

# PHIL 265: Philosophical Issues of Gender and Sex (Fall 2019)

## Gaige 201, Tuesday/Thursday 10:00-11:50

**Professor Amy Berg**

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**Office:** Gaige 225

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 (or by appointment)

### **What this course is about**

All of us have individual identities shaped by our sex and gender. But what is sex? What is gender? How do they shape our lives, and how should they? In this class, we will look at the work of philosophers, social scientists, activists, and others who try to determine who we are and how we ought to treat one another. The questions we will explore include:

- **Why would we care about what sex and gender are?** We will define oppression and consider how sex and/or gender might be involved.
- **What are sex and gender?** We will attempt to define these concepts and look at varying views of how they affect our lives.
- **Are women and men essentially different?** We will discuss some ideas about what makes the sexes and genders different and what they have in common.
- **If there is sex- and/or gender-based oppression, how should we respond to it?** We will close by considering three issues in the philosophy of sex and gender: first, whether women make a distinctive contribution to morality; second, whether women (and men) would benefit from changes to marriage law; and third, how we should organize our marriages.

### **Course policies**

#### **You will need:**

- The readings. Complete each day's assigned reading before coming to class, and bring your copy of the reading with you to class. We will be using one book and one course reader:
  - The book, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy* (Alison Stone, Polity Press 2007, ISBN 978-0745638829), is available at the RIC Bookstore (and elsewhere).
  - The rest of the readings you will need are collected in a course reader, which is only available at the Bookstore.
  - We will be using the book and reader regularly in class, and because of this course's technology policy (see below), you will need a hard copy of both (not an e-book or online PDFs).
  - If you are having difficulty getting your own copy of the book or the reader (for affordability or for any other reason), please let me know as soon as possible, so I can make sure you have the resources you need to be successful in this class.
- You will also need access to Blackboard:
  - It's where I will post every piece of paper I hand out in class, including a current version of the syllabus, handouts, and assignment instructions.
  - You are welcome to send me videos, articles, and anything else you come across that's relevant to our course, and I may post them to Blackboard so other students can see them too.
  - You'll use Blackboard too—it's where you'll turn in your written work for this course, and it's where I'll post feedback on that work.

#### **What you'll need to do**

## ***Assignments and assessment***

The assignments in this course are designed to get you up to speed with the ways philosophers think and write, so that you can produce your own original philosophical analysis by the time you write your final paper. There are six assignments in this course:

- **Reading responses:** Our class discussions will require you to have thought carefully about the reading, and one of the best ways to think carefully about a reading is to write about it. In each of these three reading responses (no more than 1 page each), you will reflect on some aspect of the reading—explain your disagreement, provide a relevant example, raise a question, or make a connection to something else you know about. To prepare you to write philosophically, you will complete each of these reading responses using a template (handed out on the first day of class; you can also find it on Blackboard). When you turn these reading responses in is largely up to you; however, the first **must** be turned in **by September 9**, and the second **must** be turned in **by October 9**. To help prepare you for the next day's discussion, and to give me time to read your response, these assignments are due by 5:00 pm on the day **before** our course meets (that is, by 5:00 on Mondays and Wednesdays).
- **Take-home assignments:** Good philosophical writing uses a variety of skills and techniques, from carefully defining terms to answering objections to a view. These take-home assignments (3 pages and 4 pages) are your opportunity to practice these skills before you write your final paper. They are due by the beginning of class on September 26 and October 31.
- **Final paper:** In your final paper, you will draw on the skills you've practiced in your reading responses and take-home assignments to write a 5-page essay on one of the topics we discuss in the last few weeks of the semester. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to propose a topic of your choice. Your final paper is due by 5 pm on December 12.
- All assignments will be graded anonymously; you should put your student ID number, *not* your name, on them. Submit all assignments via Blackboard, where they will be checked using SafeAssign. **You must turn in all assignments in order to pass the course.**
- **Extension policy for written work:** In order to receive full credit, assignments normally must be turned in by the date and time they are due; however, I am happy to consider requests for extensions if you ask me before the assignment is due. If you turn in an assignment late, and you have not made prior arrangements with me, I will deduct three percent of your grade on an assignment if that assignment is turned in the day it's due any time after the start of class and three percent for each day after that that the assignment is late (so, for example, an assignment that would have gotten 100% if it were turned in on time on Monday would get 91% if turned in on Wednesday).
- In this course, **your writing is a public act**. I will occasionally use anonymized and (sometimes) edited versions of your work in class and in future courses in order to generate discussion, share viewpoints, ask questions, and so on.

## ***Participation***

Philosophy is a collaborative, discussion-based discipline. Your writing and thinking will benefit from hearing others' views, reactions to readings, and experiences. And your classmates and I will benefit from hearing your take.

- To participate, you need to attend. You are allowed **two absences**, no explanation needed, over the course of the semester. If you're absent more than twice, it will become more and more difficult for you to keep up with the work, and we'll lose your voice in our discussions. For that reason, I will deduct one percent from your participation grade for each additional

absence, unless you receive prior permission or can provide documentation which I believe justifies excusing an additional absence.

