WOMEN'S STUDIES :02-3

Instructor:  
Bonnelle Johnson

Spring Semester 1981

SPECIAL TOPIC:  
Simone de Beauvoir and Alienation

Description

Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist views, especially her theories on the development of alienation and bad faith, enable us to understand why the alienation that women experience is different and often more profound than that of men. Though de Beauvoir's account seems to me to be inadequate in the way that all the existentialist views are inadequate, emphasizing a model that seems to apply to men more easily than women, her view also contains the material for self-correction and an expanded concept of alienation. To see why such an expansion is necessary, we will look at accounts of alienation in both women and men and see why someone might want to claim that there is a difference, and what could account for the difference. Finally, we will work on an account of alienation that could include women and men.

Format and Grading

At first, both lectures and seminars will concentrate on coming to terms with de Beauvoir's philosophical views; in the lectures, the emphasis will be on covering material, while in the tutorials we will discuss and criticize that material. Later in the course, the lectures will be largely concerned with various ways of describing and accounting for alienation, while in the tutorials we will discuss fictional pictures of alienation.

There will be four pieces of work in this course: three short papers, each worth 20%, and a term paper worth 40%. The short papers will be written on assigned topics, while the term paper will be on a topic chosen by the students.

Books

The Ethics of Ambiguity, de Beauvoir; The Second Sex, de Beauvoir, From Rationalism to Existentialism, Solomon; After Leaving Mr. McKenzie, Rhys; La Bataerde, Leduc; Play It As It Lays, Didion, Metamorphosis, Kafka; The Fall, Camus; Nausea, Sartre

Also recommended (but not required): The Mandarins, de Beauvoir; The Prime of Life, de Beauvoir; Two-Strand River, Maillard (out of print but in the library, also Vancouver Public Library).

Prerequisite: 60 credit hours or permission of instructor.