

# SYLLABUS

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## **Political Science 302 A2: Topics in Political Thought: Feminist Political Thought**

**Fall Semester 2013, T/R 1400-1520**

Course website: [www.cressidaheyes.com/students/pols302a2](http://www.cressidaheyes.com/students/pols302a2)

**Dr. Cressida J. Heyes**

*Professor of Political Science and Philosophy*

*Canada Research Chair in Philosophy of Gender and Sexuality*

**Department of Political Science**

**11-27 HM Tory**

[cressida.heyes@ualberta.ca](mailto:cressida.heyes@ualberta.ca)

[www.cressidaheyes.com](http://www.cressidaheyes.com)

**Tel: 492 9970**

**Office hours:** Thursday 9.30-11.30am starting September 5 and ending December 5 (no office hours on September 19, October 17, October 24). Also by appointment.

Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University *Calendar*.

This syllabus is only available on-line as a PDF at <http://cressidaheyes.com/students/pols302a2/>. It may be amended to correct errors, or to make minor additions or changes as the course progresses only with consent of students registered in the course; subsequent editions of the syllabus will be posted alongside the original. The most recent version of the syllabus is binding.

*“Every course outline must include an indication of how students will be given access to past or representative evaluative course material”* (GFC 23.4). As this course does not include an exam, this regulation is not applicable.

*“Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.”*

## Course description

This course will offer an overview of contemporary feminist political thought. It comes in two parts: in the first part of the term we'll walk through a basic overview of feminist theoretical frameworks: the sex/gender distinction; the "social construction" of gender; discrimination, oppression, and normalization as frameworks for conceptualizing gender injustice; and (indirectly) debates about equality and difference. In the second part of term we will examine three topical issues in feminist political theory as they relate to these frameworks: "intersectionality" (debates about how gender is always experienced and must be studied as inseparable from race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexuality, class, religious context); agency (how political action is possible and what it means to be free under conditions of social injustice); and the connection between normative feminist political theory and empirical questions about gender and politics. The course will be theoretically rigorous and aim to provide students of political science with a clear basis for thinking more deeply and critically about the demands of gender in contemporary political life.

The course is taught with an active learning component—i.e. in addition to listening to me lecturing, students will be expected to participate in neighbourly or small group conversation, reading comprehension, writing, or problem-solving exercises, and class discussion or Q & A. Important qualities for success include not just ability to think theoretically but also a willingness to be open to diverse and seemingly heretical perspectives and to engage in thoughtful criticism, including quite possibly self-criticism. I try hard to make the class into a positive environment for students of all genders (different kinds of men, women, transpeople, queer-identified people, etc.), and this effort also relies on the good faith, compassion, and generosity of all participants.

## Reading

**All readings for the course are available on-line.** The course website includes a reading list with links to each reading. The reading averages two articles of 15-20 pages per week, and careful preparation for class activities and discussion is expected. Give yourself time to access, print (if necessary), and read the texts. If you find yourself perplexed by the level of detail at which the readings are discussed, or unable to recall the content of arguments you've read when we analyse them in class, you may not be reading well. Look at the reading guidelines posted on the course website.

## Schedule

Class will meet from September 5 to December 3 every Tuesday and Thursday 1400-1520, with the exception of Thursday September 19 and Tuesday November 12 (fall term class break). Please make every effort to arrive on time for class and please do not leave early unless you have an unavoidable reason on a particular day.

## Course goals

### 1. Content-oriented goals

This course aims to...

- Teach you a rigorous yet accessible set of theoretical frameworks for making sense of gender and gender injustice in everyday life and in other academic contexts.
- Dispel myths about feminism, and introduce you to the richness and diversity of feminist frameworks.
- Provide a transparent way of linking (feminist) political theory with the broader field of political science.

### 2. Skill-based goals

This course aims to...

- Show you how to read theoretical texts closely and well.
- Teach you how to represent complex texts in short, pithy pieces of writing.
- Teach you how to ask a good critical question about a text.
- Model effective, sincere, and worthwhile group discussion.

## Evaluation

See also the guiding documents on the website under “evaluation,” which are appendices to this syllabus.

