

Duke University
Department of Philosophy
Spring 2023

Phil 590S: Topics in Feminist Philosophy: Social Construction of Gender and Sex

Time: Th 1:45pm - 4:15pm

Room: West Duke 204

Instructor: Ásta

Email: asta.asta@duke.edu

OHs: Mon 2-3pm and by appt. in West Duke 201D

Description:

What does it mean to say that gender or sex is socially constructed? What is at stake in debates over that? We will consider theoretical accounts of social construction and their application to the case of gender and sex.

Readings by Alcoff, Ásta, Bettcher, Beauvoir, Butler, Dembroff, Fausto-Sterling, Frye, Hall, Haslanger, Jenkins, Mallon, Mills, Moi, Rubin, Searle, Sojourner Truth, Wendell, Witt, Young, and others.

Readings: Readings are available on the web and on Sakai. My *Categories We Live By* can be accessed through the library or Oxford Scholarship Online. The manuscript version is available on Sakai.

Requirements and grading:

1. Active, thoughtful, class participation [15%]
 2. Presentation [15%]
 3. **Weekly** reading engagement; due every **Wednesday** at 5pm [9%; P/F]
 3. One short paper, 3 pages [900 words], due **Mar 2** [20%]
 4. Final paper, 10 pages (3000 words max), due **April 13** [36%]. Topic **Mar 9**. Outline **Mar 23**.
 5. Presentation of final paper on **April 13** [5%; P/F]
- Assignments due on Sakai.

Schedule (Subject to Change)

Thursday, January 12: Introduction to the seminar

Recommended:

Ásta, Introduction to *Categories*

Beauvoir, Introduction to the *Second Sex*

Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”

Moi, “What Is a Woman?”

Thur Jan 19: Metaphysics of social categories

Ásta, *Categories*, Introduction and Ch 1.

Searle, from *The Construction of Social Reality*

Recommended:

Searle, *Making of the Social World*, “What Is a Speech Act?”, “The Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts”, Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Butler “Critically Queer”

Thur Jan 26: Social construction

Ásta, *Categories*, Ch. 2

Haslanger, “Social Construction: The “Debunking” Project”, “Social Construction: Myth and Reality”, Wendell, “The Social Construction of Disability”

Recommended:

Mallon, *The Construction of Human Kinds*

Thur Feb 2: Materialist concerns

Rubin, “The Traffic in Women”; Frye, “Oppression”; Young “Five Faces of Oppression”; hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression”

Recommended:

Rubin, “The Trouble with Trafficking”

Thur Feb 9: Butler

Butler, Ch 1 of *Gender Trouble*, Introduction to *Bodies that Matter*,

Recommended:

Ásta, *Categories* Ch.3. Butler, Undoing Gender, Butler “Critique of Categories We Live By”, Ásta, “Response to Critics”

Thur Feb 16: Alcoff, Witt

Alcoff, excerpts from *Visible Identities*; Witt, excerpts from *The Metaphysics of Gender*.

Recommended:

Ásta, Review of *The Metaphysics of Gender, Categories*, Ch. 4, Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes”

Short paper due

Thur Feb 23: Professor out of town. No class. Work on final paper topic.

Thur Mar 2: Charlotte Witt visit?

Thur Mar 9: Mon Oct 18: Haslanger

Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?”,
Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman”

Recommended:

Ásta, *Categories*, Ch 4; Mills, “What Are You Really?”; Haslanger, “A Social Constructionis Account of Race”

Final paper topic due

Thur Mar 16: Spring break. No class

Thur Mar 23: Trans

Bettcher, “Trans Women and the Meaning of ‘Woman’”, “What is Trans Philosophy?”
Dembroff, “Reimagining Transgender”, “Beyond binary: genderqueer and critical gender kind”

Recommended:

Serano, from *The Whipping Girl*,

Halberstam, from *Female Masculinity*

Paper outline due

Thur Mar 30: Queering philosophy. Kim Q. Hall visit?

Thur April 6: Peer review. No class

Thursday, April 13: Last day of class. Presentations