

PHILOS 753
Early Modern European Philosophy
Early Modern Women Philosophers – Education, Marriage, Community
McMaster University – Fall 2021

Meeting time: Tuesdays 1130-1330

Instructor: Dr. Allauren Samantha Forbes

Office: N/A

Email: forbeas@mcmaster.ca

Office hours: Mondays 900-1100 or by appointment

Course Objectives

Course Description:

In this course, we will explore some of the works of historically overlooked European women philosophers. While much of the recent scholarship that has occurred on these figures has focused on their metaphysics and epistemology, in this course we will focus on the interpersonal social and moral arguments surrounding the fight for women's equality – these often center around education and marriage as socio-political institutions – as well as broader patterns of interpersonal relations within communities as a means of furthering subversive feminist projects. How can folks create communities of support, resistance, and change? How are some communities inoculated against a shift in epistemic practices and moral values? Some folks we will read include Mary Astell, Margaret Cavendish, and Marie de Gournay.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Critically read and analyze philosophical texts;
- Interpret 'non-traditional' philosophical texts and figures;
- Discuss early feminist philosophy in a respectful, thoughtful, engaging way;
- Construct clear and persuasive original arguments about these texts/figures;
- Produce a conference paper on at least one of these texts/figures.

Textbooks, Materials, & Fees

- Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, ed. Patricia Springborg (2002), Broadview
- Clarke, Desmond M. (2013) *The Equality of the Sexes – Three Feminist Texts of the Seventeenth Century*, OUP.

Other texts will be provided via pdf and link in keeping with McMaster copyright policy.

Method of Assessment:

- Participation – **ongoing** – 15%
- Podcast assignment – **week 7** – 20%
- Presentations – **week 13** – 15%
 - Present your plan: 5%
 - Offer substantive peer feedback to assigned peers: 10%
- Seminar paper – **18 December** – 50%

Participation

Participation consists in being a present, respectful, and engaged member of this intellectual community: we are engaged in a practice of collective inquiry into these understudied figures and texts. You will ask questions, offer your views, and be engaged participants in other ways, too. This course is something we are doing together – you need not be an expert to be a fully engaged contributor. We will co-construct our understandings as a collective. An important part of this will be publicly submitting interpretive thoughts, questions (etc.) ahead of class to develop our conversations.

Podcast assignment

In the spirit of cooperative inquiry, and with the knowledge that conversations are often some of the most interesting and intellectually productive tools at our disposal, you will work in groups to produce a podcast (which is really just a record of a conversation you've had) about some topic, theme, etc. related to the course material. This is much less structured than a paper, but that is precisely the point: there are many ways to make a point, and many ways to engage in collaborative inquiry. This is but one. We will talk more about the mechanics of this assignment in class.

Presentation & peer feedback

In the last class meeting, you will present your plan for your seminar paper, along with any interpretive/argumentative questions or concerns you might have. You will be assessed based on your level of preparation and philosophical engagement demonstrated. You will also be assigned as a peer respondent (a TBD number based on class size); your obligation here is to offer thoughtful, meaningful support and constructive feedback to others based on their presentations. This is meant to foster intellectual development and connection and to help you prepare for the paper.

Seminar paper

You will write a conference-length paper offering an interesting, original, and sophisticated argument and/or analysis. Hopefully, you will also submit this to a conference (and be accepted as a presenter). These papers are usually about 4500 words, which sounds a lot easier than it is. Conferences and writing conference papers is a crucially important skill in academia, and even if this isn't your main interest, conferences offer a wonderful social and intellectual experience (well, not quite the same in the time of covid, but still fun!). When you've settled on a broad topic, please contact me to set a meeting so that we can refine your question and source any relevant secondary literature.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties

My policy on late work is for every 24 hours after the deadline, you will lose one third of a letter grade. So, if you turn in a B+ assignment, after one day it is a B, after another it is a B-, etc. That said, I know that extenuating circumstances do occur. Should you find yourself in such a situation, please contact me as soon as possible, but keep in mind that this is no guarantee of an extension.

If you anticipate needing an extension, you must email me **at least 24 hours prior to the deadline** with your request. If something comes up at the last minute, send me an email with subject line **Urgent**. If you need an extension because of a diagnosis or disability, please see the section below on accommodations.

When uploading assignments to Avenue, make sure to allow a couple of minutes before the deadline in case of internet/Avenue issues. **Everyone receives a five-minute grace period after the deadline**, i.e., if the deadline is 12am, no late penalty will be applied up to 12:05am, though 12:06am and after will be subject to the late penalty.