- Attendance and participation will count for 10% of your grade.
- Short papers: during the term you’ll write **six** short papers (maximum strictly **500 words**, or about two double-spaced pages). Each paper will summarize an assigned article for your purposes and then motivate and pose a critical question about it. Each paper will be worth 15% of your grade.
  - **Four** of the papers will be assigned on articles we have already discussed, so that you can draw on the lecture and any discussion. Those papers will be due by the end of the class (3.20pm) *after* the class in which we discussed the reading.
  - **Two** of the papers will be assigned on articles we have yet to discuss, so that you are prepared for class, and develop your ability to read independently. Those papers will be due at the beginning of the class (2pm) *in which* the article is being discussed.
  - Late penalty for short papers is one grade increment per 24 hours or part of 24 hours: e.g. a B+ paper due on Tuesday at 3.20pm but handed in on Thursday at 9.30am will receive a B-. Late papers may be e-mailed as Word attachments but otherwise please hand in a paper copy of your work in class.
  - Please attach a “cover page” to the **BACK** of your short paper and put your name **ONLY** on that page. (I grade papers anonymously in the first instance as there’s now quite a bit of evidence that this helps to correct various kinds of implicit bias.)
- **November addendum:** *If you wish to write an optional seventh paper (on the same basis as papers 5 and 6) you may choose any text remaining and submit your paper at the beginning of the class in which it is to be discussed. Your lowest grade among the seven papers will be dropped from calculation of your final grade.*

The class is graded to a standard of merit, not on a curve (i.e. it's possible for everyone to get an A—or a D!). Nonetheless, my historical grading record tracks the U of A averages for 300-level courses, with the median grade typically being a B.

Advice, expectations, and standards for grading for each evaluated component of the course will be discussed in class and are posted on the course website.

If you have any concerns about your ability to meet the course requirements, or if you need any **accommodations due to a disability**, don't hesitate to contact me *as early in the term as possible*.

If something goes terribly wrong in your life, avoid at all costs skipping class, not handing your work in or doing it really badly, and then showing up in December when you realise a poor grade is inevitable to plead your case. If you explain yourself as soon as possible it is much easier to sympathise and help you avoid penalties.

### **Policy on academic dishonesty:**

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

## **Class-by-class schedule**

This schedule represents the *maximum* amount of reading we'll do. Some readings may be dropped if we decide to spend more time on deeper comprehension, discussion, or a topical issue comes up.

September 5: Introduction to the course

### **Part I: Feminist approaches to sex and gender**

#### **Week 2: Sex and gender**

September 10: Leslie Feinberg, "We Are All Works in Progress"

September 12: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough"

*NB: September 17 is drop/add deadline.*

#### **Week 3: The social construction of sex**

September 17: ✍ Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles."

*No class September 19.*

#### **Week 4: How does gender work?**

September 24: Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction" to *The Second Sex*. First short paper on Martin due by end of class.

September 26: ✍ Marilyn Frye, "Oppression."

#### **Week 5: Gender as hierarchy**

October 1: (✍) Sandra Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression." Second short paper on Frye due by end of class.

October 3: (✍) Iris Marion Young, "The Five Faces of Oppression"

#### **Week 6: Gender as experience**

October 8: Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." Third short paper on *either* Bartky *or* Young due by end of class.

October 10: ✍ Talia Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion."

#### **Week 7: Gender and power**

October 15: catch-up day. Fourth short paper on Bettcher due by end of class.

October 17: [guest lecture] Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power"

## Part II: Feminism and political theory

### Week 8: The state of the field

October 22: Sharon Krause, “Contested Questions, Current Trajectories: Feminism in Political Theory Today.”

October 24: Sexual Assault Education and Awareness workshop

### Theme 1: “Intersectionality”

October 29: Christine Overall, “Nowhere at Home.”

October 31: Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”

November 5: ✍ Linda Lopez McAlister, “My Grandmother’s Passing.” Fifth short paper on Lopez McAlister due by beginning of class.

November 7: [no new reading today] Presentation on feminist humanistic research

*No class November 12 (fall term class break)*

### Theme 2: Agency

November 14: Natalie Stoljar, “Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition”

November 19: Saba Mahmood, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent.”

November 21: Evaluations and completing discussion of Stoljar/Mahmood.

### Theme 3: Normative political theory and empirical study of gender and politics:

November 26: Guest interview with Linda Trimble. “Melodrama and Gendered Mediation: Television Coverage of Women’s Leadership ‘Coups’ in New Zealand and Australia.” ✍ Sixth and final paper on Trimble due by beginning of class.

November 28: Guest interview with Lois Harder, “The State and the Friendships of the Nation.”

### Week 14: Wrap-up

December 3: No new reading. Please bring one artifact, question, experience/anecdote, fact or statistic, that concerns gender and power but remains un- or under-explained for you at the end of the course.