

PHIL 116: Feminist Philosophy*
Summer 2023 – 2nd Session (July 10–August 10, 2023)
MTWT, 08:30 – 10:25 a.m. (Car Barn 302)

ABOUT THE COURSE

The Instructor

Madeleine Léger (please call me “Madeleine”)

I’m a PhD student in the Georgetown Philosophy Department. My areas of specialization are feminist philosophy, epistemology, and the philosophy of language. I love cooking, being outside, and working with my hands. I also love my cat, Simone! I’m excited to get to know each of you—and to learn about the things you love, too.

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Course Description

Feminist philosophy encompasses several intellectual traditions, political movements, methodological commitments, and topics of study. Accordingly, the feminist philosophical terrain is complex, multi-faceted, and ever-changing. In this course, we will embrace that ambiguity and messiness. Our investigations will draw on a variety of feminist philosophical texts to invite critical, intersectional, and liberatory engagements with topics like perception, gender and racial oppression, bodily autonomy, sexuality, climate change, and family. As we gradually equip our philosophical toolkits throughout the semester, we will build an understanding of what it means to think philosophically and how we can bring this philosophy out into the world.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to apply feminist philosophical concepts, methods, and tools to their own lives and to the world around them;
- Students will develop their analytic, critical, and creative thinking skills, which will equip them to better understand, articulate, and build on their own thoughts and those of their interlocutors;
- Students will engage in meaningful, constructive, and collaborative dialogue with their classmates;
- Students will develop and enrich their understanding of gendered and intersectional oppression, and they will gain tools and strategies to resist these oppressive forces in their thinking, writing, and living.

Course Structure

The course is divided into five modules: Knowing, Loving, Bodies, Community, and Despair/Hope. Each module will last one week, and each module will build on the others. Each week, there will be two longer/more complex readings/engagements and two lighter (though still rich!) readings/engagements. I have indicated the page counts (or time lengths) of all course materials, so you can plan your workflow accordingly.

You can expect class time to include combinations of lectures, discussions, and group activities. I'll do my best to provide varied and flexible opportunities for in-class engagement; please come to class prepared to dig into the readings in the way(s) that feel(s) most comfortable for you.

You will be evaluated on a combination of *Participation/Engagement* (25%), two *Thought Papers* (30%), a *Final Project* (35%), and a *Critical Reflection* (10%). (For more information about assignments and evaluation, see "Assignments" section, below.)

READING SCHEDULE

Below is a detailed list of our course reading schedule. All the assigned readings are available on the PHIL 116 Canvas Page. Note that for each class meeting, you will find a **primary reading** and an **optional engagement**. I will expect you to come to class having done the primary reading; however, the optional engagements are *completely* optional—I will never assume that you have completed them. They are just meant to provide opportunities for you to enrich your understanding of the material when curiosity or passion seizes you!

A note on the content: Some of the topics in the course may be difficult or painful. I've tried to include content warning (marked "CW") to help you prepare for particularly challenging readings. Please be in touch with me if you have concerns about any of the assigned materials.

Date	Primary Reading	Optional Engagement
Introduction In this first meeting, we'll also get to know each other a bit! We'll also set up the course, raise some questions that will follow us throughout the term, and prepare ourselves to engage with the material and each other.		
07/10	Myisha Cherry: "Conversations" (podcast, 43 mins) https://elucidations.vercel.app/posts/episode-112-myisha-cherry-discusses-the-skill-of-conversation/	Kristie Dotson: "Concrete Flowers" (7 pages)
Module 1: Knowing In this module, we will engage with questions like: What does it mean to know something? How do we know what we know? How (and why) do we fail to know some things? How can we work to be <i>better</i> knowers—more just, curious, and loving ones?		
07/11	Sandra Harding: "Standpoint Theories: Productively Controversial" (7 pages)	Briana Toole: "Identity and Knowledge" (podcast, 37 mins) https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-061-briana-toole-on-identity-and-knowledge/

