Gender, Ethics, and Education: 
Philosophical Issues

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education 
of the University of Toronto 
TPS 1439 
Winter, 2001 
Wednesday, 5:30-8:00 p.m. 
Room: TPS Seminar Room

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Philosophy, applied to the world, can help us see what's really there. 
(Judith Andre, 1995)

Although most Canadians believe that schools should promote equal opportunity, when we focus on gender, schools often mirror the same gender injustices found in our society. What role can schools play in building a society that is gender just, a society in which men and women equally contribute to and have full access to knowledge, enjoy resources, possess self-esteem and are free from fear and harassment? How does educational theory promote or hinder the attainment of this goal? This course is framed by the assumption that philosophical thinking can help us to answer these questions.

This course will examine the role of education and educational theory in the construction and reproduction of gender inequality. Primarily using philosophical texts, we will develop the conceptual framework necessary to examine the macroscopic relations between self, schooling and society in regards to gender. In addition, we will turn this conceptual lens upon the literature of educational theory to explore the role that educational theory has played in perpetuating gender hierarchies. The course will move from theoretical considerations concerning the concepts of gender, oppression and power to an examination of how gender impacts our understanding of moral experience and moral theory. We will then ask, if gender affects our interpretation, articulation and theorizing about moral experience, what implications does this have for our understanding of educational ends and methods of teaching?

Finally, students will apply this critical lens to contemporary educational issues involving gender as well as to their own private experiences as educators.

The course will be conducted primarily in a discussion mode. Sometimes this will necessarily be personally revealing. A constraint on this discussion upon which I insist is that we each individually, and all collectively, speak and listen in such a way as to actively respect the differences we bring to the class, both in moral point of view and in terms of social/political vulnerability.

Requirements:

Your final grade will be based upon the usual expectations of reading specified material and class participation, in addition to:

1) Self-reflective journal writing – For each reading assignment you will be asked to keep a journal of your reflections (1-2 pages typed). In this reflection, you are asked to highlight a point, idea, sentence, or argument in at least one of the readings that made an impression on you positively or negatively and why. In addition, you are to think of at least one critical question that the readings provoke for you that can be posed for class discussion. You may be asked to share your journal entries with the class. Each journal entry will be collected at the end of class but will not be graded individually.
Instead you will receive a composite grade reflecting the quality of all your journal entries towards the end of the term.
In addition, the class will begin each week with a student presenting a brief summary (what was the authors main point, main argument - one or two paragraphs) of one of the assigned readings for that week. This task will rotate continually among the students for the entire term. Depending on the size of the class, each student will have to a summary a number of times throughout the term.

(2) Class Presentation - In these presentations, you will explore a contemporary educational issue or question involving gender from the framework of the conceptual lens developed in the first part of the course. You will be responsible for raising critical questions for discussion and leading the class discussion. Your presentation must be based on at least 3 articles/papers that were approved by me and then distributed to the class at least one week in advance of your presentation. Some recommended topics will be suggested below and I can recommend some articles for each topic or you can research your own. I am also open to topics of particular interest to you that are not mentioned below.

(3) Final Paper – A final paper of 10 – 15 pages (typewritten and double-spaced) may be on the topic of your presentation, or a standard academic paper on a philosophical topic pertaining to the themes of the course. Another option is to organize your final paper around your self-reflective journals utilizing and closely analyzing the literature read for the course. Deadline for submission of final papers: May 1, 2001

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- Class participation: 10%
- Weekly Journals and Summaries: 10%
- Class Presentation: 20%
- Final Paper: 60%

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1 (Jan. 10): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan. 17): Some Traditional Views of Women and Education

  Mary Wollenstonecraft - Selections from the Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792

Week 3 (Jan. 24): Feminism, Liberalism, Equality and Sex-blindness


"How are you gendered?" - special journal assignment due today
Week 4 (Jan. 31): Gender as a Social Construction


**Excerpts:**
Simone de Beauvoir - *The Second Sex*

Week 5 (Feb. 7): Gender and Oppression


Week 6 (Feb. 14): Gender/Power - Institutionally Supported Power


Week 7 (Feb. 21): Gender, Knowledge and the Curriculum


**Week 8 (Feb. 28): Gendered People: How Do We Get This Way?**


**Week 9 (March 7): Gendered Aims of Education**


**Week 10 (March 14): Spring Break**

**Week 11 (March 21): Critique of Traditional Ethical Theory - Feminine Alternatives**


Week 12 (March 28): Feminist Ethics - Critiquing Caring

Week 13 (April 4): The Dangers of Essentialism

Week 14 (April 11): Presentations
Recommended Topics for Presentations
- Promoting Dialogue across Difference
- Gender and Educational Administration
- Gender and Science Education
- Schools and Sexual Harassment
- Should education be gender free?
- Autonomy as an Educational Ideal
- The Place of Reason/Rationality/
  Critical Thinking in Education
- Shortchanging Boys?
- Single-Sexed Schools
- Teacher Authority and Gender
- Feminist Pedagogy
- Language, Gender and Education
- Men, Feminism and Education
- Sex Education, Sexuality and
  Gender
- Gender and Ed. Leadership
Week 9 (Feb. 28): Essentialism and The Dangers of Considering Gender Independently of Race

Week 13 (March 28): Some Educational Implications