

**Phil 280/FMST 168**

**Topics in Feminist  
Philosophy**

**Fall 2024**

**Instructor: Carolina Flores** (she/they); caro.flores@ucsc.edu

*Class Hours:* Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-3:05 pm

*Classroom:* Physical Sciences 136

*Office:* Cowell College Faculty Office Addition, Office 104

*Office Hours:* Tuesdays 12-1pm, Wednesdays 4-6pm. (full schedule and sign-up sheet [here](#)). If you absolutely cannot make these times, email me to schedule an appointment.

You can address me as: Prof./Dr. Flores; Carolina; Caro, as you feel most comfortable.

## Communications

I strive to reply to emails within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. If you do not receive a response within this timeframe, kindly send me a reminder email. **Before emailing, check the syllabus** to see if your question is addressed. Do not email about handing in assignments late; just hand them in and they will be graded with the corresponding penalty. Similarly, do not email about justifying your first two absences. (Do email if you have a serious emergency and will need accommodations.)

## Required Texts

All readings, handouts, assignments, and announcements will be posted on Canvas.

## Course Description

This course will start from the current state of feminism, and delve into some of the liveliest debates shaping feminist discourse and action today: What is mainstream feminism missing, to what extent has it been co-opted by the powerful, and how are we to understand that process? What should feminism do about men, in light of both the fact that they are falling behind on a number of measures and the fact that gendered violence remains high? Do our socially shaped desires contribute to oppression, and what should we do about them? In the course of doing so, we will talk about Taylor Swift as a feminist, Black women in sports, trad wives, incels, online dating, and BDSM, among other topics.

We will read both classic texts in feminist philosophy and cutting-edge work, and go beyond that in looking at manifestos and recent news stories. As the course moves on, we will collectively arrive at a clearer, more nuanced take on current feminist debates, come up with our own answers to difficult questions about which there is no (feminist) consensus, and develop a solid foundation in crucial

feminist concepts and theories (such as the concepts of intersectionality, oppression, gendered performance, submission, and desire).

A **content warning**: we will discuss a range of contentious and emotionally fraught topics throughout the course, including sexual violence, racism, and transphobia. It is natural to find much of this hard to talk about, disturbing, or hurtful. I want us to learn to live with, and work through, these feelings of discomfort in a way that deepens our understanding. In the first week, we will jointly set norms for engaging and participating in class taking into account these risks. Beyond that, let me know if you need accommodations in weeks where we are covering specific topics.

## Course Goals

In this course, you will:

- Critically examine and reevaluate your own personal belief and value system (and the origin of this system), as well as the strengths and shortcomings of different feminist positions;
- Acquire a clear grasp of the concepts and theories feminists have developed to help us understand and respond to gender-based oppression;
- Develop the ability to apply concepts and theories feminists have developed to critically assess the broad socio-political context and your own personal conduct and interactions;
- Achieve a more sophisticated understanding of key debates in contemporary feminism, and come to develop your own position in these debates.

In pursuing these course-specific goals, you will also acquire the following general skills:

- Charitably interpreting, assessing, and responding to contrary views and opinions;
- Effectively and concisely communicating complex ideas in your writing;
- Asking difficult critical questions about positions you identify with;
- Coping with uncertainty and discomfort when it comes to thinking about socially significant topics, and disagreeing with peers;
- Engaging in respectful, reasoned, and passionate debate with peers about complex topics, and to use such debate as a tool in understanding the social world.

## Course Requirements

Regular work	Due date	55%
Reading annotations on Hypothesis (lowest 2 grades will be dropped, so you can miss 2 without penalty)	Day before class, 11:59 pm	10%
Class exit tickets	When leaving class	20%
5 short assignments, weeks 2-6 of the course (5% each)	Friday, 11:59 pm	25%

<b>Final paper</b>		<b>45%</b>
Outline	Nov 15, 11:59 pm	6%
Outline feedback form	Nov 19, 30 minutes after class	2%
First draft	Nov 27, 11:59 pm	15%
Draft feedback form	Dec 3, 30 minutes after class	2%
Final paper (5% for explanation of how feedback was incorporated, 15% for paper)	Dec 11, 11:59 pm	20%

## Workload Expectations

**Each week, I expect you to spend** about 6-8 hours a week on the class (with additional work for the final):

- 2 - 4 hours on active reading and annotating the texts,
- 3 hours in class,
- For weeks 2-6 of the course: 1 hour on the short writing assignment (including reviewing relevant material on skills, writing, and revising)
- 30 minutes on additional activities (such as organizing your weekly work, reflecting on feedback, coming to office hours, or discussing material with your peers).

