

FEMINIST ISSUES IN VALUE THEORY:

The Ethics and Politics of Resistance

PHILOSOPHY 167

UCLA Fall 2019

Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:50 am, Bunche 3143

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00-1:00pm, LuValle Plaza (or Dodd 383 in case of rain)

Website: <https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/19S-GENDERM110C-1>

Course Description

This is a feminist philosophy course on the ethics and politics of resisting oppression. Given serious societal injustice, the central ethical question of *how to live well* cannot be understood in isolation from political concerns.

We'll be considering the following questions: who has the responsibility to resist oppression and why; which costs it is reasonable to expect oppressed people and bystanders to pay in order to resist; the role anger or violence should play in responding to oppression vs. "logic, reason, and words" or sympathy; whether Western imperial feminism can be avoided without accepting moral relativism; and whether complicity in oppression is ever permissible.

The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with gender and racial oppression. Much of it will be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will flag especially graphic or intense content and will do my best to make this classroom a space where we can engage bravely, empathetically and thoughtfully with difficult content every week.

Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrated understanding of the assigned reading on advanced topics in feminist ethics and political philosophy
- Critical analysis and evaluation of arguments about resisting oppression found in the contemporary philosophy and feminist theory literature
- Reflection on difference, diversity, and what it would take for feminist moral theory to be genuinely inclusive

- Experience asking focused questions that motivate why an issue matters and draws out why it is confusing or objectionable
- Demonstrated ability to contribute to a philosophical discussion by paying careful attention to what others have said and offering reasons for one's position without dominating the conversation
- Thoughtful consideration of connections between the course material and one's lived experience
- Demonstrated ability to clearly present arguments and anticipate objections
- Transferable oral and written skills that display skill at argument and the ability to engage honestly with difficult and controversial topics involving oppression and resistance

Texts

All texts will be available on the course website. Many of the texts we will be reading are dense, philosophical texts, and I strongly encourage you to read them at least twice.

Screen Free Classroom

In order to avoid distractions and to promote lively participation, thoughtful note taking, and good cheer, I ask that you bring a paper notepad and writing utensil, and refrain from using your cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class. You may take notes electronically if special circumstances, such as an injury or a disability, require you to do so.

(exception: laptops are welcome Week 10 during the in-class peer review session)

Accessibility

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Graded Coursework

Philosophy is a conversational activity. This course will include in-class discussion and group work so that everyone has a chance to participate. Group work will be conducted in small groups of 4 or 5. In order for this collaborative endeavor to work, you must complete the assigned reading before class and arrive prepared to discuss it. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your fellow students, to come prepared, and to bring your energy and enthusiasm to share.

All of the following course requirements must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course. If you are at all concerned that you may not be able to satisfy one of the course requirements on time, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Class Participation

Regular class attendance and active participation will be essential in this collaborative, discussion-based course. Consistently helpful contributions to class discussion may result in the raising of a student's final grade by up to a third of a full letter (e.g. from a B to a B+). Likewise, I may lower the final grade by up to one third of a full letter (e.g. from a B to a B-) in case of spotty attendance or failure to contribute productively to class discussion. Please let me know if special circumstances prevent you from attending regularly.

Note that philosophical conversation is more about listening and thinking than it is about speaking. I do not care about the quantity but rather about the thoughtfulness of your contributions to the discussion. Your comments should reflect that you have paid attention to what others have said and have done the reading.

Two absences over the quarter (no questions asked) will not negatively impact your grade unless you miss your class presentation 10/29 or 10/31, or the in-class peer review on 12/3. I will try to make alternative arrangements for class presentations and peer review in case of illness or last-minute emergencies.

Online Questions

When reading is assigned, I will ask you to formulate and develop a concrete (non-trivial) question to submit the night before class. These questions should be approximately one-half page double-spaced. They will be graded on an S/U basis where a satisfactory question does the following:

- 1. Situates the audience.** Offers relevant background in one sentence (maybe two).
- 2. Asks something specific.** Focuses on a particular argument, implication of a theory, ambiguity in the text, etc.
- 3. Motivates your question.** Says why you are asking this question or why its answer matters.
- 4. Draws out the problem.** Makes it clear why that specific thing is confusing or objectionable.

This may seem like an easy task, but it is actually quite difficult to ask a well-developed, pointed, and thoughtful philosophical question. You will not get written feedback on your questions, but you are welcome and encouraged to discuss your questions in class or office hours.

Questions are due **on the course website at 11:00 pm** the Monday or Wednesday before each meeting with assigned reading—no questions for 10/29, 10/31, 11/28, 12/3, or 12/5.

The Online Questions portion of your grade will be computed as an A for 14 satisfactory questions submitted on time. That means no penalty for missing one question. I will also excuse three late questions submitted no more than a week late without penalty. Your online questions grade will be lowered by one third of a letter (e.g. from an A to A-) for each additional unsatisfactory question or question not submitted within a week.

Short Essay and Class Presentation

A short essay, 2 to 3 pages, double spaced, will be assigned in class 10/17 and due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 4 (10/25). Late paper penalties are 1/3 of a letter grade per day unless an extension is arranged in advance.

Brief 5-minute class presentations based on short essays will be scheduled for week 5 (10/29 and 10/31). Presentations will be graded S/U—either talking through your ideas or reading your essay is acceptable.

Term Paper

A longer term paper is required, of approximately 10 pages, double-spaced, on a topic of your choosing that engages in a serious way with at least three of the course readings. A proposed paper topic is due Thursday of week 7, a rough draft is due Tuesday of week 10, comments on another student's paper are due on Wednesday of week 10, and the final paper is due Wednesday of exam week. Details about each component of the assignment follow.

