

**Feminist Political Theory**  
**Fall 2002**  
**American University**  
**Dr. Lisa Pace Vetter**

**Govt 407/696 Section 001**

**Class Meetings:**

Wednesdays 2:10-4:40pm  
Ward Room 202

**My Office:** Ward Room 221

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**My Office Hours:** T F 2:00-4:30pm W 5:00-6:00pm

And by appointment

**Course Description**

Instead of providing a “salad bar-style” sampling of various schools of feminist thought, this course seeks to trace the evolution of major themes and issues in feminist political theory from their classical (“malestream”) roots. While it is undeniable that feminist political theory has made original and path-breaking discoveries on its own, it is equally true that feminist political theory has been largely shaped both *by* and *against* the political theories that preceded or coincided with it. Tracing the genealogy of major debates within feminist political theory will not only show the shortcomings of classical political theory (i.e., the silences or spaces from which feminist political theory emerges) but also the unexplored possibilities in classical political theory that may allow for a reconciliation of sorts with feminism.

Questions that shall be addressed include the following: To what extent is classical liberalism, with its emphasis on equality, consent, and representative government, capable of accommodating the needs of women as citizens? To what extent is the classical understanding of communitarianism capable of accommodating sexual and gender differences while maintaining equality and freedom in political communities? Do Marxism and Postmodernism provide persuasive feminist critiques of liberal individualism? If so, do they also provide adequate guidance for political change? Finally, how can the major debates in feminist political theory inform current policy debates concerning women? Areas of interest include: women in war, pornography, reproductive rights, family policy, welfare policy, wage equity/comparable worth, domestic violence, international human rights for women.

**Required Texts**

Deborah L. Rhode, *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality* (Harvard U. Press)

Zillah Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*

Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford U. Press)

Mary Lyndon Shanley and Uma Narayan, eds. *Reconstructing Political Theory: Feminist Perspectives* (Pennsylvania State U. Press)

John Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (Routledge)

Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Harvard U. Press)

**(Strongly) Recommended Texts**

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Prometheus Books) [also on reserve]

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (Prometheus Books) [also on reserve]

John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women* (Hackett Publishing) [also on reserve]

In addition, there will be several readings placed on electronic reserve that will be accessible through Blackboard and the library website. Photocopies of these readings are available in the library reserve room as well. They are indicated with an asterisk (\*) below.

**Course Requirements**

Undergraduate (400- level)

Attendance/Participation	20%
Response Papers (4 total)	20%
Paper (10-12 pages)	30%
Final Exam	30%

Graduate (600- level)

Attendance/Participation	20%
Response Papers (4 total)	20%
Paper (15-17 pages)	30%
Final Exam	30%

Attendance/Participation

The amount of reading may seem rather heavy for this class, but do keep in mind that we meet only once a week. If you are conscientious about spreading the reading out over the week, however, instead of waiting until the last minute to read everything for a given class, the workload will be much more manageable. Try to give yourself time to let things “sink in” and draw comparisons and contrasts between readings. Take reading notes or, better yet, keep a personal reading journal, jotting down questions, passages of interest, observations, personal experiences, etc. You will find that this information is exceedingly helpful as you prepare for papers and exams.

Although I will always bring prepared remarks to every class, we will devote most of our time to discussion. Regular attendance and class participation are therefore essential. For each class, students are expected to (1) read every assignment, (2) come in with questions, comments, and concerns, even if they are not scheduled to present a response paper, (3) be prepared to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments (especially their own!), (4) respond thoughtfully and respectfully to others, even if they don't agree. Remarks that are disrespectful or demeaning to others are unacceptable; everyone should feel free to participate in class dialogue.

Students are expected to attend every class. Because we meet only once a week, more than two unexcused absences will result in a lower final grade; more than three may result in failure of the course. Excused absences include: serious illness, death of immediate family member, pre-approved athletic activities, religious holidays. A written explanation is required for all excused absences. In emergencies, please contact me as soon as possible.

Note: Late papers, including reaction papers, will be accepted without penalty only in cases of excused absences. If you submit work late without a written explanation of your absence, the assignment grade will be reduced by one full increment (A becomes A-, etc.), with an additional increment for each 24-hour period that passes after the assignment was due.

Response Papers

At the beginning of the semester each student will be assigned to a particular group whose members will be responsible for preparing and presenting response papers on the readings that are assigned for those particular classes (as indicated on the schedule of classes). At the beginning of the class, each student in the assigned group will present a brief summary of his/her own brief response paper (two typewritten double-spaced pages/600 words, approx.) to other class members. After hearing the summaries of the reaction papers by the assigned group members, the floor will be opened for discussion. Response papers will be collected during class break.

