WS 830-4: Feminist Ethics: Care, Difference, and Power

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Tues. 9:30-1:20, Burnaby campus

Feminist ethics is a nexus for the interplay of philosophy, politics and psychology. This course examines how feminists have questioned the assumptions and analyzed the concepts of traditional ethics to suggest that the diverse experiences and roles of women as mothers, wives, and caregivers create alternative ethics. Could an ethic of care be useful for others such as health care practitioners? How should one distinguish feminist ethics from feminine ethics? Has the interaction between gender and ethics changed with the emergence of new reproductive technologies? The course will also critically assess major epistemological approaches within feminist theory. Postmoderns and women of color feminists consider the problems of difference and essentialism. Feminist ethics strives to break away from binary opposites such as masculine/feminine, in order to uncover the fractured identities of women in all of their multiplicity.

Required Readings:
Custom courseware package (required readings are also on reserve in Bennett Library). Articles in the courseware package include: Simone de Beauvoir, “Conclusion” from The Second Sex, Kimberly Hutchings, “Ethics, Feminism, and International Affairs,” Jana Sawicki, “Feminism, Foucault, and ‘Subjects’ of Power and Freedom”

Assignments and Grading Structure:
Attendance and Participation 10%
Simulation (3-4 pages) 10% (5% oral and 5% written)
Idea proposal (1 page) 10%
Term paper (8-10 pages) 30%
Midterm Exam 15%
Take home Final Exam 25%

Description of Assignments:
- Grading will be based on attendance, and the frequency and quality of your participation in class discussions and small group activities. To assist you to prepare, study questions will be provided at the preceding class.
- Simulation is a group assignment that develops your critical thinking and teamwork skills. You will be engaged in practical moral reasoning by applying ethical theories to a case study. In the moral brief, you will answer case-specific questions as a way to construct a sound defence for taking a particular ethical action. In class, you will prepare with other members of your group arguments to justify the decision. Then each group will present their views to the rest of the class. You will be graded on how well you demonstrate an understanding of feminist and non-feminist ethical theories in formulating justification for a decision, not on what final decision is chosen.
- By setting out the general area you would like to explore for your research paper, the idea proposal will assist you to prepare the research paper.
- A list of topics for the term paper will be provided early in the course, from which you can choose a topic. The paper, written in an argumentative style, should show evidence of attention to required readings in addition to utilizing two books and articles from the library that were not part of the list of required readings.
- The midterm exam will be held in class and the format will be short-answer and closed book.
- The take home final exam will contain short-answer and essay questions. The last class will review course material in preparation for that exam.

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.