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

Class date	Topic	Readings
Sep 26	Module 0. Introduction and discourse norms.	No reading.
Oct 1		Syllabus. Briana Toole, “Standpoint epistemology and epistemic peerhood: A defense of epistemic privilege”
Module 1. The state of feminism today.		
Oct 3	What is mainstream feminism missing?	Combahee River Collective, Statement Olufemi Taiwo, <i>Elite Capture</i> , Introduction and Chapter 1
Oct 8		Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a woman?” Jules Gil-Peterson, “ <a href="#">Transgender compromise</a> ” Susan Shaw, “ <a href="#">Transphobia in women’s sports is dangerous for all women</a> ” (Ms. Magazine)

Oct 10		Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics" Anika Sapra, <a href="#">"Taylor Swift, white feminism, and the illusion of inclusivity"</a> (Women's Media Center)
Oct 15	The reaction to feminism: misogyny and trad wives.	Kate Manne, <i>Down Girl</i> , Chapter 2 Judith Butler, <a href="#">"Why is the idea of 'gender' provoking backlash the world over?"</a>
Oct 17		Manon Garcia, <i>We Are Not Born Submissive</i> , Chapter 8 Judy Brady, <a href="#">"I want a wife"</a> Niloufar Haidari, <a href="#">"If this is the age of the tradwife then I'm ready to die alone"</a> (Dazed)
Module 2. What should be done about men?		
Oct 22	Are men oppressed under patriarchy?	Iris Marion Young, "The five faces of oppression" Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"
Oct 24		Richard Reeves, <i>Of Boys and Men</i> , chapters 1-3 Robin Dembroff, <a href="#">"Patriarchy hurts all of us: Including men"</a> (podcast)
Oct 29	Is what is needed a better masculinity?	Judith Butler, "Performative acts and gender constitution"
Oct 31		Matt Andler, "What is masculinity?" Valerie Solanas, "The SCUM Manifesto" (selections)
Module 3. Desire and sexuality as feminist battlegrounds.		
Nov 5	How is desire socially constructed and what should we do about it?	Catherine MacKinnon, "Sex and violence: A perspective" Peggy Orenstein, "The troubling trend in teen sex" <b>Content warning:</b> discussion of sexual violence.
Nov 7		Amia Srinivasan, "The right to sex" and "Coda: The politics of desire"
Nov 12		A.W. Eaton, "Taste in bodies and fat oppression" Celeste Curington, <a href="#">"Dating apps are rife with 'digital-sexual racism'"</a>
Nov 14		No class - instructor away at a conference.
Nov 19		Outline workshop
Nov 21	How can we have sexual agency in a non-ideal	Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic" Quill Kukla, "'That's what she said': The language of sexual negotiation"

<b>Nov 26</b>	<b>world?</b>	Dee Payton, “Scenes as games: Agency, autonomy, and value in BDSM” - <b>The author zooms into class!</b>
<b>Nov 28</b>		No class - Thanksgiving break.
<b>Dec 3</b>		Paper draft workshop
<b>Dec 5</b>		Review OR new topic by request

## Instructions for assignments and rubrics

### Regular work

#### Reading annotations on Hypothesis

I expect you to annotate the texts using Hypothesis, a program for collective study. You can access the readings on Hypothesis from the Home page on Canvas: by clicking on “Article title (Read & Annotate)”. This lets you view others’ annotations, upvote your favorites, and comment on others’ annotations.

