1. Course Description

This course looks at three ways that certain behaviours, attitudes, institutions, representations, and ways of using language have been morally criticised. To objectify is to treat or represent a person as a mere thing; to dehumanise is to treat or represent a person as lacking in humanity, for example, as animal-, insect-, or disease-like; while to treat someone as the Other is to enjoy and depend on their recognition of oneself as a subject, while failing to fully reciprocate this recognition. However, these slogans leave the crucial questions largely unanswered. It’s left unclear what it is to treat people in these ways, in what ways such treatment might be morally problematic, and to what extent these three notions overlap (and whether we’re really dealing with three distinct notions here at all). Moreover, philosophers such as Kate Manne and Mari Mikkola have recently denied the significance of objectification and dehumanisation, as typically understood, while Nancy Bauer has questioned whether philosophers can say anything true and significant about them. This course introduces leading philosophical accounts of objectification, dehumanisation, and othering, and investigates the degree of overlap between the three notions. We will also examine scepticism about the significance of these notions, looking closely at a number of case-studies in order to assess the plausibility of this kind of scepticism. These case-studies will include sexist pornography, epistemic injustice (Miranda Fricker’s term for ways in which one can be harmed in one’s capacity as an epistemic subject), and the roles of dehumanising language and imagery.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

This course will allow students to demonstrate core skills in philosophy, including interpreting and critically engaging with philosophical texts, evaluating arguments and theories, and developing one’s own ideas in response to the issues discussed. Students will be able to understand, explain, and critically evaluate the principal theories of objectification, dehumanisation, and othering, as well as the most pressing issues facing such theories, and will be able to write short, clear papers on the topics covered in the class, manifesting the core philosophical skills listed above.
3. Course Content

1. Can Philosophers Teach Us Anything About Objectification?

Primary Readings


Simone de Beauvoir, 1949, The Second Sex, Vintage Books, Introduction to Volume 1. (Borde and Malovany-Chevallier translation preferred, but Parshley will be fine and is more widely available.)

2. Objectification as a Cluster Concept

Background


Primary Readings


Further Readings


3. Objectification as Imposition

Background


Primary Reading


Further Readings


4. Othering as Derivatisation

Primary Reading


Further Reading

See week 9.

5. Dehumanisation

Primary Reading


Further Reading

6. Human, All Too Human

*Background Reading*


*Primary Reading*

Kate Manne, 2018, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Oxford University Press: chapter 6. Available online through University library (or as audiobook from other places).

*Advanced Reading*


7. Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Objectification

*Background*


*Main Readings*


Aidan McGlynn, forthcoming, ‘Epistemic Objectification as the Primary Harm of Testimonial Injustice’, *Episteme*. Available online through University library.

*Further Reading*

8. Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Othering

Background

Week 4 readings


Primary Readings


Further Readings

Aidan McGlynn, draft, ‘Objects or Others? Epistemic Agency and the Primary Harm of Testimonial Injustice’. Available on Learn.


9. Objectifying Representations

Background


Primary Readings


10. Dehumanising Language

*Background*


*Primary Readings*


*Further Reading*


11. Revision