

Syllabus

Title of the Course:	Feminist Philosophy and Women’s Poetry	Course Breakdown:	14 weeks
Name of the Instructor:	Dr. Iman AL-Ghafari	Weekly class time:	Thursdays 16:00-18:00 CEST
Language:	English		
Hosted by:	Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich	Certificate issued by:	Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (6 ECTS)
min. number of participants:	5	max. number of participants (for certificate)	10

Description of the course

The aim of my course is to provide participants with a general introduction about the feminist philosophy and a comprehensive knowledge about women’s poetry. “What it means to be a female poet in a male-dominated poetic tradition” is a key question in this course which reveals the challenges that usually face most women in patriarchal societies. The social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of sex and gender will be addressed. The course engages with key theoretical debates in the field, such as the queer theory; and the philosophical, sociological, and feminist conceptualization of gender, sex, and sexuality.

The course is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on introducing the main feminist theories. Reference will be made to selected theoretical texts by Simone de Beauvoir, Nancy Chodorow, Alicia Ostriker, Judith Butler, Helen Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Mary Daly, Gayatry Spivak and Monique Wittig. The second part contains an analysis of women’s poetry in various socio-political contexts. This part explores women’s poetic voices and their different races, ages, sexualities and cultural backgrounds. My focus will be culturally diverse. Hence, I will read and analyze a wide selection of poems written by various female poets (please check the reading list at the end). The two parts intersect and intertwine within the context of the course. A connection will be made between the feminist theories and the way they can be used to re-read women’s poetry from feminist and cross-cultural perspectives.

This informative and analytical course sheds a thorough light on women’s poetry from a feminist and a lesbian perspective and explores the development of the concept of gender and how it was first used as a means of liberating the female sex in modernist contexts to be later re-interpreted in a manner that turns it into a socio-political means of subduing the female sex and erasing lesbian voices. In other words, it provides tools to increase awareness of the problems that continue to face many women worldwide and to recognize some of the limitations of both modernist and postmodernist discourses.

Learning Aims

To provide a general understanding about:

- The emergence of the feminist philosophy in Anglo-American, European, global and post-colonial contexts.
- The development of various types of feminist theories, such as the psychoanalytical feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism, lesbian feminism, post-colonial feminism, cyborg feminism, gender theory and the queer theory.
- Women's feminist and lesbian poetry in various socio-political and cultural contexts.
- The struggle that female poets faced in their journey of self-expression.
- The limitations of some modernist and postmodernist discourses within the feminist philosophy.

Upon the successful completion of the course participants will be able to:

- Relate feminist theories to women's poetry.
- Analyze women's poetry from feminist and cross-cultural perspectives.
- Relate feminist theories and gender concepts to the writings of women in different cultures.
- Express their opinions in smaller activities within the class and to exchange views about the topic.
- Provide their own well-informed answers to the following questions:
 - How does women's poetry challenge patriarchal concepts?
 - What are the key feminist issues that continue to be debated worldwide?
 - How does the feminist philosophy develop in different cultures and literature?
 - Does the feminist philosophy contribute to the development of women's poetry in general and to lesbian poetry in particular?

Course requirements:

- participants must have oral and written proficiency in English. They also need to have their own computers that allow them to study online.
- Write a final essay or a short research paper in which they relate the feminist theories to the poems of their choice. They can freely select any poem, using the feminist theory they find relevant. They can explain why they choose the poem and in what way it can be read from a feminist or a gender-sensitive perspective. Hence, participants will learn from the lectures and from the experiences of each other in different cultures.

Course components include:

- Lectures
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Readings of some selected articles and quotations from different books.
- Online articles and videos.
- Interviews and journalistic articles.
- Assignments and oral reports.
- The course is taught through active learning—i.e. listening to the presentations, and participation in small group work, reading, writing, and class discussion.

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- **Assignment 1 (10%):** Active contribution in analyzing the selected texts and poems during the course.
- **Assignment 2 (40%):** 15 minute PowerPoint presentation/a short paper (400-600 words) on a feminist poet that the participant picks to be read and discussed in the class.
- **Assignment 3 (50%):** A final essay on a topic that the participant will find or pick from the extensive list of topics in the syllable (1000-1200 words).

Each week, a participant will be given the chance to present their chosen topic that will be discussed in class.

This informative and analytical course is intended to familiarize the participants with many feminist theorists and poets in an insightful and interesting manner. Hence, it is up for the participants in the end to choose the poet and the feminist theory that they prefer to focus on in their final essays.

The final papers need to expose critical and creative thinking. Plagiarism should be avoided at all costs.

Additional Notes:

- The reading materials appear in different editions. I don't include all details of the references, because it is up to the participants to search for the editions that they plan to focus on in their research.
- The course provides the participants with the chance to have a general knowledge of the feminist theories, but they are not expected to read all the suggested references to pass the course. They are free to select the chapters that they find more convenient to their arguments.

