UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Winter 2017 | Term 2

PHIL 560: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE
Feminist Philosophy of Science

Instructor: Professor Alison Wylie
Class meetings: Mondays 10:00-1:00, BUCH D324
Office hours: M 2:00-4:00, Th 4:00-5:00
or by appointment: alison.wylie@ubc.ca
Office: BUCH E276
Phone: 604-822-6574
email: alison.wylie@ubc.ca
Canvas: https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/885

Seminar Description

Critics of the very idea of feminist philosophy of science insist that, because feminism is an explicitly political stance, it can have nothing to do with science or how we understand it philosophically; what distinguishes scientific inquiry and knowledge is its ability to transcend partisan, political interests and the relativism that threatens if these are allowed a role in science. The epistemic ideals that underpin such arguments have come in for sharp and sustained criticism in recent decades. Feminist philosophers of science and science studies scholars have been prominent among those who have argued that the ideal of “value-free” science is untenable; the production, content and authority of scientific knowledge is deeply configured by social, contextual factors. While their critics object that such arguments to entail a corrosive relativism, feminist philosophers of science rarely embrace such conclusions; they take up the challenge of systematically reformulating epistemic ideals like objectivity in more nuanced and practicable terms. The aim of this seminar is to explore the range of positions articulated by feminist philosophers of science in both critical and constructive responses to conventional “value-free” ideals.

Following the line of argument developed by Elizabeth Potter in Feminist Philosophy of Science (2006), our point of departure will be a sampling of the feminist critiques of science and research programs that catalyzed feminist science studies, and the case Lynn Hankinson Nelson makes for taking a socially naturalized approach to understanding their philosophical implications. We then consider several ways of conceptualizing the role of social values in scientific practice. These include Helen Longino’s contextual empiricism and arguments from inductive risk updated by Heather Douglas; critiques of these “gap arguments”; and alternatives to them that recognize a deeper entanglement of epistemic and social values. In connection with this last we consider the “aims approach” proposed by Elizabeth Anderson and recently developed by Kristen Intemann and Inma Melo-Martin, and Kevin Elliott. A central question here is: how, and in what form, does a diversity of situated experience and knowledge become a resource for scientific inquiry rather than a compromising source of bias or disabling dissent?

In the final segment of the course we discuss feminist standpoint theory as developed in the 1970s and 1980s by Nancy Hartsock and Dorothy Smith, and later expanded in scope by Sandra Harding and Patricia Hill Collins, among others. Our aim here will be to assess proposals for reconceptualizing objectivity in jointly epistemic and social/ethical terms: the proceduralist account offered by Longino, Harding’s “strong objectivity,” and approaches that centre on trust and trustworthiness. We juxtapose this literature with recent analyses of epistemic injustice based on essays drawn from the Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice (2017). At the close of the term we turn to meta-philosophical questions and consider the goals and status of feminist philosophy of science as a form of “non-ideal” theory.

Course texts
Elizabeth Potter, Feminism and Philosophy of Science (Routledge, 2006).
All other readings are available on Canvas and/or through UBC Library Course Reserves.

Format and requirements
This is a reading-intensive course with the emphasis on seminar discussion. The requirements include five discussion posts (20%), in-class presentations and seminar participation (20%), and a thesis-driven term paper (60%). The details of the course requirements and policies are available on Canvas.
Requirements

**Seminar participation**
Active, informed participation in seminar discussion is an essential component of this course. Be sure to complete all the required readings in advance of the seminar meeting for which they are assigned and come to class prepared with questions and comments for discussion.
- 5% of the final grade

**Seminar presentations**
Each week, from Week 3 through Week 10, one member of the seminar will give a 15-20 minute presentation and a second respondent will initiate seminar discussion. Your presentation should be analytic (rather than descriptive) and focused on a closely specified set of issues raised by the assigned readings. Treat this as an opportunity to raise questions about puzzling concepts and the context of debate to which authors are responding. It is also an opportunity to appraise these concepts and arguments in light of examples of research practice or debate drawn from your own areas of interest and expertise.
- To finalize the presentation schedule, send me an email with your preferences for two weeks (each) in which you would like to present or to respond by Wednesday, January 10.
- Presenters are required to pre-circulate a short handout outlining the focal issues and examples they will discuss by 5:00 pm on the Sunday before their presentation.
- 15% of the final grade

