

**Gender and Political Theory**  
**Political Science 477:01, CID 4114**  
**Fall 2009**

*Tuesdays and Thursdays*  
*9:30 – 10:50*  
*CHSS 232*  
*Office Hours: T, H 1–2*  
*By appointment*

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### **Course description**

This is a discussion-based class intended for those who have either familiarity with or interest in political philosophy. The aim is to revisit some of the foundational texts of the so-called ‘Western canon’ with a specific feminist perspective and to seek the political philosophical implications of selected feminist approaches. The course has a dual focus: it is a content class that introduces participants to a particular way of reading and interpreting texts, and it is a skills class that trains participants in critical thinking by asking them to formulate their own questions.

### **Learning Outcomes**

This course will provide participants two types of opportunities to engage in the quintessential theoretical activity: questioning. You will be introduced to a paradigm of questioning governed by kindred commitments, and you will be invited to work out some of your own contribution to the practice of questioning. In other words, you will be introduced to the way some feminists have challenged some canonical thinkers and you will be asked to come up with questions of your own. This dual focus will furnish both contents and skills that will transfer to other inquiries participants as intellectuals may embark upon.

**Prerequisites: 6 hours of Political Science.**

**Credit hours: 3.**

### **Course texts**

A number of the required texts for this course are made available through **electronic reserve** through NGL and/ or Blackboard. These texts are marked by (!) in the tentative course schedule. Please note that they are **required** and not optional.

Texts **required for purchase** are the following, along with the abbreviations that identify them on the course schedule:

Mitchell Cohen and Nicole Ferman, eds. Princeton readings in political thought (PR) – available in the bookstore – UNLESS SELECTIONS IN PR ARE NOTED, READ EVERYTHING BY AUTHORS IN THAT VOLUME

Molly Shanley and Carole Pateman, eds. *Feminist interpretations and political theory* (FI) – available in the bookstore

Wendy Brown. *Manhood and politics* (MP) – available in the bookstore

Finally, one text, Zillah Eisenstein: *The radical future of liberal feminism* (RFLF) relevant to the course, is out of print. Thus the selections of this text that appear on the course schedule, are **recommended but not required**. They will serve as the basis for lectures and discussions. A copy of the book is on reserve at NGL and may be used on the premises for two-hour intervals. Please note that the only extra credit opportunity in this course relies on this text (RFLF).

## Assignments

This course will have the following types of graded written assignments:

### ➤ application papers

These papers are about authors and topics of your choice. There are no pre-approved topics.

Since two of them are required, one may be either about a ‘classic’ from the course or about an ‘analysis’ or secondary text from the course. It is necessary that at least one of them be about a classic source text from the course.

The purpose, and therefore, the structure of the application papers is focused on applying something from a course text to contemporary realities. For instance, if there is a particular view of gender or sex roles that a source text endorses, you may write about whether that view still works well today. Or if a feminist analysis of a classic points out a problem in the classical text, you may write about whether more recently, that problem has been remedied. The structure is to start from a required text and apply it to today’s reality.

Using secondary literature for application papers is allowed but not required. If, however, you choose to use secondary sources, you have to identify and cite them properly.

Application papers will be 1500 to 2300 words, with word counts appearing clearly next to your name. There will be penalties for papers under 1400 and papers over 2500 words as well as for missing word counts.

### ➤ exams

Exams in this course will be open-book and open-note. You may bring your source texts and notes you took in class, with you to take the exams. You are not, however, allowed to use printouts from websites that propose to summarize and / or explain philosophical works.

You will have a choice of questions (two or three will be on the exam and you will have to choose one to write about) and you will have the entire class period to write.

Please come to class with a blue book (or multiple blue books) and a pen.

### ➤ research topic / thesis statement

This is a short but crucially important assignment. You will have to write no more than a short paragraph – but in this short piece, you will have to identify the topic about which you will be writing your final research paper and sketch out a line of argument. Bluntly put, the assignment is supposed to demonstrate that you know what you are doing and have a good idea about how to do it.

The research topic is a graded assignment that will be returned to you with comments aiming to help you improve the project. These comments will be necessary to prepare the rewrite of the topic.

➤ research topic / thesis statement re-write

This assignment will allow class participants to respond to the comments on the research topic, to make the project clearer and to get further along in preparing the final project.