- To show respect for your peers and for me, avoid coming late to class or leaving early. You count as absent if you are not present when I take attendance, even if you show up later in the class period; you also count as absent if you leave early without prior permission. If at any point in the semester, you believe you are in a situation for which I should make an exception to this policy, please talk with me outside of class.
- But participation is more than just attendance! In order to receive full participation points, come ready to make active, serious, charitable contributions to class discussion. To make sure our discussion is productive and includes a wide variety of voices, I may sometimes call on students at random. If you are not comfortable participating in class, I will count active, serious, charitable visits to my office hours toward your participation grade. To help guide your participation, I will give you an assessment at midsemester of how you've done so far. When I grade participation, here's what I'm looking for:
  - *A range:* You attend all (or almost all) class sessions, your comments demonstrate that you've done the reading, you actively and positively participate in all group activities, you ask questions or offer comments at least every other class session, and/or you come to office hours at least a couple of times.
  - *B range:* You attend most class sessions, your comments demonstrate that you've usually done the reading, you participate in most group activities, you ask questions or offers comments sporadically. You are never a distraction.
  - *C range:* You attend only occasionally, your comments demonstrate a lack of familiarity with the reading, you do not participate very actively in class (or else are a distraction), and you never come to office hours.
  - *D or F range:* You rarely if ever attends class, you either do not participate or are an active distraction in class, and you never come to office hours or communicate with me via email.
- **Technology policy:** Because philosophy is done best when it's done collaboratively, my goal is to create a space where productive conversations can happen. Research on classrooms and workplaces consistently supports the conclusion that, for most people, technology is a barrier to these productive conversations. (Ask me if you're curious about this research!) For that reason, **electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) are generally not allowed in class.** I will ask you to put these devices in your bag at the beginning of class and leave them there until the end of class. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. **If you need an electronic device in order to be successful in this course (because of a disability, a life situation, or some other reason), please speak with me during the first two weeks of the course.** If I give you permission to use technology, it's your responsibility to work to minimize your distractions to other students (a good way to do this is to sit in the back or to the side of the classroom, so that your screen will not be visible to others). If you need to use a RIC computer to print, view documents, or upload your assignments to Blackboard, there are computers available at Adams Library.

Here's how the work in this course contributes to your final grade:

- **Reading responses:** 5% each; 15% total
- **Take-home assignment 1:** 15%
- **Take-home assignment 2:** 25%
- **Final paper:** 35%
- **Participation:** 10%

The grade scale is:

B+: 87-89%	A: 93-100%	A-: 90-92%
C+: 77-79%	B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%
D+: 67-69%	C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%
F: below 60%	D: 60-63%	D-: 60-62%

## What I'll need to do

My responsibilities in this course include:

- Working with you to make sure you have what you need to succeed. This may include helping you access the readings (see above), talking with you about extensions (see above), and making sure you have the accommodations you need to succeed (below). I know you've got other things going on in your life besides this course, but I can't know what those other things are unless you tell me. I strongly encourage you to communicate early and often with me about your situation.
- Making sure our discussions are productive. If at any point you're not feeling that our discussions are respectful and charitable, please come talk to me.
- Grading your work quickly and fairly. I will return all graded work no later than two weeks from the day you turn it in.
- Communicating with you over email.
  - My responsibility is to email you whenever there are time-sensitive announcements about this course; your responsibility is to check your RIC email (including your spam folder) every day.
  - Please note: I use Blackboard when I need to send announcements to the entire class. Replies to emails I send through Blackboard do not go to me, and I have no way to see them. **If you need to contact me over email, please make sure you're emailing my email address, aberg@ric.edu.**
  - Our emails to each other in this course are professional documents, and it is my and your responsibility to write them professionally. For tips on how to write a professional email, check the email rubric posted to Blackboard. I will respond to your email no later than 5 pm on the next business day; in the rare case I do not, please feel free to follow up with me.

## Some ways to succeed in this course

- I am committed to making sure that you can succeed in this course, regardless of whether you have a disability (visible or invisible). If you need an accommodation under the ADA and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, RIC'S Disability Services Center (Fogarty 137, 456-2776) is here to work with you. To receive accommodations for this class, visit Disability Services to receive an accommodation form and meet with me during the first two weeks of the course to discuss how we can implement them. (If something comes up over the course of the semester, it's your responsibility to let me know as soon as you can.) If you have questions, or if you need an accommodation of another type (athletic, religious, etc.), please let me know as soon as possible.
- **Academic honesty is critical to your success in this course.** In order to learn in this course, and to show mastery of the subject, the work you turn in must be the product of your own effort. That doesn't mean you can't get help—from me, the Writing Center, OASIS, and other resources—but this help cannot be a replacement for your own careful thinking, writing, and revising. The following behaviors violate RIC policies:
  - **Cheating** includes receiving unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment.

