The teacher of record holds regular meetings (grading practicums) to ensure appropriateness and consistency in grading standards across sections and visits discussion sections to ensure that appropriate teaching methods and content are being used.