**Reading Responses**
Everyone is required to post at least five reading responses in the course of the term. These should be roughly a page long (two to three paragraphs), and should focus on a particular issue, concept, or argument that you find intriguing or problematic and in need of explication. As with the seminar presentations, treat these as an opportunity to raise questions and introduce examples from your areas of research interest that you would like to discuss in the seminar. Here are the specifics:
- Everyone is required to post a response to set questions in the 2nd and 10th week.
- Choose any three other weeks in which to post, except for the weeks when you give an in-class presentation.
- Posts are due by 5:00 pm on the Sunday before the seminar meeting when the reading on which you post will be discussed.
- Everyone is urged to read these posts and come to class prepared to discuss them. Online comments are welcome!
- 20% of the final grade

**Term paper**
Your major assignment for this seminar is a thesis-driven essay in which you develop a position of your own in response to an issue we discuss in the course of the term. Ground the argument you give for your thesis in analysis of the specifics of a position advocated or contested by authors on the reading list and, if possible, in consideration of a concrete example of a feminist critique of science or research program.
- Your paper should be 15 to 20 pages long (3750-5000 words).
- Everyone is required to post a one-page abstract and reference list online by 5:00 pm, Sunday, February 11; an optional writing workshop will be convened at the regular class time on February 12 (B.C. Bank Holiday).
- Your final essay is due online at midnight on Monday, April 9
- 60% of the final grade (10% for the abstract; 50% for the final paper)

**Course Policies**
Please see the appended summary of campus-wide and course-specific policies relating to academic conduct, concessions and grading.
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SYLLABUS

Other required readings: linked to the “Weekly Readings & Assignments” page on Canvas and/or available through UBC Library Course Reserves
Background reading: optional readings intended as resources for class discussion, presentations and papers.

Week 1 January 8: Introduction to the seminar

Week 2 January 15: Feminist critiques of science and the value-free ideal
  Full-length version available online: http://www-personal.umich.edu/~7eanders/hownotreview.html
Required discussion post: Search out (or choose) an example of a feminist critique of science and post a discussion of it. Here are two questions to consider: In what sense is your example feminist? and, What does it show about the bearing of feminism on science? (Some classic examples are posted on Canvas as ‘supplementary readings’.)

Week 3 January 22: Naturalism and epistemic agency
- EP: Chapter 1, ‘Naturalized Feminist Empiricism’.

Week 4 January 29: Building evidential claims
Background: Chapman, R., & Wylie, A. (2016) ‘Robustness Reasoning’. In Evidential Reasoning in Archaeology (Bloombury), Chapter 4, pp. 146-163.

Week 5 February 5: Facts and values – a ‘co-operative’ model of theory justification
One additional Anderson article:

Essay abstract due: online by 5:00 pm, Sunday, February 11
February 12: B.C. Bank Holiday – optional writing workshop
February 19-23: Winter Break
Week 6 February 26: Gap arguments


Week 7 March 5: Standpoint theories


Week 8 March 12: Strong Objectivity and collaborative practice


Week 9 March 9: Epistemic justice
- One of the following articles and a third of your choice from the Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice:
  - Fricker, M., ‘Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Justice’, pp. 53-60;
  - Shotwell, A., ‘Forms of Knowing and Epistemic Resources’, pp. 89-100;
  - Code, L. ‘Epistemic Responsibility’, pp. 89-100;

April 2: class cancelled – Easter holiday

Week 10 April 9: Meta-philosophical implications: Non-ideal Philosophy
- EP: Chapter 6, ‘Can Philosophy of Science be Value Free?’.

Required discussion post: Revisit your answers to the questions posed for the first required discussion post; how would you now characterize feminism and its relevance to science?

