

See opposite sides for recommended readings / list of lecture topics.

PHIL 316 (2005) Philosophy of Gender
City Campus every Saturday /
Legon Campus every Tues 11:30 am Library Annex & Thurs 6:30 pm Central Cafe

Gender and Work

The topics and issues in gender studies are many. In order to make some philosophical progress in the limited time available, the data we will address is limited to gender issues and the concept and practice of work.

We will take as given the data of exhibiting widely experienced gender disparity in workplaces of all kinds, from the farm to the academy, and in all aspects of human labour from cleaning floors to rocket science. Presupposing the data widely available, we will focus on issues that link the various aspects of gender based injustice involving work to many other forms of injustice, e.g. racially based discrimination.

It is not obvious *why* women are so widely disadvantaged in society. Nor is it obvious why they should or shouldn't be.

Already these remarks span very different domains of argument: empirical explanation *vs.* ethical conviction.

We will examine various conceptual and logical difficulties that underlie arguments sustaining the uniqueness of gender-specific discrimination against women, and its dissimilarities from other forms of discrimination. This rules out a lot of other related topics, but only to help us focus on the philosophical issues underlying them all.

To familiarise ourselves with the data and the wide spectrum of issues concerning gender studies researchers, activists and advocates, the readings initially recommended provides only a starting point or awareness raising point of reference only. The content of this course presupposes, for example, the existence of gender-based discrimination.

Rather than wrestle with denials of this data, we will examine the philosophical questions underlying or presupposed by sociological and ethical debates over identity-based injustice.

Order of Topics (approximate and susceptible to change)

0. A review of facts on the ground ('the data'): varieties of violence against women, disparities in opportunity, pay inequities, gender bias in 'modernity' (women's subjugation ≠ traditional values)

I. Tools for analysis—Value judgments *vs.* Empirical descriptions, and value-laden observation

- Contrasting deductive argument structure to defend an ethical point of view *vs.* inductive confirmation of a descriptive hypothesis using evidence
- Hume's dictum: "you can't derive an 'ought' from an 'is'."

II. Identifying and understanding gender as difference

- The essentialist theory of 'innate' difference
- Kwame Appiah's objections to the model of racialist essentialism
- The nature *vs.* nurture duality: a false dichotomy underlying the myth of biological determinism
- Theological and ideological arguments defending gender hierarchy
- Vulgar relativism and the erasure of women's experience of subjugation

III. Classical liberalist views of gender disparity

- European political doctrines of abstract individualism (John Locke, J. S. Mill, Immanuel Kant)
- Judeo-Christian foundations of misogyny
- Abstract individualism and the western industrialist ideology of gender-neutral equality

IV. Post-modernist views of gender injustice in the labour market

- Marx and Engels' understanding of class conflict, labour as 'praxis', and gender-based exploitation
- The sexual division of labour—reproductive and nourishing activity ≠ 'praxis'
- The limitations of Marxist analysis of gender-based exploitation

V. Classic cross-cultural misrepresentations of gender as difference

- Hegemonic sources of gender bias: public *vs.* private domain, spirit *vs.* flesh in human nature

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Relevant readings for each unit of lectures are identified in the list below and will be identified in the course of the lectures.

Readings listed contain sections that are the source material and/or perspectives and arguments referred to in the lectures. (Others may be recommended as we proceed).

Handout on empirical vs. value judgments, circular reasoning

Handout on bio-determinist Summers' populist views of gender disparity

Abuya, Pamela; "Women in Need of Liberation," *Critical Gender Discourse in Africa* ed. C.E. Ukhun; Ibadan: Nigeria (2002) pp. 104-116

Collins, John; "The African Macrocosm: Sexual Polarity" *African Musical Symbolism in Contemporary Perspective* (2004) pp.94-104.

Fred-Mensah, Ben K. "Looking up to the Victims: Land Scarcity and Women's Role in Food Provisioning in the Ghana-Togo Border Area," *IAS Research Review NS* vol.19.2 (2003) 35-48.

Jaggar, Alison; *Feminist Politics and Theories of Human Nature* Chs.3&4 (1983).

Kitcher, Philip; "Evolution: Explaining the Diversity of Life on Earth" Ch. 27 *History and Philosophy of Science for African Undergraduates* (2000)

Lauer, Helen; "Future Women in the Public Sphere," *Critical Gender Discourse in Africa* ed. C.E. Ukhun; Ibadan: Nigeria (2002) pp. 13-30.

Moore, Henrietta L.; *Feminism and Anthropology* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota (1990) pp. 42-127.

O'Neill, Onora "Justice, gender and international boundaries," *International Justice and the Third World* ed. R. Atfield, Barry Wilkens (1992) pp.50-77

Odotei, Irene; "Gender and Traditional Authority in the Artisanal Marine Fishing Industry in Ghana" *IAS Research Review NS* vol. 15.1 (1999) pp. 15-38

Overa, Ragnhild; "Gender Ideology and Manoeuvring Space for Female Fishery Entrepreneurs," *IAS Research Review NS* vol.19.2 (2003) pp. 49-66.

Rosaldo, M. Z. "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-cultural Understanding" *Signs: JI of Women in Culture and Society* (1980) vol. 5.5 pp. 389-474.

Songsore, J. and McGranahan, G. "Women's Household Environmental Caring Roles in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area, A Qualitative Appraisal," *IAS Research Review NS* vol.19.2 (2003), 67-83.

Women's *Manifesto for Ghana* (excerpts pp. 1-21)

These readings in photocopy form available at City Campus from the Class Rep and Library Legon Campus at L/H Annex B foyer with Mr. Nana Akuomaning