Response papers may take two forms: (1) Analyze a theme, concept, contradiction, or draw a comparison between works; (2) Choose a quotation and analyze it in detail, critiquing it and explaining the larger implications involved. Notice that neither option requires summarizing the material or providing historical or biographical background. Avoid mere summary and general description whenever possible – instead, analyze the material with a view to conveying why it is important and how it will help us better understand these works.

Paper

Students are required to submit a paper at the end of the semester that addresses ways in which the major debates in feminist political theory we shall study can inform current policy debates concerning women. They will choose one area of interest from the following: women in war, pornography, reproductive rights, family policy, welfare policy, wage equity/comparable worth, domestic violence, international human rights for women. (Students who choose to write on an issue that is not specified here should secure approval from me beforehand.) Students will apply theoretical perspectives discussed in class to shed further light on the major issues underlying these debates, determining which thinker(s) best illuminate(s) these issues and why

they think so. Undergraduates: apart from finding basic materials that describe some aspect of one of the issues listed above, no extensive outside research is required for this paper. Graduate students: more in-depth materials that describe some aspect of one of the issues above and additional recommended feminist theory sources are required.

A paper workshop is scheduled before the final paper is due that will give students the opportunity to provide and receive feedback on their respective projects. Participation in the workshop is required and will count toward the final paper grade.

### Academic Integrity:

The University's Academic Integrity Code states: "By registering as a student at The American University, all students acknowledge their awareness of the Academic Integrity Code each semester at the time they acknowledge their awareness of University registration policies. . . . Students are responsible for becoming familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Academic Integrity Code and are responsible for knowing the requirements for their particular courses (regarding such issues as collaborative work, use of study aids, or take-home examinations). Students are responsible for learning the conventions of documentation and acknowledgment of sources required in academic discourse."

Guidelines for citing textual evidence and preparing for the final exam will be provided as these assignments arise. In accordance with the Code, you will be expected to familiarize yourself with these policies, asking necessary questions before a given assignment is due. Plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur.

### Final Exam

A cumulative final exam will be given during final exam week. Review questions will be distributed in advance.

## **Schedule of Classes**

### **Wednesday, August 28**

#### Introduction to the Course

### **Wednesday, September 4**

#### Why Feminist Political Theory? (Group 1)

Deborah L. Rhode, *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality* ch. 1-3, 6-7, 9  
(Recommended: ch. 4-5, 8)

### **Wednesday, September 11**

#### Unit One: Classical Liberalism (Group 2)

\*John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* ch. 1-7; ch. 8 para. 95-99, 119; ch. 9; ch. 16 para. 175, 180-183

\*John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women* ch. 1 pp. 1-7, 12-17 to "Human society of old . . . , 20 bottom-30; ch. 2 pp. 31-35 bottom, 40-52; ch. 3 pp. 53-58, 61-66, 68-69, 82-83; ch. 4 pp. 86-89

**Wednesday, September 18**

Feminist Critiques of Liberal Individualism (Group 3)

Liberalism as Patriarchy

Zillah Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* intro. and ch. 2-3, 6

Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* intro. and ch. 2-6, 9

Liberalism as Alienation

\*Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Feminist Theory to Feminist Politics," in *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*

**Wednesday, September 25**

Now What? Feminist Revisions of the Liberalism (Group 1)

\*Anne Phillips, "Universal Pretensions in Political Thought" and "Must Feminists Give up on Liberal Democracy?" in *Democracy and Difference*

\*Susan Moller Okin, "Toward a Humanist Justice," in *Justice, Gender, and the Family*  
Martha Minow and Mary Lyndon Shanley, "Revisioning the Family: Relational Rights and Responsibilities," in *Reconstructing Political Theory*

Elizabeth Kiss, "Alchemy or Fool's Gold? Assessing Feminist Doubts about Rights," in *Reconstructing Political Theory*

Anita Allen, "The Jurispolitics of Privacy," in *Reconstructing Political Theory*

**Wednesday, October 2**

Feminist Reconceptions of Liberal Citizenship (Group 2)

Uma Narayan, "Towards a Feminist Vision of Citizenship," in *Reconstructing Political Theory*

\*Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and Concrete Other," in Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., *Feminism as Critique*

\*Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship," *Ethics* 99 (January 1989): 250-74

\*Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," in Linda Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (Routledge, 1990)

**Wednesday, October 9**

Unit Two: Rousseauian Communitarianism (Group 3)

\*Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* Preface pp. 33-35; Book I pp. 37-51, 59-68; Book II pp. 77-86, 96-102, 118-120, 159-163; Book III pp. 165-166, 177-186, 190-191, 206 bottom-208; Book IV pp. 211-216, 232-237, 325-335, 341; Book V pp. 357-385, 393-406, 410-414, 424-429 para. 2, 433-441, 446-450, 471-480

(Recommended: \*Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, selections)

Feminist Critiques of Rousseau's Communitarian Women

\*Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Author's Introduction; ch. 1 pp. 21-24, 27; ch. 2-3, ch. 6 pp. 126-128; ch. 7; ch. 9; ch. 12 pp. 176 bottom-180

Zillah Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* chs. 4-5

**Wednesday, October 16**

Feminist Redefinitions of Communitarianism – The “Different” Voice (Group 1)

John Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (entire)

\*Penny Weiss, “Feminism and Communitarianism: Comparing Critiques of Liberalism,” in *Conversations with Feminism: Political Theory and Practice* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998)

\*Mary Dietz. “Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem of Maternal Thinking.” *Political Theory* 13, 1 (1985).