Final paper due: online by midnight, Friday, April 6
Academic Integrity

UBC campus-wide policy recognizes “academic honesty” as crucial to the functioning of the university and makes it the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the relevant standards for honest and responsible conduct as members of an academic community. This policy as well as guidelines and procedures related to it are set out in the Academic Calendar, with specifics outlined on the Graduate School website:

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/student-declaration-responsibility

Plagiarism

One form of academic honesty that is especially important in this context is to ensure that what you turn in for all course assignments is your own original work. The UBC policy on plagiarism is as follows:

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person’s words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

For the details, see the UBC campus-wide policy on Academic Misconduct, where this statement about plagiarism is posted, and the Graduate School webpage on “Intellectual Property”:

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/intellectual-property

For advice on avoiding plagiarism, citing sources, and respecting copyright, see the Academic Integrity webpage on the UBC Learning Commons: http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/

Disability Accommodation

The University of British Columbia is committed to “removing barriers and providing opportunities to students with a disability, enabling them to access University services, programs and facilities and to be welcomed as participating members of the University community.” This campus-wide policy is posted here: http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,34,0,0

For further information or to request disability accommodation contact:

Access + Diversity: https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity#about-access-diversity
Student Services: https://students.ubc.ca/campus-life/diversity-campus/disability

Academic Freedom and Freedom from Harassment and Discrimination

The University of British Columbia affirms a commitment to academic freedom, and to ensure “that all members of the University community - students, faculty, staff, and visitors - are able to study and work in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect that is free from harassment and discrimination.” Here is the campus-wide policy:

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,0,0

The UBC “Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff” sets out the following principle and urges everyone to take responsibility for working to realize it in practice:

The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at UBC is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles…

See the full statement: https://www.hr.ubc.ca/respectful-environment/files/UBC-Respectful-Environment-Statement.pdf
The UBC Office of the Ombudsperson provides a number of services aimed at ensuring that “students are treated fairly and can learn, work and live in a fair, equitable and respectful environment.” The Ombuds Office is an independent, impartial, and confidential source of information, advice and referrals:  [https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/our-resources/](https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/our-resources/)

**Academic Concessions**

University of British Columbia policy recognizes two circumstances under which a student may request an academic concession: conflicting responsibilities and unforeseen events. These include in-term concessions – provisions to allow you to make up incomplete coursework while the term is in session – as well as “standing deferred” concessions that grant you an extended deadline to complete final coursework or, under exceptional circumstances, late withdrawal from a course. The university-wide policy is outlined here: [http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0](http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0)

If you are unable to attend class or complete graded assignments due to illness, accident, or personal tragedy and would like to make arrangements for an in-term accommodation, notify your instructor as soon as you can. If the adverse circumstances you face will result in missing final requirement deadlines consult with the Director of Graduate Studies as well as with your instructor.

See the Graduate School website for relevant guidelines and resources:
- [https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-concession](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-concession)
- [https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/assisting-graduate-students-distress](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/assisting-graduate-students-distress)

**Concerns about a Course, an Instructor, or a Grade**

If you have concerns about a class, first discuss the matter with your instructor. If the issue is not resolved at that level, you should contact the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the Department Head and, beyond that, the Graduate School or the Ombudsperson for Students. Here are the relevant links:
- Campus-wide policy on grade appeals: [https://senate.ubc.ca/vancouver/rules/academic](https://senate.ubc.ca/vancouver/rules/academic)
- Arts Advising: [https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/academic-performance/disagreement-with-a-professor/](https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/academic-performance/disagreement-with-a-professor/)
- Office of the Ombudsperson for Students: [https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/](https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/)

**Mark to Grade conversion**

Assignments for this course will be assessed on the standard UBC grading scheme as outlined in the UBC Calendar: [http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0#217](http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0#217)

Low-stakes assignments like reading responses will be graded on a 5-point scale ( ✓ / ✓ / ✓ / ✓ ) that converts to letter and percentage grades as follows.

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<td>85-89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>✓+</td>
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