

Government & Politics 479W “Justice, Gender & The Family”

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This class is an intense three weeks of looking at gender and justice, with readings in feminism, philosophy and sociology. It will require, just as with a physical class, several hours of work per day. There will be a heavy reading load, with 300+ pages per week, as well as ongoing online writing assignments and a final exam. I will post discussion questions, as well as occasional lectures, to which you will be required to respond. The goal will be developing a community online which functions just as a seminar classroom, with the presentation of diverse perspectives from both the texts and students.

Course Goals:

After this course, students should

- Gain a background in feminist theory
- Connect questions of gender and difference to arguments about justice
- Consider the relationship between law, institutions and individual choice
- Improve their written critiques of peers and authors

Course Themes (required texts in italics)

In Week One we will discuss briefly the history of women’s movements, and theoretical feminism. We will look at globally diverse views on women’s issues using *The Feminist Theory Reader*, and finish with a discussion of “post-feminism” via Ariel Levy’s *Female Chauvinist Pigs*.

Week Two will delve into philosophical treatments of women, family and politics through discussions of justice and difference. Seyla Benhabib's *Situating the Self* will help us look at how we can respond to the critiques offered by feminism, while Iris Marion Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* will explore how government and politics can be responsive to the variation in individuals and groups.

Finally, our last week will take us specifically to questions about the family and the workplace. We will read selections from Susan Okin's *Justice, Gender and the Family* to examine how institutions shape the choices men and women make, and finish with a novel, *The Ten Year Nap*, by Meg Wolitzer which explores the lives of women who have "dropped-out" of the workplace to raise families.

Requirements:

1. 40% Discussion Thread Posting/Participation

I will post questions and comments daily, and all students will be required to post **5 times per week**. A post entails 200-300 words that address either a question posed by me or the TA, or respond to another student's post. Posts should reference the text explicitly, preferring using quotes, and follow conventional grammar, punctuation and stylistic conventions. You are also required to fill out a profile on the first day of class.

2. 40% Reflection Papers

Students will be required to write **three 2-3 page reflection papers**, due 1/9, 1/14 & 1/19. Reflection papers should connect the reader to the writer's own experience and offer a critique or evaluation of the text. More information will be posted.

3. 20% Final Exam

The Final exam will consist of short answer and essay questions and will occur on 1/23. It will be posted at 9am and will be due by midnight, but will be designed to take up only a few hours. All readings for the course will be covered on the final.

BLACKBOARD

Clearly, this online course will require a lot of time spent on blackboard. Students will need to check for new assignments and postings every weekday, and will be expected to participate on the daily basis. The Instructor and the TA will hold occasional "chat" sessions where students can ask questions and get clarification, although the primary form of instruction will be over email. The chat schedule will be posted on blackboard, as will this syllabus and any other course requirements. Log in at www.elms.umd.edu

If you are registered for the course, then you have access to the course webspace for GVPT479W. The website will be used to post announcements and documents (including the syllabus), link to relevant websites, and provide other communications. Behind the scenes, we will be using it to manage course registration, grading, and submission of grades. If you have not used ELMS already, please sign up for training and/ or use the student guides available on the ELMS website. If you have trouble logging in to the system, you need to get help from the Office of Information Technology HelpDesk at 301-405-1400, or walk-in services at 1400 Computer and Space Science Building.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, just ask us and we will be happy to explain. See the Library's information page on plagiarism, at http://www.lib.umd.edu/UES/plag_stud_what.html

IMPORTANT DEADLINES INFORMATION

You must let us know by the end of the schedule adjustment period if there is a conflict between the course schedule (exams and due dates) and any religious obligations you have so we can make alternative arrangements. The University only excuses students from obligations on the actual holiday but not for any travel days you choose to take.

You must also let us know by the end of the schedule adjustment period of any physical or learning disability so we can accommodate your needs. We are happy to assist you in any way we can. You will need to document your disability through Disability Support Services.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday, January 5th
Course Introduction & Profile Exercise

Tuesday, January 6th

- Introduction, Section 1 “Definitions and Movements” Introduction, “We Egyptian Women” by Inji Aflatun, “The Second Sex” by Simone de Beauvoir, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression” by bell hooks, “Rethinking Sex & Gender” by Christine Delphy, “No More Miss America”, “Reproductive and Sexual Rights “A Feminist Perspective” by Sonia Correa & Rosalind Petchesky. “Ecofeminist Appropriations and Transnational Environmentalism” by Noel Sturgeon- all in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann & Seung-Kyung Kim.

Wednesday, January 7th

- Section Two “Theorizing Intersecting Identities” Introduction, “A Black Feminist Statement” by The Combahee River Collective, “The Preferential Symbol for Islamic Identity: Women in Muslim Personal Laws” by Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union” by Heidi Hartmann, “Capitalism, Imperialism and Patriarchy: The Dilemma of Third-World Women Workers in Multinational Factories by Linda Y.C. Lim, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” by Anne Koedt, “One is not born a Woman” by Monique Wittig all in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann & Seung-Kyung Kim.

Thursday, January 8th

- Section Three “Theorizing Feminist Agency and Politics” Introduction, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” by Donna Haraway, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” by Judith Butler, “Notes towards a Politics of Location” by Adrienne Rich. All in in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann & Seung-Kyung Kim.
- Excerpts from *Manliness* by Harvey Mansfield (online), Sarah Palin and Feminism from NPR (online)

Friday, January 9th

First Reflection Paper Due

- Levy, Ariel. *Feminist Chauvinist Pigs*. New York: Free Press, 2005. (all)

Week Two

Monday, January 12th

- Benhabib, Seyla. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Post-Modernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
Introduction, Chapter 5

Tuesday, January 13th

- Benhabib, Seyla. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Post-Modernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
Chapters 6-8

Wednesday, January 14th

Second Reflection Paper Due

- Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.
Introduction, Chapters 1-3

Thursday, January 15th

- Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.
Introduction, Chapters 4-6

Friday, January 16th

- Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.
Introduction, Chapters 7-8, Epilogue

Week Three

Monday, January 19th

Third Reflection Paper Due

- Hirschman, Linda R. *Get to Work...and get a life before it's too late*. New York: Penguin, 2006. All. (online)

Tuesday, January 20th

- Okin, Susan Moller *Justice, Gender and the Family*. New York: Basic Books, 2009. Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 8

Wednesday, January 21st

- Wollitzer, Meg. *The Ten Year Nap*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2008.
Chapters 1-10

Thursday, January 22nd

- Wollitzer, Meg. *The Ten Year Nap*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2008.
Chapters 11- 19

Friday, January 23rd

Final Exam