Advanced Topics in Feminist Philosophy  
(PHIL10214)  
2021/2022 Semester 1

Course Organiser: Dr. Filipa Melo Lopes // Filipa.MeloLopes@ed.ac.uk  
Office Hours: TBA please see Learn page.

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Course Description

This course will focus on Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*. First published in 1949, it became one of the most influential feminist texts of the 20th century and it continues to inform Feminist Philosophy today. But this is also a controversial book that has been criticized by both feminists and anti-feminists. In it, Beauvoir brings together ideas and methods from intellectual traditions like existentialism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and anthropology. We will work through the two volumes of *The Second Sex* and will have the opportunity to discuss issues like the relation between gender inequality and biology; the role of love in women’s subordination; the ethical status of sex work; our social ideals of masculinity; and the cultural association of women and Nature.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be better able to:

- Effectively present close and critical analysis of a historical philosophical text.
- Present and defend their own reasoned ideas about the issues discussed.
- Demonstrate their capacity to articulate arguments succinctly and clearly in a written essay format.
- Critically evaluate gender dynamics and feminist politics in their own lives.

Format & Times

Seminar  Tuesday  16:00 - 18:00  TBA

The course will be run as a discussion-based seminar. We will try to understand and critically evaluate a complex philosophical text, so it is **crucial** that you do the required readings in advance of the seminar. As you read, you should take notes and bring those with you to class.
Readings

You must purchase a copy of *The Second Sex*, Vintage Books edition (2015), translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (other translations are not acceptable). This will be our edition of reference for this course.

You can purchase a copy of this edition from Blackwell’s on Southbridge in person or online directly through [this link](#).

Weekly Topics

**Volume I – Facts and Myths**

Week 1  •  Watch Introductory Lecture Video + Introduction
Week 2  •  Part 1 Destiny
Week 3  •  Part 2 History - Chapters 1-4; last section of chapter 5 (from “Several conclusions come to the fore …”)
Week 4  •  Part 3 Myths - Chapter 1

**Volume II – Lived Experience**

Week 5  •  Introduction; Part 1 Formative Years - Chapter 1
Week 6  •  Part 1 - Chapter 2
Week 7  •  Part 1 - Chapters 3, 4
Week 8  •  Part 2 Situation Chapter 6
Week 9  •  Part 2, Chapters 7, 8
Week 10 •  Part 3 Justifications
Week 11 •  Part 4 Towards Liberation

Assessment

- **Midterm Essay** (1500 words)  40 %
  DUE: Thursday 21st October, by 12 noon
- **Final Essay** (2500 words)  55 %
  DUE: Thursday 9th December, by 12 noon
- **Final Essay Proposal**  5%
  DUE: Thursday 18th November, by 12 noon
Final Essay Proposal

Students will have the opportunity to develop their own final essay prompt, based on the topics we have covered. They must engage with *The Second Sex* and at least one piece of secondary literature.

Students must submit an essay proposal in advance of (2 pages double space max.). This should include an essay topic, a thesis, an argument plan, and a preliminary bibliography. Detailed guidance will be given during the semester. Students will receive feedback on their proposal that they can use to write their final paper.