07/12	Kristie Dotson: “Ignorance” (podcast, 47 mins) https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-009-kristie-dotson-on-ignorance/	Lisa Heldke: “Farming Made Her Stupid” (14 pages)
07/13	Hanne De Jaegher: “Loving and Knowing: Reflections for an Engaged Epistemology” (20 pages)	Sue Sinclair: “Wisdom,” from <i>Lyric Ecology</i> (7 pages)
<p>Module 2: Loving</p> <p>In this module, we will think about how love shapes our interactions with the world and each other. The readings in this module will ask us to have a broad and flexible idea of what love can be. Each of these authors will argue that love is about a lot more than our romantic relationships: we also love to understand, relate, challenge, repair, and grow. We will engage with questions like: What can love help us know? What does it mean to love well? What is the power of self-love? Can love help us engage in subversive, radical, and (re)generative projects? If so, how?</p> <p><i>* Note: First Thought Paper due on July 23</i></p>		
07/17	Kristie Dotson: “Radical Love: Black Philosophy as Deliberate Acts of Inheritance” (7 pages)	bell hooks: “Aesthetic Inheritances: History Worked by Hand,” from <i>Belonging: A Culture of Place</i> (7 pages)
07/18	María Lugones: “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception” (16 pages)	Lee Maracle: “My Love,” from <i>I Am Woman</i> (prose poem, 4 pages) <i>CW: colonialism, gender-based violence</i>
07/19	M. Hernandez: Excerpts from “Gender Affirmation and Loving Attention” (11 pages)	Iris Murdoch: Excerpts from <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> (5 pages)
07/20	Maggie Nelson: Excerpts from <i>The Argonauts</i> (6 pages)	Jan Zwicky: Excerpts from <i>The Book of Frog</i> (6 pages)
<p>Module 3: Bodies</p> <p>In this module, we will turn our attention to embodiment, though loving and knowing will remain top of mind. We will consider some pressing philosophical questions about bodies, including: How much can we influence our desires? How do representations of embodied selves shape our social world and self-understandings? How do human bodies relate to their environments—including land—and to their positions in those environments?</p>		
07/24	Amia Srinivasan: “The Right to Sex” (10 pages) <i>CW: sexual violence, complexities of desire, racism, sexism, ableism, fatphobia</i>	Audre Lorde: “The Uses of the Erotic,” from <i>Sister Outsider</i> (7 pages)
07/25	Nancy Bauer: “On Pornography” (podcast, 44 mins) https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-016-nancy-bauer-on-pornography/	Batya Ungar-Sargon: “She Swoons to Conquer: Can You Enjoy Romance and Still Be a Feminist?” https://aeon.co/essays/can-you-enjoy-romance-fiction-and-be-a-feminist

	<i>CW: sexual harassment, exploitation</i>	<i>CW: sexual violence, politics of desire</i>
07/26	<p>Anonymous: “Fat Female Philosophers” https://blog.apaonline.org/2018/07/10/fat-female-philosophers-2/</p> <p><i>CW: body image, eating disorders, fatphobia</i></p>	<p>Da’Shaun L. Harrison: Excerpts from <i>Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness</i> (9 pages)</p> <p><i>CW: racism, fatphobia</i></p>
07/27	<p>Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: “The Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples’ Bodies,” from <i>As We Have Always Done</i> (22 pages)</p> <p><i>CW: genocide, racism, sexual violence, colonialism</i></p>	<p>Gloria Anzaldúa: Excerpts from <i>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</i> (6 pages)</p> <p><i>CW: colonialism, racism</i></p>
<p>Module 4: Community</p> <p>As many of the above readings have already reminded us, we aren’t isolated knowers, lovers, or bodies. In this module, we will think about the ways we organize ourselves and our relationships to each other. How do we find, choose, create, and sustain communities? How might each of us think about our relationships to those with whom we share our communities? What kinds of communities can (should) we hope for?</p> <p><i>*Note: Second thought paper due on August 6</i></p>		
07/31	<p>Linda Martín Alcoff: “On Whiteness” (podcast, 36 mins)</p> <p>https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-018-linda-alcoff-on-whiteness/</p>	<p>Linda Martín Alcoff: Excerpts from “The Problem of Speaking for Others” (12 pages)</p>
08/01	<p>Audre Lorde: “The Uses of Anger” (8 pages)</p> <p><i>CW: racism, homophobia, misogyny</i></p>	<p>Imani Perry: Excerpts from <i>South to America</i> (9 pages)</p>
08/02	<p>bell hooks: “Piecing it Together,” from <i>Belonging: A Culture of Place</i> (6 pages)</p>	<p>Samra Habib: Excerpts from <i>We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir</i> (10 pages)</p>
08/03	<p>Amy Westervelt: “Mothering in an Age of Extinction,” from <i>All We Can Save</i> (6 pages)</p> <p><i>CW: climate anxiety</i></p>	<p>Alice Walker: “Calling All Grand Mothers” (2 mins)</p> <p>https://www.eomega.org/videos/calling-all-grand-mothers</p>
<p>Module 5: Despair and Hope</p> <p>In this final module, we will think about futurity: Are some problems too big to be fixed? If so, what do we do? What can we hope for? How do we build forward-looking narratives in the face of enormous (and sometimes existential) challenges?</p>		

