

Women in Western Political Thought: POL 303

Instructor: Mary Jo MacDonald
Office: Sid Smith 3007
Office Hours: Wed 3:00-4:00pm, SS3007
Email: maryjo.macdonald@mail.utoronto.ca

Summer 2023
Mon/ Wed 4-6pm
UC 256

Please be advised: Notes taken during lectures and classroom discussion must be handwritten. The use of mobile devices (including computers, laptops, tablets, phones, or recording devices) is prohibited, except with permission of the instructor. For more information, see below.

Course Description

This course explores how women and writings about women contributed to the development of central ideas in the history of political thought, including ideas about equality, freedom, ambition, progress, and authority. The course will cover writings on women by 'canonical' political thinkers such as Aristotle, Niccolò Machiavelli, Michel de Montaigne, and Thomas Hobbes; as well as their female interlocutors such as Lucrezia Marianella, Gabrielle Suchon, Margaret Cavendish, Marie de Gournay, and Mary Astell.

Course Objectives

1. To become acquainted with the 'woman question' in history of political thought and understand how it intersects with other key concepts, questions, and debates in political theory.
2. To develop the capacity to pose questions and critically analyze these texts, both in thesis-driven writing assignments and in classroom discussions.
3. To develop capacity to listen to lectures, identify the main points, and effectively take hand-written notes that synthesize this material.

Notes on Texts

All required texts will be made available on quercus. There will be no need to purchase any additional materials for this course. Some of the texts we will study are translations of French and Italian works. I encourage you to read these texts in the original language if you can do so. Please let me know if this applies to you, and I can direct you to French/ Italian versions of the texts.

Notes on Pre-requisites

Previous in the history of political thought or philosophy is a pre-requisite for this course (such as POL 200). This is an advanced political theory course, so I expect some familiarity with thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke.

Weekly Schedule and Readings

July 5th — Introduction, Syllabus overview

July 10 - **Ancient Debates** Plato and Aristotle

July 12 - **Women's Superiority**

Lucrezia Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*

July 17 - **Women as Wonders**

Gabrielle Suchon, *Treatise on Ethics and Politics*

July 19 - **Skepticism and Equality**

Montaigne, "The Inequality Between Us"

Marie de Gournay, *The Equality of Men and Women*

July 24 - **In Class Midterm**

July 26 - **Fortune, Virtu, and Female Ambition**

Machiavelli, Selections from *The Prince*

Mary Astell, Prefatory Discourse of *Moderation Truly Stated*

July 31 - **Amazons and Matriarchies**

Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

Margaret Cavendish, *Bell in Campo*

August 2 - **Liberalism and Progress**

John Locke, selections from *Two Treatises of Government*

Judith Drake, *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*

August 7 - **No Class**

August 9 - **Equality and Difference**

Poullain de la Barre "The Equality of the Sexes"

Rousseau, Selections from *Emile*

August 14 - **Equality and Difference Continued.**

August 15 - **Black Feminism**

Anna J. Cooper "Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race"

Course Requirements

Participation: 15%

In-Class Midterm: 30%

Final paper proposal: 10%

Final Paper: 45%

Instructions for Course Requirements

Participation: Participation grades will be based on in-class discussions. Remember that this is not an attendance grade—while attendance is required to participate, you will be graded on your contributions to the discussion. You will have one excused absence from discussion for the term.

Midterm: The midterm will be an in-class on July 24. More details will be given about the format closer to the date.

Paper Proposal and Final Paper:

Paper Proposal.

For final papers, you will choose your own topic related to the course material (by which I mean you must engage with the texts studied in this course). These topics must be approved by me before submitting the paper. To get approval, all students will submit a 500-word paper proposal by August 2. The paper proposal must indicate:

- (1) A question your paper will address. Note that questions can be evaluative or interpretative. Whereas interpretative questions seek to explain or elucidate an argument from the text that is puzzling, evaluative ones aim to assess the validity of an argument.
- (2) Your thesis.
- (3) Briefly highlight the main arguments you will consider to support your thesis
- (4) Explain what objections you will consider to your thesis.

I will return your proposals with recommendations for how you develop your paper. You may wish to schedule a meeting with me afterwards if there are major concerns with the paper proposal or if you need to come up with a new topic.

Final Paper

The final paper will be due on August 18th. The paper should be between 1900-2200 words long. Like your proposal, the paper must have an explicit thesis, clear arguments to support your thesis, and a response to objections.

All papers and proposals must be handed in on quercus in word or pdf format (no other formats will be accepted). All papers must be double spaced, at least 11 point font, within the appropriate word count, and have proper reference citation. You may use any reference citation system you like, as long as it is complete, consistent, and includes page numbers when referencing course materials.

Late Work Policy

Without prior permission from the instructor, assignments handed in late will be deducted 5% each day (including weekends). Please speak to me well in advance if you require an extension.

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: accessibility.

services@utoronto.ca or www.accessibility.utoronto.ca

Laptops, Communications and Mobile computing Devices

To achieve course-objectives, mobile computing devices (such as laptops, phone, tablets) are not to be used in class. There are several reasons for this:

1. There is increasing evidence that these devices distract both the user and fellow students; contributing to poorer performance overall in university courses.
2. Taking notes by hand prevents one from transcribing the lecture verbatim. Manual note-taking instead requires students to identify key points of the lecture, synthesize the material, and effectively put it into their own words—this is an important skill in its own right and one which contributes to student success in the course.

Turnitin and Academic Integrity

Students will be required to submit their assignments to Turnitin.com to ensure a practice of good academic integrity. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website. If, as a student, you object to using turnitin.com, please see the course instructor to establish appropriate alternative arrangements for submission of your written assignments.

Students are also required to keep their rough and draft work and copies of their assignments until the end of the course when grades are posted on ROSI. University policy regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Please see the University of Toronto's policy on plagiarism on the Blackboard site or at

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>. Please also consult the writing resources on campus noted in the introductory module of the Quercus page for this course.

Please note that AI generative tools, such as ChatGPT, are not to be used in this course.