

FEMINIST COALITIONAL POLITICS

Instructor: Dr. Caleb Ward

Contact: caleb.ward@uni-hamburg.de

Course developed as an advanced BA seminar

Taught Winter 2021/22 at University of Hamburg Institute of Philosophy

Without community there is certainly no liberation, no future, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between me and my oppression.

— Audre Lorde

Course Description

Feminist political theory and philosophy have developed sophisticated theories of coalition and solidarity within political movements. These theories are grounded in the unavoidable heterogeneity of the interests and political demands of women (and others facing gender-based oppression) across differences such as race, gender identity, sexuality, ability, and socioeconomic position. Because of this attention to marginalization, feminist theories of coalition set out from questions rarely asked within liberal political philosophy: On what basis is shared political action possible for people who have been persistently excluded—due to race, gender, or economic disenfranchisement—from traditional ideals of democratic rights and mutual respect? How can coalitions pursue external political change without ignoring internal tensions and historical injustices, such as between white women and women of color? What theories of social identity, oppression, and communication facilitate this kind of political action? What are the implications for global efforts against oppression and injustice?

In this seminar, we will examine theories of coalition and solidarity that have been developed in support of feminist political movements. We will also discuss how these theories might be applicable to social change in general, beyond specific feminist movements. What implications do theories of feminist coalitional politics have for political philosophy writ large? Special attention will be paid to philosophies developed by women of color and in transnational contexts.

Reading Schedule

Week 1 Introduction: Read and discuss syllabus

Unit 1: The Problem of Difference for Feminist Work

Week 2 Theme: Difference and injustice

Readings: [1] Iris Marion Young, “The Scaling of Bodies and the Politics of Identity,” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), 122–155;

[2] Audre Lorde, “Open Letter to Mary Daly,” in *Sister Outsider*, 66–71

Week 3 Theme: Interconnected oppressions

Readings: [1] Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider* (1984), 114–123

[2] Mari J. Matsuda, “Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory out of Coalition,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1183–1192

- Week 4 Theme: Bridging differences among women
Readings: [1] María Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for ‘the Woman’s Voice,’” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 6, no. 6 (1983): 573–81
[2] María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception,” *Hypatia* 2, no. 2 (1987): 3–19
- Week 5 Theme: Failures of white feminism
Readings: [1] Mariana Ortega, “Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color,” *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 56–74
[2] Sarah Tyson, “Feminism, Violence, and the State,” in *Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Public Policy*, ed. Boonin (2018), 97–108
- Week 6 Theme: Accountability in theorizing
Readings: [1] Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique* 20 (1991): 5–32
[2] Kristie Dotson and Ayanna De’Vante Spencer, “Another Letter Long Delayed: On Unsound Epistemological Practices and Reductive Inclusion,” *Philosophical Topics* 46, no. 2 (2018): 51–69

Unit 2: Transnational Feminism

- Week 7 Theme: Neoliberalism and the many faces of feminist struggle
Reading: [1] Linda Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Mapping Transnational Feminist Engagements: Neoliberalism and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements* (2015), 82–115
[2] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles,” *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2002): 499–535.
- Week 8 Theme: Third World women’s engagement with feminism
Reading: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,” in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003), 43–84
- Week 9 Theme: Asymmetries in global feminism
Reading: [1] Alison Jaggar, “‘Saving Amina’: Global Justice for Women and Intercultural Dialogue,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2005): 55–75
[2] Uma Narayan, “Sisterhood and ‘Doing Good’: Asymmetries of Western Feminist Location, Access and Orbits of Concern,” *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2019)
- Week 10 Theme: Grounding feminist political claims
Reading: Serene Khader, “Toward a Decolonial Feminist Universalism,” in *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic* (2019), 21–49

Unit 3: Feeling, Caring, and Knowing in Coalition

- Week 11 Theme: Feeling and refusing to feel, part I

Course Plan – Feminist Coalitional Politics (Caleb Ward)

Readings: [1] Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” in *Sister Outsider*, 124–133

[2] Sara Ahmed, “How Not to Do Things with Words,” *Wagadu* 16 (2016): 1–10

[3] Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage* (2021), excerpt

Week 12 Theme: Feeling and refusing to feel, part II

Reading: Hil Malatino, “The Promise of Repair: Trans Rage and the Limits of Feminist Coalition,” *Signs* 46, no. 4 (2021): 827–51

Week 13 Theme: Building coalitions based on feelings and commitments

Reading: [1] Allison Weir, “Global Feminism and Transformative Identity Politics,” *Hypatia* 23, no. 4 (2008): 110–33

[2] María Lugones, “On Complex Communication,” *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 75–85

Week 14 Presentations and feedback on final paper prospectuses