

INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

LOWER-LEVEL UNDERGRADUATE COURSE

This is a sketch of a feminist epistemology syllabus.

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. The persons, communities, cultures, and technologies that shape and communicate knowledges — be they scientific theories, political opinions, or entertainment news — have a profound effect on how people acquire and use those knowledges. This is the foundational premise of feminist epistemology. In this course we study the influence of cultural, community, and personal backgrounds on knowledge acquisition and transmission. We focus in particular on scientific knowledge, as it is the type of knowledge often considered least susceptible to cultural influence, and its literary complement, science fiction.

2. CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

This course involves active student participation in discussions of potentially contentious issues. For these discussions to be a success, all students must engage with the readings and with their peers. Weekly commentary assignments have been designed to encourage engagement with readings, and group discussion activities will involve students in debates with each other.

By entering any classroom, students agree to participate in an intellectual community. This community encourages respectful disagreements that foster new knowledge through the tools of critical thinking. This community does not tolerate disrespectful disagreements that aim to attack a person's ethnicity, religious beliefs, politics, gender, or other aspects of personal identity.

3. PROGRESSION OF TOPICS

- (1) What is Feminism?
- (2) What is Objectivity?
- (3) Historical perspectives: From suffrage to situated science
- (4) Power dynamics: who is entitled to what knowledges?
- (5) Gendered experiments, gendered theories
- (6) Constructing our world(s): from gender dynamics to scientific theories
- (7) Medical contexts: Hysteria and pharmaceutical testing populations
- (8) Are laws of nature objective?
- (9) Education movements/Unlocking the Clubhouse
- (10) Where do we go from here?

4. READING LIST

- Keller and Longino, *Feminism and Science*
- Le Guin, *Birthday of the World*
- hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*
- Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Kourany, *Philosophy of Science after Feminism*
- Margolis and Fisher, *Unlocking the Clubhouse: Women in Computing*
- Selections from Mallory Ortberg, black-girldangerous, Jezebel, etc.