

Phil573/Fall 2024
Feminist Theory Seminar/*Speculum*
Wednesdays 4-6:45 pm, Bowden 216



Robert Motherwell, *In Plato's Cave No. 1*, acrylic on canvas, 72x96 in., National Gallery of Art, 1972

Professor Lynne Huffer
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Office hours: T 4-5 pm
or by appointment
Bowden 315

Course description

This seminar focuses on Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) as an investigation into how Western philosophy can be redefined through a feminist critique of its constitutive exclusions. Our seminar will have three aims: First, to deepen our understanding of Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference through an intense engagement with *Speculum*; second, to practice literary close reading as a philosophical method; and third, to explore the philosophical canon Irigaray deconstructs with supplementary readings from Freud, Aristotle, Plotinus, Descartes, the mystics, Kant, Hegel, and Plato. In your final paper you will have the opportunity to consider how Irigaray's focus on sexual difference has been taken up, critiqued, and transformed by contemporary queer, feminist, trans, decolonial, and critical race theorists.

Texts (available at campus bookstore)

Required:

Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*,
trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University
Press, 1985).

Recommended:

Mary C. Rawlinson and James Sares, eds.,
*What Is Sexual Difference? Thinking with
Irigaray* (New York: Columbia University
Press, 2023).

French original:

(on course reserves)

Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*
(Paris: Minuit, 1974).

Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray:
Philosophy in the Feminine* (London:
Routledge, 1991).

All other readings will be available on Canvas.

Assignments

You will be asked to complete four assignments over the course of the semester:

1. Close reading (2 assignments)

DUE OCTOBER 2 AND NOVEMBER 6 IN CLASS

“Close reading” is an important feminist method that emerged out of literary studies and post-structuralism in the 1980s. In *Speculum*, Irigaray deconstructs the Western philosophical canon through a skillful deployment of this method. We will hone this skill over the course of the semester and explore its uses as a philosophical tool. For each of the two close reading assignments, you will choose **one to three sentences** from *Speculum* for close reading. You will then closely read the passage, annotating heavily as you work and rework it. For each assignment, you will hand in a two-page document consisting of two parts: 1) a **color** photocopy of your **annotated** page and 2) a **400-word** set of reflections based on your close reading of the passage in question.

2. In-Class Discussion Lead (dates to be determined via sign-up sheet)

Your primary task for this in-class assignment will be to *briefly* present something about the canonical text Irigaray targets in her reading and then to lead a discussion focused on Irigaray’s text. I will ask you to zoom in on a particular passage in Irigaray, with reference to the canonical text she deconstructs. *Please don’t think of this as a presentation, but rather as an exercise in collaborative inquiry*; do your best to elicit dialogue through the use of questions and/or collaborative activities. Be creative! Your discussion lead will be assessed for clarity, concision and, most important, effective engagement with others in the class.

3. Final Paper DUE DECEMBER 17 BY 5 PM AT MY OFFICE, BOWDEN 315

You will write **ONE medium-length analytic paper (4-5K words)** that examines a specific theme, concept, or problem in *Speculum*. The focus of your paper will be determined over the course of the semester and must be approved by me. I encourage you to write about something that stumps or troubles you rather than something you think you already know. This is a great way to expand your analytical skills, to challenge the limits of your thinking, and to open yourself to reflection on your own intellectual habits. More pragmatically, this paper will give you an opportunity to combine the practice of close reading with philosophical conceptualization. Both these skills should be evident in your paper. If you would like to try a more experimental form for your final paper (see Huffer in Rawlinson and Sares as an example) please come talk to me about your ideas.

4. Seminar Participation

Everyone is expected to contribute to our class discussions and, barring medical or personal emergencies, to attend every scheduled class meeting. This expectation applies to auditors as well as those taking the course for a grade.