Outline of the Course Schedule

<p>Week 1 28 April 2022</p>	<p>1- Introductions and exchanging views with participants about their motivation and expectations for joining the course.</p> <p>2- Discussing and reviewing the syllabus</p> <p>3- Opening the space for questions and preparing the participants for the forthcoming lectures.</p> <p>4- Defining some major terms in the feminist philosophy.</p> <p>5- Dividing the assignments among the participants. Each week, a participant is expected to present a brief introductory video or a PowerPoint Presentation about any female poet and any of her poems. In each lecture, a Participant will be given the space to present one’s brief video or PowerPoint Presentation as an assignment and we will all discuss it together during the lecture. (10- 15 Minutes).</p> <p>Suggested reading materials (optional);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lucy Delap, <i>Feminisms: A Global History</i>, London, Pelican (imprint of Penguin), 2020. ○ A Handbook of Literary Feminisms - Heftet, English, 2002 ○ <u>Shari Benstock</u>, <u>Suzanne Ferriss</u>, <u>Susanne Woods</u>, <i>A Handbook of Literary Feminisms</i>, 2002. ○ Sandra Kemp & Judith Squires, eds., <i>Feminisms</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
<p>Week 2 5 May 2022</p>	<p>1- Presenting an overview of <u>the development of the feminist philosophy and the major waves of feminism</u>.</p> <p>2- Reading and analyzing extracts from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>, 1949. ○ An Animated Introduction to the Feminist Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir Open Culture ○ Betty Friedan, <i>The Feminine Mystique</i>, 1963. <p>A Participant will be given the space to present one’s brief video or PowerPoint Presentation as an assignment and we will all discuss it together during the lecture. (10- 15 Minutes).</p>
<p>Week 3 12 May 2022</p>	<p><u>Feminism and Psychoanalysis</u></p> <p>Reading and analyzing <i>extracts from</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nancy Chodorow, <i>The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender</i>, 1978. ○ Juliet Mitchell, <i>Psychoanalysis and Feminism</i>, 1974.

<p>Week 4 19 May 2022</p>	<p><u>Radical Feminism and Views about Sexuality, Pornography, Religion and the State.</u> Reflections on the works of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Catharine A. MacKinnon, <i>Toward a Feminist Theory of the State</i>, 1989. ○ Mary Daly, <i>Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation</i>, 1973.
<p>Week 5 26 May 2022</p>	<p><u>French Feminism, <i>Écriture féminine</i>, and the lesbian body</u> in the works of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Luce Irigaray, <i>This Sex Which Is Not One</i>, 1977. ○ Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 1976. ○ Monique Wittig, <i>The Straight Mind: And Other Essays</i>, 1992.
<p>Week 6 2 June 2022</p>	<p><u>American Lesbian Feminism.</u> Reflections on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," 1980. ○ Lillian Faderman, <i>Surpassing the Love of Men; Romantic Friendship And Love From The Renaissance To The Present</i>, 1981.
<p>Week 7 9 June 2022</p>	<p><u>Black lesbian feminism and Chicana lesbian feminism.</u> Reflections on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Audre Lorde, <i>Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches</i>, 1984. (Selected chapters). ○ Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</i>, 1987. (Selected chapters).
<p>Week 8 16 June 2022</p>	<p><u>The queer theory, where to?</u> Reflections on Butler's transitions in her works: 1- From gender politics into transgender politics. 2- And from deconstructing gender as a playful performance into re-constructing gender as an identity and as a socio-political reality. Reflections on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judith Butler, <i>Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity</i>, 1990. ○ Later Interviews with Judith Butler ○ <u>Theorist Judith Butler Explains How Behavior Creates Gender: A Short Introduction to "Gender Performativity" Open Culture</u> ○ Reflections on an interview with Judith Butler. <u>Judith Butler: looking back on 'Gender Trouble' – YouTube</u>

<p>Week 9 23 June 2022</p>	<p><u>Feminist critiques of the queer theory and trans-politics.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Sheila Jeffreys</u>, “Queer theory and violence against women,” 1999. ○ <u>Sheila Jeffreys</u>, “The Queer Disappearance of Lesbians: Sexuality in the Academy,” 1994. ○ <u>Susanna Rustin</u>, “Feminists like me aren't anti-trans – we just can't discard the idea of 'sex',” The Guardian, 2020.
<p>Week 10 30 June 2022</p>	<p><u>Cyborg feminism and post-humanism.</u></p> <p>Reflections on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 1985. ○ Moria Wiegel’s Interview with Donna Haraway. “<u>Feminist cyborg scholar Donna Haraway: ‘The disorder of our era isn’t necessary’</u>,” 2019. ○ Rosi Braidotti, “Writing as a Nomadic Subject.” <i>Comparative Critical Studies</i> 11.2–3 (2014): 163–184 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/ccs.2014.0122
<p>Week 11 7 July 2022</p>	<p><u>Feminist postcolonial theories</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reina Lewis & Sara Mills, <i>Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader</i>, 2003. <p>The dilemma of Translating gender and queer into different languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. “The Politics of Translation.” <i>Outside in the teaching machine</i>. New York: Routledge, 1993.
<p>Week 12 14 July 2022</p>	<p>1- <u>The Quest for Feminist and Lesbian Mythology.</u></p> <p>Reflections on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alicia Ostriker, “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking.” <i>Signs</i>, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 68-90. ○ Anne Sexton, “Consorting with Angels.” ○ Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus”. <p>2- <u>Lesbian Erotic Poetry versus Pornography.</u></p> <p>Reflection on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Audre Lorde, <i>Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power</i>, 1978. ○ Amy Lowell. ○ Adrienne Rich. ○ Mary Oliver.

<p>Week 13 21 July 2022</p>	<p>1- <u>Resisting the Patriarchal expectations in Women's Poetry.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise," 1978. ○ Audre Lorde, "Sisters in Arms," 1997. ○ Marge Piercy, "Barbie Doll." <p>2- <u>Lesbian Love Poetry. Readings of.</u></p> <p>Reflections on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adrienne Rich. Twenty-One Love Poems [(The Floating Poem, Unnumbered)]. ○ Pat Parker, "My Lover is a Woman."
<p>Week 14 28 July 2022</p>	<p>Conclusion and an Open Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- A Review of the major themes. 2- Rethinking Intersectionality and intertextuality. 3- Discussing the participants' opinions about the course and their evaluation of it. 4- The participants who were shy to participate in the discussions will be given the last chance to improve their grades by answering some questions or discussing some points that are related to the course. 5- Final remarks and suggestions. 6- Submission of the final papers on 4 August 2022.