Because this stage of the work requires a bibliography, this assignment has to prove that you not only know what you are doing and how you are arguing it, but that you are also aware of the arguments ‘out there’ that will help you make your case. Make no mistake: in order to turn in a decent bibliography, you have to have your source-collecting work done. **There will be penalties for turning in final research papers with bibliographies that have sources not identical to the re-write.**

The rewrite will not be commented on and will not be returned to you.

For those members of the class who only get congratulatory comments on their research topic and get full scores on that assignment, the rewrite becomes a different exercise. While it will still have to have a bibliography just like in every other case, the text to be produced will have to be the introduction to the paper.

➤ final research paper

Given the level of the course, this assignment ought to need the least amount of explanation. It is an academic research paper, with scholarly sources, an original argument and good writing. You will have to conform to the qualitative expectations of academic writing as well as the logistical / mechanical expectations of citations, sourcing, etc. You will be free to choose which citation style you rely on, so long as you are able to use one consistently and proficiently.

The research paper will be 3000 to 4000 words in length, with a word count clearly appearing next to your name. There will be penalties for papers under 2800 or over 5000 words.

The reason for the research topic / thesis statement and re-write assignments is to make sure that the final paper is neither utterly nerve-wrecking nor done in the 36-hour period leading to its due date. Please also note the multiple workshop opportunities in the latter part of the course to facilitate your work process, along with time away from class to create the opportunity to do literature searches.

This paper is the final project in the course and therefore it is due at the time scheduled by SHSU for a final exam for this course. Because the paper replaces the final, there is no final exam per se.

## Grading plan

The following components will go into your final grade in this course:

2 in-class exams	30% (15% each)
2 'application' papers	20% (10% each)
research topic / thesis statement	5%
re-write and bibliography	10%
attendance	10%
final research paper	25%

**Extra credit:** Even though the practice of extra credit assignments is controversial and discouraged at SHSU, it is possible to earn some extra points in this course. For those who so desire, it is acceptable to turn in an extra writing assignment with the following conditions:

- the subject matter is restricted: extra credit points will only be assigned to personal reaction papers about Eisenstein's book (RFLF) – specifically, papers of this nature will have to deal with the timeliness or otherwise of Eisenstein's points today
- the length requirements for the extra credit papers are the same as for the application papers (1500 to 2300 words expected, with a penalty range under 1400 and over 2500 words)
- writing an extra credit paper does not guarantee that the maximum possible points will be assigned to it
- the maximum one can earn on an extra credit paper is 5%
- it is expected that those who choose to write this type of paper will familiarize themselves with RFLF

Grades will be assigned on the standard grading scale:

A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and below.

## Course policies

The policies that govern this course are included on the BlackBoard site of the course, under Course Documents. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and abiding by, the contents of the 'Course Policies' document and that everything in it has the same force as other items on the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the document early on.

## Course evaluations

Towards the end of the semester, you will be asked to fill out anonymous evaluations about the course.

## Tentative course schedule

day	date	topic	due on this day	
	25-Aug	T	intro	
	27-Aug	H	Nicholson (!)	
	1-Sep	T	Brown (!)	
	3-Sep	H	Nicholson and Brown (!)	
	8-Sep	T	Video: The Beauty Myth	
	10-Sep	H	Plato PR	
	15-Sep	T	Okin FI	
	17-Sep	H	Aristotle PR	
	22-Sep	T	Saxenhouse FI	application paper 1
	24-Sep	H	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
	29-Sep	T	MP Ch 2-3-4	
	1-Oct	H	MP Ch 2-3-4	
	6-Oct	T	Machiavelli PR	
	8-Oct	H	MP Ch 5	
	13-Oct	T	MP CH 6 + RFLF 1-13	
	15-Oct	H	Locke PR	
	20-Oct	T	Butler FI	
	22-Oct	H	RFLF 33-54	application paper 2
	27-Oct	T	Rousseau PR	
	29-Oct	H	Lange FI	research topic
	3-Nov	T	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
	5-Nov	H	<i>research topic workshop</i>	
	10-Nov	T	AUDEM - no class meeting	
	12-Nov	H	AUDEM - no class meeting	
	17-Nov	T	RFLF 55-88	research topic rewrite plus bib
	19-Nov	H	RFLF 89-112	
	24-Nov	T	<i>research workshop</i>	
	1-Dec	T	Mill PR	
	3-Dec	H	Shanley FI	
	8-Dec	T	Faludi (!)	
	10-Dec	H	<i>recap and research topic workshop</i>	

*final exam to be scheduled by SHSU – that is the due date for the final paper*