“Good” class participation does not necessarily mean talking the most. There are many ways to promote dialogue in class, including asking questions, noticing if others are silent and trying to make space for those voices, allowing silences just to “be” for a few moments, talking to each other and not just to me, reminding yourself that the goal is less to be “right” than it is to collaboratively work through issues and problems. Useful discussion contributions might encompass explicating key terms and passages, posing questions for clarification, considering the theoretical, practical, political, ethical, and epistemological implications of Irigaray’s moves throughout the text, considering interpretive dilemmas and obstacles, comparing Irigaray’s aims with those of the philosophers she deconstructs, attending to unanticipated developments or limitations in the readings, comparing with other readings, or assessing Irigaray’s methods of inquiry.

In general I am looking for regular, thoughtful contributions to demonstrate that you are 1) reading carefully and 2) thinking both analytically and creatively about the material.

Final Course Grade	
Close reading annotations and reflections	30% (15% for each assignment)
In-class presentation	20%
Final paper	40%
Seminar participation	10%

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Other Course Policies

Accessibility

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. I want every student to succeed. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must register with the DAS at <https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/>. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so you need to contact DAS as early as possible and contact me as early as possible in the semester to discuss the plan for implementation of your accommodations. For additional information about accessibility and accommodations, please contact the DAS at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

Grading Scale

The following scale translates the traditional 100-point grading scale to the letter grades consistent with Laney Graduate School policy.

93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
70-79	C
0-69	F

I expect you to perform at the A or A- level. Performance below the A- level is a sign that you struggled with the assignment. If you receive a grade below A-, you should come see me to talk about the course material, your questions, or concerns.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to uphold and cooperate in maintaining academic integrity as a member of the Laney Graduate School. By taking this course, you affirm your commitment to the Laney Graduate School Honor Code, which you can find in the Laney Graduate School Handbook. You should ensure that you are familiar with the rights and responsibilities of members of our academic community and with policies that apply to students as members of our academic community. Any individual, when they suspect that an offense of academic misconduct has occurred, shall report this suspected breach to the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies, Program Director, or Dean of the Laney Graduate School. If an allegation is reported to a Director of Graduate Studies or a Program Director, they are in turn required to report the allegation to the Dean of Laney Graduate School.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Reading
1	August 28	Overview/Introduction to <i>Speculum</i> Close reading as a feminist philosophical method
2	September 4	"The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry," pp. 13-65 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" (on Canvas)
3	September 11	"The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry," pp. 66-129
4	September 18	NO CLASS (Recommended: Read Whitford pp. 1-97)
5	September 25	"Speculum," pp. 133-159 ("Any Theory of the 'Subject,'" "Kore," and "On the Index of Plato's Works") Plato, <i>Timaeus</i> 42e-47e; <i>Alcibiades</i> I 130e-133e; <i>Republic</i> 596a-598d (on Canvas)
6	October 2	"Speculum," pp. 160-179 ("How to Conceive (of) a Girl" and " <i>Une Mère de Glace</i> ") Aristotle, <i>Generation of Animals</i> , selections; Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> , selections (on Canvas) CLOSE READING 1 DUE IN CLASS
7	October 9	"Speculum," pp. 180-202 ("... and if, taking the eye of a man recently dead ..." and " <i>La Mystérique</i> ") Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> (selections); Angela of Foligno (selections) (on Canvas) (Recommended: Read Bianchi and Huffer in Rawlinson and Sares, pp. 333-355 and pp. 372-426)
8	October 16	"Speculum," pp. 203-240 ("Paradox A Priori," "The Eternal Irony of the Community," and "Volume-Fluidity") Kant, <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> , selections; Hegel on Antigone from <i>Hegel on Tragedy</i> , 260-73 (on Canvas)
9	October 23	"Plato's <i>Hystera</i> ," pp. 243-256 Plato, <i>Republic</i> 514c-525c (on Canvas)
10	October 30	"Plato's <i>Hystera</i> ," pp. 256-283
11	November 6	"Plato's <i>Hystera</i> ," pp. 283-319 CLOSE READING 2 DUE IN CLASS
12	November 13	"Plato's <i>Hystera</i> ," pp. 319-339
13	November 20	"Plato's <i>Hystera</i> ," pp. 339-364
14	November 27	NO CLASS (Recommended: Read Whitford pp. 101-191)
15	December 4	Wrap-up/Review/Final paper workshop

FINAL PAPER DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 17 BY 5 PM (BOWDEN 315)