These annotations are graded on a **Pass-Fail** basis. For a pass (full points), you should write at least 2 annotations, and at least one of these should be in the second half of the text. These can include substantive replies to others’ annotations—in fact, I encourage this. Each annotation should be a sentence that shows some thinking (i.e., not just ‘Great!’ or ‘I disagree!’); at least 40 words. Examples of good annotations include:

- Explaining a key idea from the text in your own words,
- Explaining why you disagree with a key idea in the text, or with what one of your peers writes,
- Replying to one of the instructor’s annotations, which will typically be questions for you,
- Seeking clarification on a bit of terminology that isn’t clear to you, noting some options for what it might mean in the context,
- Posing a thoughtful question on an idea in the text, inviting further exploration,
- Responding to one of your classmates’ questions,
- Offering a real-world example of a phenomenon discussed in the text,
- Drawing a connection between the reading and other material covered in the course.

These are due the evening before lecture (i.e. 11:59 PM on Monday and 11:59 PM on Wednesday).

#### Short assignments

In **weeks 2-6**, 5 short assignments will be due, each on **Friday** at 11:59 PM. The goal of these is to give you a chance to practice key philosophical skills that will be helpful for the final. The format of these will vary, but for the most part they will require you to respond to a specific prompt in between 300 and 500 words. Short assignments should be submitted without identifying information (i.e. your name should be nowhere on the submission) on Canvas by the date listed.

Oct 11	Oct 18	Oct 25	Nov 1	Nov 8
Short assignment 1	Short assignment 2	Short assignment 3	Short assignment 4	Short assignment 5

These will be graded based on the rubric below, with grades ending in 0.5 for fine-tuning.

- **5 points:** fully addresses all parts of the prompt. Concise, clearly written, and specific. Shows engagement with at least one of the texts for the week, and mastery of the philosophical skill under practice.
- **4 points:** addresses the full prompt and is mostly relevant to the topic, and shows competence with the philosophical skill under practice. But: (a) some points may be poorly or insufficiently articulated; or (b) shows some difficulties with the philosophical skill under practice; or (c) fails to engage with relevant texts; or (d) is under or over the word limit. (At most one of these issues is visible)
- **3 points:** addresses the full prompt and is mostly relevant to the topic, but: two or three of the problems above are present; or shows significant confusion with respect to the key skill for the week; or addresses at most half the prompt at 5-level.
- **2 points:** addresses at most half the prompt and at 4-point level; or addresses the full prompt, but it is unclear and shows significant confusion about major points.
- **1 point:** addresses at most half the prompt and it is unclear, fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.
- **0 points:** unintelligible and unrelated or academic misconduct.

## Final paper

The final paper will include three stages and two in-section workshops (in groups of 2 or 3 students). All deadlines are at midnight. All should be submitted via Canvas, by the deadline, with **no identifying information** (i.e. with your name nowhere on the PDF), in a standard font, size 12, double-spaced.

With those specifications, the outline should be about 1 page. The paper draft should be 4-8 pages. And the final paper should be no less than 5 pages and no more than 7 pages.

Nov 16	Nov 19	Nov 27	Dec 3	Dec 11
Outline deadline.	In-class outline workshop.	Paper draft deadline.	In-class paper draft workshop.	Final paper due.

Papers (and outlines) should be submitted with **no identifying information** (i.e. your name should be nowhere in the PDF) through Canvas by the due date (midnight of the day listed).

## Outline and paper draft

You are expected to come up with your own question for the final paper. (We will spend time in class discussing how to ask good questions.) I will grade both your outline and your first draft. (Rubric below.) You will also get comments from me after the in-section peer review session.

In addition, you must participate in an in-section workshop where you will give each other feedback on your outlines and drafts. During this workshop, you will fill in a feedback sheet on the work that you review. You will get credit for filling in this feedback form thoughtfully (and no credit otherwise).

If you can't make it to the section in which the workshop happens for unavoidable reasons (e.g. you are sick): you will be allowed to make up for this by completing the activity in office hours ASAP after the in-section workshop. In that case, you should email me by the day after the class you missed to make arrangements.

### Rubric for the outline and paper draft

The outline and paper draft are meant to be exploratory, revealing of real effort and thinking, but by no means perfect. This is reflected in the rubric. Below is roughly what each letter grade means. Note that '+' and '-' grades will be assigned for fine-tuning.