1. Paper Topic

A copy of a proposed topic is due through the course website by 10:00 AM on Thursday of week 7 (11/14). The proposed topic should be a one-paragraph abstract or statement of a question that you plan to discuss in your term paper. This topic is not a commitment, and you may change your mind about your paper topic.

2. Rough Draft

Another way in which you will develop your paper ideas is by helping one another with feedback on a rough draft of the paper. Giving feedback on your peers' writing also helps you to take up the perspective of the reader in thinking through what makes for a good philosophy paper.

To be ready for the collaborative editing process, you will submit a rough, partial draft of your final paper (around 7 to 8 pages long), due on the course website by 10:00 AM on Tuesday of week 10.

Please also bring a hard copy to class on Tuesday of week 10 to exchange with another student.

This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft by the deadline will receive no credit for this portion of the grade. It is crucial that you complete your draft on time so that you can participate in the peer editing exercise.

3. Peer Editing Exercise

We will have a collaborative editing exercise in class on Tuesday of week 10 (12/3), when the rough drafts are due. In addition to the in-class exercise, you will submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Wednesday of week 10 (12/4). You will email your comments to your partner as well as submitting them through the course website. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

4. Final Draft

The final paper is due on the course website by 5:00 PM on Wednesday of exam week (12/11). This paper will be graded on the standard letter scale using the rubric at the end of this syllabus. Aside from last minute emergencies, extensions must be arranged at least 24 hours in advance.

Late paper penalties are 1/3 of a letter grade per day.

Final Grades

Your course grade will be computed as follows:

- 20% Online Questions
- 15% Short Paper (2 to 3 pages)
- 5% Class Presentation
- 5% Rough Draft (7 to 8 pages)
- 5% Peer Review
- 50% Term paper (approximately 10 pages)

As noted above, final grades may be adjusted upward or downward by up to a third of a letter grade on the basis of class participation.

Note for Philosophy Graduate Students: any Philosophy graduate students enrolled for a letter grade may choose between satisfying the above course requirements or writing a longer paper to be graded as a seminar paper. Please let me know early in the term which requirements you intend to satisfy.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1 – Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory

Tuesday, October 1:

Tommy Shelby, “The Ethics of Uncle Tom’s Children” (2012)

optional: Richard Wright, “Bright and Morning Star” (1940)

[content warning: racist and misogynist slurs, racial violence]

Thursday, October 3:

Lisa Tessman, “Idealizing Morality” (2010)

Week 2 – Collective and Individual Responsibility

Tuesday, October 8:

Titus Stahl, “Collective Responsibility for Oppression” (2017)

Thursday, October 10:

Carol Hay, “The Obligation to Resist Oppression” (2011)

Week 3 – Civility and Incivility

Tuesday, October 15:

Jean Harvey, “Victims, Resistance, and Civilized Oppression” (2010)

Thursday, October 17:

Candice Delmas, selection from *A Duty to Resist: When Disobedience Should Be Uncivil* (2018)

optional: Angela Davis, selection from *An Autobiography* (1974)
[content warning: racial violence]

➤ SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNED IN CLASS THURSDAY 10/17

Week 4 – Civility and Incivility, continued

Tuesday, October 22:

Philip Yaure, “Deliberation and Emancipation: Some Critical Remarks” (2018)

Thursday, October 24:

Amia Srinivasan “The Aptness of Anger” (2018)

➤ SHORT ESSAY DUE ON THE WEBSITE BY 5 PM FRIDAY 10/25

Week 5 – Class Presentations

Tuesday, October 29:

CLASS PRESENTATIONS (no online question)

Thursday, October 31:

CLASS PRESENTATIONS (no online question)

Week 6 – Moral Relativism and Universalism

Tuesday, November 5:

Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?” (2002)

Thursday, November 7:

Serene Khader, “Toward a Decolonial Feminist Universalism” (2019)

Week 7 – Resistance and Revolution

Tuesday, November 12:

Pat Parker, “It's not Neat or Pretty or Quick” from *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981)

Thursday, November 14:

bell hooks “Feminist Revolution: Development Through Struggle” from *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984)

➤ PAPER TOPICS DUE ON THE WEBSITE BY 10 AM THURSDAY 11/14

Week 8 – Complicity in Oppression

Tuesday, November 19:

Daniel Silvermint, “Passing as Privileged” (2018)

Thursday, November 21:

Sarah Buss, “Reflections on the Responsibility to Resist Oppression” (2010)

Week 9 – Complicity in Oppression, continued

Tuesday, November 26:

Lauren Schaeffer, “Oppression, Complicity, and the Double-Bind”

Thursday, November 28:

NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (no online question)

Week 10

Tuesday, December 3: In-class peer review (no online question)

- ROUGH DRAFTS DUE ON WEBSITE 10 AM TUESDAY, 12/3
- BRING HARD COPY TO CLASS. LAPTOPS WELCOME

- PEER COMMENTS DUE BY EMAIL TO YOUR PARTNER AND THROUGH THE WEBSITE BY 5 PM WEDNESDAY, 12/4

Thursday, December 5:

Review (no online question)

Finals Week

TERM PAPER DUE THROUGH THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 5 PM WEDNESDAY 12/11

Grading Rubric for Term Papers

(A, A-) Excellent essay

- Writing is straightforward and easy to read.
- Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost.
- Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it.
- Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension of arguments to the reader.
- Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed.

- Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.

(B+, B, B-) Good essay

- Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult.
- Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost.
- Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic.
- Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader.
- Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.

(C+, C, C-) Adequate essay

- Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical.
- Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost.
- Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant.
- Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader.
- Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.

(D+ or lower) Inadequate essay

- Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning.
- Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another.
- Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the themes of the course.
- Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed.
- Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.

(F) Failing essay

- Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.