08/07	Kathryn Norlock: “Perpetual Struggle” (11 pages)	Adrienne Rich: “A Mark of Resistance” (poem)
08/08	Alexis Shotwell: Excerpts from <i>Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times</i> (14 pages)	Shalan Joudry: “Raising Forests” and “Unfolding of Blankets” (poems)
08/09	Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing: “Arts of Noticing,” from <i>The Mushroom at the End of the World</i> (9 pages)	Jan Zwicky: “Moon” and “New Year” (poems)
08/10	TBD/Catch-Up Day *In-class critical reflection	Andrea J. Pitts: “Philosophical Collaborations With Activists” (11 pages)

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation (25%): To fulfil this requirement, you must be present (in all senses of the word) and alert in class, and you must engage in small group discussions and classroom activities. I am committed to making our classroom a welcoming environment for everyone, and I hope that you all feel comfortable contributing to larger in-class discussions. That said, I understand that folks have different comfort levels in group settings. Accordingly, I will include several other kinds of engagement in my consideration of what active participation in this course can look like. Such additional engagements can include office-hour attendance, email inquiries, discussion posts on the Canvas page, etc. Please communicate with me early and often if you have questions about this requirement.

Thought Papers (30%): Write *two* (15% each) short papers (max. 700 words) on something in the course materials that strikes you as particularly interesting, challenging, frustrating, etc. Once you have your “thought,” your task is simply to articulate that thought clearly and concisely. The first thought paper is due on **July 23**; the second thought paper is due on **August 6**. (More details to be provided in class.)

Final Project (35%): Submit a final project that engages deeply with the course material. You may meet this requirement by writing a standard final paper (8–10 pages), but you may also submit a creative project (e.g., narrative, visual art, podcast, etc.). If you choose the latter, you *must run your plan by me first*. Due at the **end of term** (specific date TBD).

Critical Reflection (10%): On the last day of class, I will block off some time to have a group discussion and a short writing exercise to reflect on the term. To fulfil this requirement, it will suffice to be present and to participate in this exercise. (More details to be provided in class.)

COURSE POLICIES

Email Communication: Please email me if you have any questions or concerns about the course. I will respond to all weekday inquiries within 24 hours. I will respond to weekend inquiries within 48 hours.

Office Hours: Please feel invited and encouraged to come to office hours! I love meeting with students, and I care about getting to know each of you. (For more information, see office hours handout, which is available on the Canvas page.)

Canvas Page: Course information, announcements, readings, syllabus updates, and links will be posted on and/or sent through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that messages sent through Canvas are sent directly to your email address and for checking your email and canvas regularly. Please also see

Canvas for additional resources, including guidelines for writing a philosophy paper and mental health resources.

Attendance: You are expected to attend each class session, to come prepared, and to arrive on time. That said, I understand that you may sometimes be unable to come to class for a variety of reasons. Accordingly, each student may have *one* unexcused absence during the semester. You may claim it at any time without explanation or justification. However, any additional absences must be explained and communicated promptly; excessive and/or unexplained absences may affect your participation grade.

Late Work Policy: I understand that we all have lives outside of our coursework. However, this course operates on a condensed summer-session timeline. This means that we all have very limited flexibility when it comes to getting our work in on time. To accommodate unexpected life events and everyone's individual workflow, each student may claim up to *three late days (total)*, which they can use on any assignment and at any point in the term. (So, you can use all three days on one assignment, but you can also spread them out over several assignments. For example, you can use one day on a Thought Paper and two days on your Final Project.) I will not ask any questions or require any justification for late submissions, so long as they fall within this three-day window. However, if you need to exceed three late days over the course of the term, you must be in touch with me to make a formal arrangement for a new deadline/schedule. In the absence of such communications, the grade of late assignments will be lowered for every additional day exceeding the three-day buffer. Please be in touch with me if you have questions about this.

The Honor Code: You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty in this course. In particular, plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable. All papers will be run through TurnItIn. You should be familiar with the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website (see relevant links on Canvas).

Below, you will find the Georgetown Title IX Syllabus Statement. Please be in touch with me if you have questions about this.

“Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

Counselling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician.

**Note: This syllabus is provisional! It's subject to change (with reasonable notice). I also hope to be in conversation with each of you about your own interests/hopes for the course.*

More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process. More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).”