**A:** The selected question is (at least close to) appropriate: relevant to the course, interesting, and not overly ambitious. The outline/draft fully answers the question. It includes a sketch of what could be turned into a strong argument, though at this stage there might be imprecisions and gaps. It considers an objection. It is clear enough that it can be easily understood. More importantly, it shows independent and creative thinking, going beyond what we discussed in class, as well as making a serious attempt to grapple with some of the key relevant concepts and ideas we have covered in the course.

**B:** The question is appropriate and mostly answered, but it is missing crucial parts of the argumentative structure or does not consider an objection. OR: It does not show independent thinking, merely providing a rote summary of points made in class, despite fully answering an appropriate question. OR: Despite fully answering an appropriate question, it fails to engage with key concepts and ideas covered in the course, with the analysis staying at a superficial level. OR: Is at A-level, but under or over the page count, OR: the question asked is faulty (not relevant, not interesting, or too ambitious).

**C:** More-or-less off-topic and unclear. Fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.

**D and below:** scarce evidence of effort or understanding along all dimensions.

**F:** dishonest work.

## Final paper

For the final paper, you will be requested to submit, at the top of your paper, a brief (half to 1.5 pages) summary of how you implemented feedback (coming from either the outline workshop, the paper draft workshop, or from me). This will be graded out of 5 as follows, with grades ending in 0.5 for fine-tuning:

- **5 points:** clearly and specifically notes at least 3 pieces of feedback received, as well as summarizing how they are addressed and in what ways addressing them improved the paper.
- **4 points:** does the same as above, but only for 2 pieces of feedback. Or: notes 3 pieces of feedback, but for one of them precisely one of how it is addressed or how doing so improved the paper is not clear.
- **3 points:** Notes 2 or 3 pieces of feedback, but only for one of them is it clear how it is addressed and how doing so improved the paper.
- **2 points:** only considers one piece of feedback, but does it well. Or: considers 2 or 3 pieces of feedback, but why those were chosen and how they were addressed is not clear for any of them.
- **1 point:** only considers one piece of feedback, and there are issues there.
- **0 points:** unintelligible and unrelated.

The paper itself is worth the remaining points. This is roughly what each letter grade means. Note that '+' and '-' grades will be assigned for fine-tuning.

**A:** Fully answers the question in a concise and convincing manner. Provides a strong argument, with a clearly stated, relevant thesis, a transparent argument structure, and compelling premises. Considers objections and makes a persuasive effort to address them. Writes clearly, in plain language, and uses terminology in a precise manner. Shows insight by going beyond examples, views, or objections discussed in class.

**B:** Answers most of the question. Provides a solid argument, with a clear thesis, mostly transparent argument structure, and relevant premises, though the argument may have some significant gaps. Displays understanding of the topic by considering other views, though perhaps without articulating points independently or while showing confusion about some significant point. Writes mostly in a clear manner, though there might be inaccuracies that compromise the points made.

**C:** More-or-less off-topic and unclear. Fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.

**D and below:** scarce evidence of effort or understanding along all dimensions.

**F:** dishonest work.



## Grading scale

This class uses the following standard grading scale:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
97-100	93-96	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59

## Extra credit

Extra credit will be granted only for the following:

- 1% to **all** students if at least 80% of enrolled students fill in the course [SETS survey](#).
- 1% for attending office hours, having sent in 2 substantive questions by email in advance.
  - Examples of substantive questions are: “I didn’t understand this argument /concept in the reading. Can you explain?”; “What are the applications of view X for real-world issue Y?”; “Here is my objection to the view in paper X.”; or questions about your own work, e.g. “How can I improve the structure of my papers?”, or “How can I improve my time management?”
- 1% for submitting a substantive question, with a 1-paragraph explanation of the background, for the final review.

Note that the last two are not cumulative: you can get at most 1 point of extra credit by either attending office hours or submitting a question for the final review. No additional extra credit will be granted.

