

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline, Winter 2016**

**Philosophy 4530G: Topics in Feminist Theories of Knowledge
Feminist Critiques of Science**

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| Winter Term 2016 Wednesday 2:30-5:30 pm Classroom: Stevenson Hall 1145 | Instructor: Kathleen Okruhlik Office: Stv H 4147 okruhlik@uwo.ca |
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DESCRIPTION

This course will focus chiefly on the question whether the gender of the knower makes a difference in scientific (and other) knowledge. If androcentric bias characterizes even some "good" science, what does this imply for epistemology? Could more rigorous adherence to scientific method be counted upon to eliminate that bias? Alternatively, would it be better to acknowledge the impossibility of gender-neutral knowledge and insist instead on the superiority of a feminist standpoint? Or should we simply abandon altogether the idea of objective knowledge and recognize sexist and feminist theories as alternative narratives different "versions," none of which can claim epistemic superiority? (Please note that the course will focus chiefly on science rather than other forms of knowledge.)

TEXTS

Readings will be made available through the course website and the library system.

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize students with a body of literature that is often omitted from the standard philosophy curriculum.
- To raise questions about the relationship between scientific objectivity and social context.
- To help students develop further the expository and argumentative skills they will need to address issues that are politically charged and epistemically complex.

REQUIREMENTS

Each of the following three components will account for one-third of the final mark:

- Attendance, participation, and seminar presentations
- One essay (3,000 – 4,000 words)
- Final exam. Study questions will be provided in advance.

Note: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please note that this outline is tentative and subject to change.