

PHIL 332
Philosophy and Feminism: Women, Men, Reason, Beauty
Summer 2012

Course Description

You may have been struck by recent news stories and images in popular culture that claim that boys and girls think differently. For instance: boys are good at math, and girls are good at reading; t-shirts for girls that read 'Allergic to Algebra' (Forever 21 pressured to pull) and 'I'm too pretty to do my homework, so my brother has to do it for me', (JCPenney pressured to pull), and the like. This sort of thing is hardly new. In fact, similar sorts of claims can be found throughout intellectual history in a set of views that are often called 'essentialist'. Essentialist accounts maintain that men and women are different in nature, and it is typical to maintain that women and men have different rational capacities: that is, women and men think differently. We will begin the course by examining some arguments in favor of essentialism. We will then turn our attention to three sets of responses to essentialism. Interestingly, in many essentialist accounts, rational capacities often get pitted against beauty. We will be interested in alternative views that instead maintain a close link beauty and rational capacities. Second, we will be interested in responses that explain distinctions between the way men and women think by appeal to cultural practices. Finally, we will be interested in counter-arguments to essentialist claims founded in recent psychological studies.



Texts:

Philosophy of Woman, ed. Mary Mahowald, Hackett ISBN: 978-0872202610

Symposium, Plato, Penguin ISBN: 978-0140449273

The Second Sex, trans Borde and Malovany-Chevalier, Vintage ISBN: 978-0307277787

The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men, Lucrezia Marinella,
Chicago ISBN: 978-0226505466

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Mary Astell, Broadview ISBN: 978-1551113067

Delusions of Gender, Cordelia Fine, Norton ISBN: 978-0393340242

Selected articles available on reserve

Course Requirements:

Two 5pp Papers, 30% each

Presentation, 10%, Paper (6-8pp) expanding on presentation, 20%

Participation 10% -- includes weekly short responses to reading