



PHI 347:  
Gender & Philosophy  
with Dr. Sarah Vincent



Course Description

The advertised course description is as follows: “How has gender discrimination impacted the academic discipline of philosophy? In what ways are women challenging the philosophical canon? What can philosophy tell us about the causes of and solutions to the oppression of women? In what ways does that oppression intersect with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, and socioeconomic status? In what ways does socialization shape concepts like ‘masculinity’? Does patriarchy hurt men too? This course will engage questions like these. All are welcome. Let’s work together to think about how academic philosophy can improve on this front and how it may be able to provide avenues of resistance to gender prejudice.”

To elaborate on the general description above, we will begin this course with a quick overview of the four waves of feminism, followed by a conversation about how the gender binary hurts everyone. From there, with some sense of the importance of both the personal and social-political dimensions of gender in mind, we will shift to consider various ways in which philosophy interacts with gender. Some of these are not positive; we will, for example, discuss why philosophy as a discipline has so few women who major or work in the field. But we will also talk about ways in which feminist philosophers are meaningfully reshaping historical philosophy, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. The final third of the course will focus on intersectionality, with readings that will simultaneously highlight both shortcomings of some feminist philosophies as well as crucially important avenues for improvement.

Structure-wise, for most readings (excepting the first two), there will be a class session dedicated to lecture/exposition, another to discussion/evaluation, and a third to in-class question/response activities. I find that most students truly benefit from this ‘I do, we do, you do’ approach to our time together; I hope you too will find the structure helpful.