## Absences and late assignments

### Absences

Attending and actively participating in class is mandatory. If you cannot commit to doing so on a regular basis, then I recommend that you switch into another class. That said, I don’t want people coming to class if they are sick, and I understand that you might need to take days off for other reasons. For this reason, you can **miss up to 2 class meetings** without penalty. If it is going to be one of your first 2 absences, do **not** email me. If, for some *unavoidable* and *serious* reason, you need to miss more than 2 classes, email me to discuss make-up work.

### Late assignments

**You can miss two reading annotations without penalty.** I recommend that you save this leeway for potential emergencies/illness/mental health days. And **you can request 1 penalty free 72-hour extension** on the total of: short writing assignments, outline, paper draft, final paper. You can do so by

noting, in the comments field on Canvas when you submit your work, “I am requesting my free extension”. (Use it wisely!)

Beyond these exceptions, if handed in late, assignments will automatically be downgraded 10% per day. After 10 days, no late assignments are allowed.

Until late assignments are graded, you will see a “0” on Canvas, as I’ve set it to auto-populate a score of 0 into every missing assignment once the due date has passed. Late assignments will be graded when time permits, within 2 weeks of submission, and you won’t receive comments; your grade will change then.

If you have a serious, unavoidable emergency (e.g., the death of a close family member, serious illness, etc.), email me and we will figure out an accommodation.

## Academic integrity and plagiarism

I expect you to be familiar with and to abide by the [university’s academic misconduct policy](#). Violations of this policy include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

In general, anything more than 3 consecutive words from another source should include a citation to that source. If you submit work that appears to have been written using unauthorized sources, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your thinking and writing process. I will also ask you to talk through your submission orally so I can assess your knowledge in real time. If, after our conversation, I conclude it’s more likely than not that you did not personally complete an assignment you submitted under your name, you will get a 0 on the assignment, I may give you a failing grade for the entire course, and I will definitely report the incident to the university administration for further sanctions.

## ChatGPT and other generative AI tools

**TL;DR:** Unless you are specifically instructed to use AI in an assignment prompt, using generative AI for ANY task related to this course is not allowed.

**Full version:** Philosophy is all about critical thinking and skillful writing, both of which can only be developed through concerted effort over time. You’re here to learn those skills, and using AI will keep you from doing that.

The easiest way to ensure that your writing does not come under suspicion for AI use is to not use AI. Here is the AI policy for my classes:

- You may not use ChatGPT or any other generative AI platform or technology, including (but not limited to) Bing, Bard, DALL-E, Grammarly Premium, StudyBuddy, predictive text, etc.
- Unless *explicitly* instructed to do so for a specific assignment, you may not use AI for any reason, including (but not limited to) thinking, writing, brainstorming, researching, outlining, editing, or literally any other purpose on the planet that you could conceive of.

- Translation software (including, but not limited to, Google Translate) counts as an AI platform, so its use is strictly prohibited. Even if English is not your first language, you must write your papers directly in English rather than writing them in your native language and translating them. You may look up individual words in an English/Your-Native-Language online dictionary, but you may not use an online translator to translate phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or papers.
- I expect you to be able to easily define any word you use in your writing; please be sure to learn and memorize the definitions of any new words you have gotten from a dictionary.
- For spell-check and grammar-check functions, you are limited to Grammarly Basic (*not* Premium) or the basic spell-check and grammar-check features that come pre-loaded with word-processing software such as MS Word or Google Docs. You may not use any other editing software, nor should you use the suggestive/predictive text that such software proposes.

If you have any questions about this policy, please ask me so I can provide clarification.

## Discourse Norms and Expectations

I expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions, and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way. Beyond this, we will collectively devise explicit discussion norms in the first two course meetings.

## Accessibility Accommodations

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your [Academic Access Letter](#) from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, as soon as possible in the academic quarter, preferably within 1 week. I also encourage you to discuss with me ways we can ensure your full participation in this course. I encourage all students who may benefit to learn about the DRC and the UCSC accommodation process. You can visit the DRC website at [drc.ucsc.edu](http://drc.ucsc.edu). You can make an appointment and meet in-person with a DRC staff member. The phone number is [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089), or email [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).

## Religious accommodations

UC Santa Cruz welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation without penalty. You should first discuss the conflict and your

requested accommodation with your instructor early in the term. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the [Dean of Students office](#).

## Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.