

Philosophy 285
Seminar on Special Topic
Feminist Philosophy
The Sex/Gender Distinction

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H&SS 7077
Thursday 2:00-4:50
Office Hours
W 12:00 -1:00
F 12:00-1:00 and by apt.

Drawing the sex/gender distinction was (arguably) the inaugural move of second wave feminism. Contemporary feminism is (unquestionably) preoccupied with what to make of the distinction. Should it be revised, accepted, rejected? The seminar's fundamental aim is to determine *what this distinction is* (or: what we might want it to be). Much of the traditional focus has been on the question: What is gender? But an equally important (and surprisingly difficult) question is What is sex? We need to ask: What (if anything) is the *point* of distinguishing sex and gender? How does drawing the distinction further the cause of women? (*If it does: does it?*) Is there a single category "woman" or is talk of "women" ineluctably exclusionary? Is the sex/gender distinction useful? Or is it misleading, misguided, or wrongheaded? It is important to bear in mind that there are any number of ways of drawing the distinction. A fundamental question is: What is the *best way* of formulating it?

Ours will be a *philosophical* investigation. What it is to pursue these questions in this way, how philosophy can contribute to (or hinder) the investigation are additional issues to be taken up. The seminar presupposes no prior work in the philosophy of feminism and can serve as an introduction to the field. Rather than surveying the subject, we can shall attempt to get a sense of the whole by focusing on one central, illuminating part. The seminar will address relevant issues in metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of biology, and social and political philosophy.

26 September. Introduction

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| Mikkola | "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender" (2012) |
| Haslanger | "Gender and Race (What) are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" (2000) |

3 October. The psychiatric distinction and its feminist appropriation

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| Stoller | <i>Sex and Gender</i> (1968) |
| Millet | <i>Sexual Politics</i> (1969) |

10 October. Gender as identity and social position

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| Ruben | "Traffic in Women" (1975) |
| Haslanger | "Future Genders? Future Races?" (2003) |

17 October. Feminist origins of the sex/gender distinction

de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (1949)

24 October. The particularist critique of the sex/gender distinction

Spelman *Inessential Woman* (1988)
Mikkola “Elizabeth Spellman, Gender Realism, and Women” (2006)

31 October. The post-structuralist critique of the sex/gender distinction.

Butler *Gender Trouble* (1990)
----- *Bodies that Matter* (1993)

7 November. Is sex binary?

Fausto-Sterling *Sexing the Body*

14 November. Is gender wholly independent of sex?

Money “Psychosexual Differentiation”
Colapinto *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*

28 November. Thanksgiving. No class

5 December. Whither the sex/gender distinction in transgender experience?

Bergman *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You*

Course requirements

Attendance and participation at all seminar meetings, seminar presentation (analyzing a key argument or claim in a reading and leading the discussion), and a term paper (about 12-15 pages in length) on some topic central to course themes, subject to approval by the instructor

Texts

Most readings will be made electronically available via electronic reserves. The following books should be purchased.

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| S. de Beauvoir | <i>The Second Sex</i> (Vintage) |
| S. Bergman | <i>The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You</i> (Arsenal) |
| J. Butler | <i>Gender Trouble</i> (Routledge) |
| J. Colapinto | <i>As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl</i> (Harper Perennial) |
| A. Fausto-Sterling | <i>Sexing the Body</i> (Basic Books) |
| E. Spelman | <i>Inessential Woman</i> (Beacon Press) |