Other Course Information

Behaviour

Philosophy is, at its core, a practice of critical thinking. This often consists in making arguments and responding to one's interlocutors in ways that interrogate their positions and claims; we will consider reasons for and against views in a way that incorporates an underlying commitment to trust, empathy, and cooperative inquiry. Throughout our discussions we will maintain an attitude of respect even – especially – when we disagree with the views at hand. We will discuss specific practices of class conduct in the first class.

Electronic Devices

I would usually include a section here on the evidence that suggests that distractions via one's devices undermine academic success through interference with attention, learning, participation, etc. Since we are meeting online, such reminders are moot.

Email

I will communicate with you via email and Avenue Announcement, particularly if something changes in the course. Please ensure that you are receiving these notifications. My general policy is to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them, not including weekends; however, I will not discuss grades over email, and would prefer that longer questions about assignments are addressed in virtual office hours. Please check the syllabus and the (forthcoming) detailed instructions on assignments, etc. before emailing me about them.

Grades

I am committed to a fair and unbiased grading process. As such, all assignments must be submitted with no identifying information other than your student number. This allows the teaching team to grade anonymously. If you have concerns about this process, please contact me and we will discuss possible solutions. If you are unsatisfied with your grade and would like to appeal it, the process is as follows. Between 24 and 72 hours after the grades are posted, explain in writing – in a way that responds to every single comment – how you think the grade/comments are inappropriate for your assignment. I promise to consider these appeals and, if the appeal is accepted, to re-examine your assignment. Please note, however, that a successful request for regrading can result in your mark going up or down.

Accessibility and Support Services

I want all of you to succeed and flourish philosophically. There are, of course, many ways to

learn; I will strive to adapt to your needs, but this means that you must tell me how you learn best. Please feel free to contact me via email or in office hours to let me know what works for you.

Students with disabilities or relevant diagnoses are strongly encouraged to make use of services here at the University. If you require any accommodations in light of any diagnoses or disabilities, please contact Student Accessibility Services. You do not need to disclose any details of any of these matters with me; once you've been in contact with SAS, we will only discuss how to accommodate your needs given practical details of the class.

Turnitin

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Covid-19

These are obviously strange and frustrating times. When we do meet, it will be via Zoom (provided by McMaster). You do not need to have your cameras on in large group meetings, though it would be nice to be able to see you when we meet privately in office hours. Please make note of the degree of privacy afforded by Zoom virtual backgrounds.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lockdown their browser during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca e-mail to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

Request for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright

law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Topics and Readings

Schedule:

Week 1 – Sept. 7: The history of early modern philosophy

- O’Neill, “Disappearing Ink”
- Hutton, “Women, philosophy and the history of philosophy”

Week 2 – Sept. 14: Marie de Gournay

- *Equality*
- *Complaint*

Week 3 – Sept. 21: Anna Maria van Schurman

- *Dissertation*
- Clarke, “Anna Maria van Schurman and Women’s Education”

Week 4 – Sept. 28: François Poulain de la Barre

- *Discourse*
- Schmitter, “Cartesian prejudice: Gender, education, and authority in Poulain de la Barre”

Week 5 – Oct. 5: François Poulain de la Barre

- *Discourse*
- Reuter, “Francois Poulain de la Barre on the Subjugation of Women”

[READING WEEK OCT 10-16]

Week 6 – Oct. 19: Mary Astell

- *Proposal*
- Detlefsen, “Custom, Freedom, and Equality: Mary Astell on Marriage and Women’s Education”

Week 7 – Oct. 26: Mary Astell

- *Proposal*
- Forbes, “Astell on Bad Custom and Epistemic Injustice”

Week 8 – Nov. 2: Mary Astell

- *Reflections* (excerpt)
- Broad, “Mary Astell on Marriage and Lockean Slavery”

Week 9 – Nov. 9: Margaret Cavendish

- *The Convent of Pleasure*
- Sierra, “Convents as Feminist Utopias: Margaret Cavendish’s *The Convent of Pleasure* and the Potential of Closeted Dramas and Communities”

Week 10 – Nov. 16: Mary Wollstonecraft

- *Vindication*
- Halldenius, “The Primacy of Right: On the Triad of Liberty, Equality, and Virtue in Wollstonecraft’s Political Thought”

Week 11 – Nov. 23: Mary Wollstonecraft

- *Vindication*
- Mackenzie, “Mary Wollstonecraft: An Early Modern Relational Autonomy Theorist?”

Week 12 – Nov. 30: Friendship as Resistant Community

- Deslauriers, “One Soul in Two Bodies: Marie de Gournay and Montaigne”
- Kendrick, “Mary Astell’s theory of spiritual friendship”

Week 13 – Dec. 7: **Presentations**