**Wednesday, October 23**

Feminist Redefinitions of Communitarianism – Black Sisterhood (Group 2)

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (entire)

**Wednesday, October 30**

Unit Three: Marxism and Feminist Political Theory (Group 3)

\*Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (selections)

\*Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family* (selections)

Feminist Applications of Marxism

Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* chs. 1-3

**Wednesday, November 6**

Feminist Applications of Marxism, contd. (Group 1)

Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* chs. 4-13

**Wednesday, November 13**

Paper Workshop – no assigned readings today; no response papers are required

**Wednesday, November 20**

Anarcho-Feminism and Marxism (Group 2)

\*Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (selections)

\*Emma Goldman, “Anarchism,” “Woman Suffrage,” and “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation”

Contemporary Anarcho-Feminism and Radical Democracy

Anna Yeatman, “Rethinking Anarchism/Rethinking Power: A Contemporary Feminist Perspective,” in *Reconstructing Political Theory*

\*L. Susan Brown, “Anarchism and Feminism,” in Kathryn Pyne Addelson, ed., *Impure Thoughts: Essays on Philosophy, Feminism, and Ethics* (Temple University Press, 1991)

\*Chantal Mouffe, “Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics,” in Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman, eds., *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

(Wednesday, November 27 – Thanksgiving)

**Wednesday, December 4**

Unit Four: A (REALLY Brief!) Introduction to Postmodernism (Group 3)

\*Michel de Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, pp. 1-49, 92-102, 150-159

Postmodern Feminist Political Theories

\*Jana Sawicki, "Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 1 (Summer 1986): 23-26

\*Jana Sawicki, "Foucault and Feminism: A Critical Reappraisal," in *Disciplining Foucault* (Routledge, 1991)

\*Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*

**Friday, December 6**

Papers are due in my office (Ward 221) no later than noon today.

**Wednesday, December 18**

Final Exam: 2:10-4:40pm in Ward 202.

**Additional Recommended Sources**

**Wednesday, September 18**

Feminist Critiques of Liberal Individualism

Mary Lyndon Shanley, "Marital Slavery and Friendship," in *FIPT*

Melissa A. Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy," in *FIPT*

Susan Okin. "Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (Winter 1982): 65-88

**Wednesday, September 25**

Now What? Feminist Revisions of the Liberalism

Jane Mansbridge, "Reconstructing Democracy"

**Wednesday, October 2**

Feminist Reconceptions of Liberal Citizenship

Kathleen B. Jones, "Citizenship in a Woman-Friendly Polity," *Signs* 15, 4 (July 1990)

**Wednesday, October 9**

Unit Two: Rousseauian Communitarianism

Lynda Lange, "Rousseau and Modern Feminism," in *FIPT*

Ann Charney Colmo, "What Sophie Knew," in *Finding a New Feminism*, ed. Pam Jensen

**Wednesday, October 16**

Feminist Redefinitions of Communitarianism – The “Different” Voice

- Sara Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking,” *Feminist Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 342-67.  
Virginia Held, “Feminism and Moral Theory,” in Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers, eds., *Women and Moral Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1987).  
Virginia Held, “Noncontractual Society: The Postpatriarchal Family as Model” and “Epilogue: The Feminist Future,” in *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1983)

**Wednesday, October 23**

Feminist Redefinitions of Communitarianism – Sisterhood

- Particia Hill Collins. “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought.” *Signs* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 745-73  
Kimberle Crenshaw. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989

**Wednesday, October 30**

Unit Three: Marxism and Feminist Political Theory

- Alison Jagger, “Traditional Marxism and Human Nature,” in *Feminism and Human Nature*  
Linda Nicholson, “Feminism and Marx: Integrating Kinship with the Economic”  
Heidi Hartmann, “The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework”  
Nancy C.M. Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”

**Wednesday, November 13**

Anarcho-Feminism and Marxism

**Wednesday, November 20**

Unit Four: A (REALLY Brief!) Introduction to Postmodernism

- Jane Flax, “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory,” in Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*  
Nancy Fraser, “Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere: Toward a Postmodern Conception,” in Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman, eds., *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1995)