

Suffolk Community College, Selden, New York 11784

PL 32: PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN LIBERATION

Instructor: Dr. Gertrude Postl
Fall 2004, Section 1551
Time: M/W 12:30-1:45 p.m.

Office 120, Southampton Building
Tel. 451-4860 (Main Office: 451-4351)
Office Hours: M 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
T/T 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVES

This course will enable students to:

1. identify and comprehend the metaphysical/ontological concepts of freedom and determinism;
2. identify and comprehend the political concepts of oppression and liberation, the various sources of oppression, and the consequent models of liberation;
3. situate contemporary constructions of gender within the framework of oppression and liberation, and to understand the various aspects of women's oppression;
4. apply the conceptual insights of this course to their own experience of oppression in order to transform those experiences in a liberating fashion.

TEXTS:

- Janet A. Kourany, James P. Sterba, Rosemarie Tong (eds.), *Feminist Philosophies*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, 1999.
- Handouts;

REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) FOUR QUIZZES: quiz 1: M 9/27 quiz 2: W 10/27
quiz 3: M 11/22 quiz 4: M 12/20

Quizzes will consist of brief essay questions relating to the readings and the course material in general. The lowest quiz-grade will be dropped. **No make-up quizzes!**

2) TEXT REPORT (due 10/13):

This report should be **at least three pages long, typed, double-spaced, and in the appropriate academic format** (name, title, correct quotation). Choose one of the readings from section I ("Basic Concepts"), summarize this text in your own words and critically evaluate the text (E.g.: What did you find most interesting about this text and why? What do you agree/disagree with? Is this text still relevant today? Is the author consistent and convincing in his/her argumentation? Etc.).

If this paper is handed in before the deadline (up to the week before the due date) it may be rewritten in order to improve the grade. The due date for the second version is in general two weeks after the first version was returned. The first version has to be handed in together with the second version! In order to raise the grade, the rewritten version has to show serious improvements! **Papers received after the deadline will not be accepted!**

3) RESEARCH PAPER (due 12/8):

The paper should be **at least three pages long, typed, double-spaced, and in the appropriate academic format** (name, title, correct quotation). Choose an instance of sexism or racism (can be your own experience or something you read or heard about; it may involve an individual or an entire group) and analyze it by applying at least three texts used in class (sections II and III). Consult with the instructor before deciding upon an example for sexism or racism.

4) CLASS PARTICIPATION, READING ASSIGNMENTS AND BEHAVIOR

Class participation means to participate in the common effort of discussion in order to complement the reading material and to accomplish the aims stated in the course objectives. Absolute unwillingness to participate will result in a lower final grade. "Talking a lot" is not necessarily participation. **Reading assignments** have to be completed **before** class meetings. It is not enough to read a text; one should also be able to talk about it. The biographical introduction to each author is part of the reading.

Disruptive or inconsiderate **behavior** (including walking in and out of the classroom during class time) will affect the grade. Cell phones and beepers have to be switched off during class time.

5) ATTENDANCE POLICY

The college defines excessive absence or lateness as more than the equivalent of one week of class meetings during the semester. In this course, students are allowed **no more than three absences!** Any additional absence will affect the grade. Excessive absence or lateness may lead to failure in the course or removal from the class roster. If a student is late, the time will be added up and will thereby also contribute to the amount of absences. It is **the student's obligation to sign the sign-up sheet** which will be passed around. If a student misses a class due to sickness or other justifiable reasons, **evidence needs to be shown as soon as possible!** In this case the absence will be excused. If a student drops the class **after** the official withdraw-date (11/3) without justifiable reason, he/she will receive an "F" for the course.

GRADING

3 Quizzes: 40% of the final grade
Text-Report: 20% of the final grade
Research Paper: 25% of the final grade
Class Participation: 15% of the final grade
 Excessive absence will lower the final grade!

PLAGIARISM:

"In writing, students must fully acknowledge the source of any paraphrased passages and any ideas which they have borrowed. Failure to conform to these academic standards is plagiarism and may result in a failing grade for the course and/or serious disciplinary sanctions as outlines in the Code of Conduct" (SCCC Catalog, p.89). Plagiarism of any kind will result in a "0" for the assignment in question and in repeated cases in an "F" for the course.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

W 9/1: Liberation vs. oppression, sources of oppression;
 M 9/6: No Class (Labor Day)
 W 9/8: A Case Study of Race-Class-Gender Oppression: Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (handout);

I: BASIC CONCEPTS

(all readings in this section are handouts)

Metaphysical/Ontological Concept of Freedom: Determinism vs. Free Will

M 9/13: John Hospers, Meaning and Free Will;
 W 9/15: Saint Augustine, from *On Free Choice of the Will*;
 M 9/20: Jean-Paul Sartre, from *Being and Nothingness*;

Political Concept of Freedom: Liberation from Oppression

W 9/22: John Stuart Mill, from *On Liberty*;
 M 9/27: **QUIZ 1**
 Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, from *The Communist Manifesto*;
 W 9/29: Marx/Engels continued;
 M 10/4: Hannah Arendt, from *Origins of Totalitarianism*

II: OPPRESSION/LIBERATION ON GROUNDS OF GENDER

(if not indicated otherwise, the readings in this section are in: Kourany et al. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophies*)

- W 10/6: Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (pp.353-359);
- M 10/11: Firestone continued;
- W 10/13: Marilyn Frye, *Oppression* (handout)
Paper #1 (Text Report) due!
- M 10/18: Hélène Cixous, *Sorties* (pp.440-445);
- W 10/20: Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family* (pp. 313-320);
- M 10/25: Moller Okin continued;
- W 10/27: **QUIZ 2**
Adrienne Rich, *Anger and Tenderness* (pp.219-230);
- M 11/1: Virginia Sapiro, *Women and Religion* (pp.281-291);
- W 11/3: Sapiro continued;
LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES WITH GUARANTEED “W”!
- M 11/8: Catharine MacKinnon, *Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech* (pp.367-380);
- W 11/10: Patricia Hill Collins, *Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images* (pp.142-152);
- M 11/15: Maria Lugones, Elizabeth Spelman, *Have We Got A Theory for You! ...* (pp.474-486);
- W 11/17: Lugones, Spelman continued;
- M 11/22: **QUIZ 3**
Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (pp.345-349);
- W 11/24: No Class (Friday classes meet instead of Wed.)

III: OPPRESSION/LIBERATION ON GROUNDS OF RACE

(all readings in this section are handouts)

- M 11/29: Frederick Douglass, from *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*;
- W 12/1: W.E.B. Du Bois, from *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*;
- M 12/6: Frantz Fanon, from *The Wretched of the Earth*;
- W 12/8: Martin Luther King, *Letter from the Birmingham City Jail*;
Research Paper due!
- M 12/13: Fanon, King continued;
- W 12/15: Cornell West, *Nihilism in Black America*

M 12/20: **QUIZ 4**