- **Plagiarism** involves the theft of intellectual property. The college policy against plagiarism bans word-for-word plagiarism, patchwork plagiarism, unacknowledged paraphrasing, and unacknowledged facts. I also do not allow self-plagiarism (that is, you may not turn in work you have written for a previous class).
- **Other dishonest behaviors** include anything else that provides an unfair advantage over other students or that sabotages another student's efforts.
- I am happy to talk to you if you have any questions about academic integrity, or you can consult the Academic Standards section of the RIC Student Handbook (<http://www.ric.edu/studentlife/documents/RICStudentHandbook.pdf>). If you have questions as you're completing your work for this class, ask! Before you've turned your work in, I can help you to make sure that your work meets RIC's and my academic-honesty standards. Once you've turned your work in, you will not be allowed to redo it if it turns out that you haven't met those standards.
- If I find that you have violated academic-integrity standards, the minimal consequences will be a zero for the assignment, and you will not be allowed to redo it. Additional consequences may include your failing the class and/or being brought before the Academic Integrity Board. I will also report you to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- There are lots of resources at RIC to support you during your time here. OASIS (Adams Library, lower level; <http://www.ric.edu/oasis/>) is here to help you succeed academically. Learning For Life (Adams Library, level 1; <http://www.ric.edu/learningforlife/>) can connect you to resources on- and off-campus to support you with non-academic needs you may have while you're at RIC. Project ExCEL (Roberts 303; <http://www.ric.edu/esl/>) has a variety of programs and classes for multilingual students. If you'd like information on how to access and use these resources, please don't hesitate to talk with me.
- You are welcome and encouraged to come to my office hours or make an appointment with me whenever you want to talk about the course material, your assignments, or any other philosophy-related concerns you have.

### **Schedule of readings and assignments**

**[Readings by Stone are from *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*; all other readings are in the reader]**

**Tuesday, August 27:** Course introduction

**Reading:** None

**Thursday, August 29:** What is oppression?

**Reading:** hooks, "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand" AND Hofstadter, "A Person Paper on Purity in Language"

**Tuesday, September 3:** What is oppression?

**Reading:** Johnson, "What Is This Thing Called Patriarchy?"

**Thursday, September 5:** What is oppression?

**Reading:** Frye, "Oppression"

**Monday, September 9 is the last day to turn in your first reading response on time**

**Tuesday, September 10:** What is oppression?

**Reading:** Boxill, "The Responsibility of the Oppressed to Resist Their Own Oppression"

**Thursday, September 12:** What are gender and sex?

**Reading:** None

**Take-home assignment 1 handed out Thursday**

**Tuesday, September 17:** Sex

**Reading:** Stone, ch. 1 (through p. 41)

**Thursday, September 19:** Sex

**Reading:** Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes"

**Tuesday, September 24:** Sex

**Reading:** Stone, ch. 1 (p. 41-end)

**Thursday, September 26:** Sex

**Reading:** Bergman, *The Nearest Exit May Be behind You*

**Take-home assignment 1 due Thursday**

**Tuesday, October 1:** Sex

**Reading:** Chappell, "Transwomen and Adoptive Parents: An Analogy"

**Thursday, October 3:** Sex

**Reading:** Padawer, "When Women Become Men at Wellesley"

**Tuesday, October 8:** Gender

**Reading:** Stone, ch. 2 (through p. 67)

**Wednesday, October 9 is the last day to turn in your second reading response on time**

**Thursday, October 10:** Gender

**Reading:** Stone, ch. 2 (p. 67-72)

**Tuesday, October 15:** Gender

**Reading:** Beauvoir, "From Maturity to Old Age"

**Thursday, October 17:** Gender

**Reading:** Spelman, "Simone de Beauvoir and Women"

**Take-home assignment 2 handed out Thursday**

**Tuesday, October 22:** Essentialism

**Reading:** Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking"

**Thursday, October 24:** Essentialism

**Reading:** Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"

**Tuesday, October 29:** Essentialism

**Reading:** Stone, ch. 5 (p. 158-end)

**Thursday, October 31:** Ethics of care

**Reading:** Gilligan, "Images of Relationship"

**Take-home assignment 2 due Thursday**

**Tuesday, November 5:** Ethics of care

**Reading:** Held, "The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory"

**Thursday, November 7:** Ethics of care

**Reading:** Moody-Adams, "Gender and the Complexity of Moral Voices"

**Tuesday, November 12:** Marriage

**Reading:** Brake, "Is Divorce Promise-Breaking?"

**Thursday, November 14:** Marriage

**Reading:** Card, "Against Marriage and Motherhood"

**Tuesday, November 19:** Marriage

**Reading:** Brake, "Minimal Marriage"

**Final paper assigned Tuesday**

**Thursday, November 21:** Marriage and chores

**Reading:** Okin, "Justice and Gender"

**Monday, November 25 is the last day to turn in your third reading response on time**

**Tuesday, November 26:** Marriage and chores

**Reading:** Payette, "The Feminist Wife: Notes from a Political 'Engagement'"

**Thursday, November 28:** THANKSGIVING

**Tuesday, December 3:** NO CLASS

**Thursday, December 5:** Peer-review sessions for final papers

**Reading:** None

**Finals week**

**Final paper due by 5 pm on Thursday, December 12**