

Simone de Beauvoir Today



Friday, September 23, 2011

9:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Franklin Humanities Institute

The Garage, Bay 4, First Floor, Smith Warehouse



Simone de Beauvoir (1908—1986)

Simone de Beauvoir was a French writer and philosopher, and one of the major feminist theorists of the twentieth century. Inspired by French existentialism, her analysis of women's oppression, *The Second Sex* (1949) remains one of the landmarks of feminist thought. Beauvoir was also a major figure in French literature, as famous for novels like *L'Invitée* (*She Came to Stay*; 1943) and *Les Mandarins* (*The Mandarins*; 1954) as for her magisterial series of memoirs, which offers an unparalleled vision of an intellectual woman's life in mid-twentieth century France. Her travel book *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (*America Day by Day*; 1948) and her more overtly political contributions, such as that on the Algerian torture case *Djamila Boupacha* and her work on abortion, are important documents of a French intellectual's vision of political life.

Since the late 1980s there has been an international revival in Simone de Beauvoir studies. In the first stage of the revival, scholars have mostly focused on Beauvoir as a philosopher, and sought to establish the quality and importance of her philosophical intervention, not just in *The Second Sex* but in works like *Pyrrhus and Cineas* (1944) and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948). This work is still crucial and must continue. But Beauvoir was not just a philosopher, she was also a writer. Throughout her life, she refused to choose between philosophy and literature. To her, philosophy and literature were different perspectives on the same thing: human existence, and human experience. "In truth," she wrote in 1948, "there is no divorce between philosophy and life."

This conference seeks to encourage a second stage in the Beauvoir revival, one in which scholars continue to explore Beauvoir's philosophical work, but also pay full attention to her literary and autobiographical writing. Throughout her career Beauvoir worked across genres and disciplines, without losing sight of her major philosophical and existential themes: freedom, responsibility, situatedness, otherness, and ambiguity. We hope that this one-day symposium will inspire an equally wide-ranging response to Beauvoir's work among scholars and feminists in many different disciplines.

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- 9:30 am Welcome, **Laurie L. Patton**, Dean of the faculty of Arts and Sciences
- 10:00 – 11:15 am **Linda Zerilli, University of Chicago**
Reading Beauvoir in the 21st Century
Stella Sandford, Kingston University
What is a Woman? The Second Sex and The Republic'
- 11:30 am – 12:30 pm **Graduate Student: Azeen Khan**
Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Woman Destroyed': Temporality, Epistemology, and the Event
Graduate Student: Ashley Scheu
Living with the Other's Pain: The Problem of Empathy in Simone de Beauvoir's Le sang des autres."
- 12:30 – 1:30 pm Lunch
- 1:30 – 2:45 pm **Emily Apter, NYU**
'Sex' and 'Gender': Philosophical Untranslatables
Ursula Tidd, University of Manchester
'Speculating the Other Woman: Simone de Beauvoir and Feminist Film Theory'
- 2:45 – 3:00 pm Break
- 3:00 – 4:00 PM **Graduate Student: Ali Mian**
Simone de Beauvoir, Biopolitics, and the Nonsovereign Autonomous Subject
Graduate Student: Amey Adkins
Silencing Simone: Between Frantz Fanon and The Second Sex
- 4:00 – 5:00 pm **Roundtable: Toril Moi , Duke and Nancy Bauer, Tufts**
Moderator: Ranjana Khanna, Duke

Participant Biographies

Emily Apter is Professor of French, English, and Comparative Literature at New York University. She has also taught regularly for the Whitney Independent Study Program. Her books include *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006), *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects* (1999), *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, (co-edited with William Pietz in 1993), *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (1991), and *André Gide and the Codes of Homotextuality* (1987). Articles have appeared in *boundary 2*, *New Literary History*, *Littérature*, *Artforum*, *Critical Inquiry*, *October*, *Translation Studies*, *PMLA*, *Comparative Literary Studies*, *Grey Room*, *The Boston Review*, *American Literary History*, *Sites*, *Parallax*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Esprit Créateur*, *Critique*, *differences* and *Public Culture*. Since 1998 she has edited the book series, *Translation/Transnation* for Princeton University Press. In progress: co-editing with Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood the English edition of the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* [Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon]. Two books in progress: "Politics small p:" Essays on the Society of Calculation (Stanford UP) and *Against World Lit: On Untranslatability in Comparative Literature* (Verso). Recent articles include "O seminar!" in *Cabinet*, "Women's Time (Again)" in the journal *differences*, an essay on "Philosophical Translation" (in MLA's *Profession*) and an article in *Angelaki* "What is Yours, Ours, and Mine: On the Limits of Literary Ownership and the Creative Commons." In 2004 she was a Guggenheim recipient and in 2011 she was awarded a Mellon Grant (with Jacques Lezra) for a seminar on "The Problem of Translation."

Nancy Bauer is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University, where she teaches courses in feminist philosophy, philosophy and film, phenomenology and existentialism, philosophy of the ordinary, and ethics. She is the author of *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism* (Columbia UP, 2001) and is presently finishing up a book called *How to Do Things With Pornography*, which is a meditation on contemporary philosophy's powers to criticize the culture from which it springs. She is also writing the Routledge Guidebook to Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*. Most of her writing is concerned in one way or another with the attenuation of philosophy's social relevance in the wake of its professionalization in the 20th century.

Ranjana Khanna is Professor of English and Literature and Margaret Taylor Smith Director of Women's Studies at Duke University. She works on Anglo- and Francophone Postcolonial theory and literature, Psychoanalysis, and Feminist theory. She has published articles on transnational feminism and psychoanalysis in journals such as *Diacritics*, *Art History*, *positions: east asia critique*, *Screen*, *Signs*, *Third Text*, *Differences*, and *The Duke Journal of Law and Gender*. She is the author of two books: *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Duke University Press, 2003) and *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation 1830 to the present* (Stanford University Press, 2008). Her current book projects in progress are entitled "Asylum: The Concept and the Practice," and "Technologies of Unbelonging." She has an ongoing sometimes ambivalent interest in the work of Simone de Beauvoir, whom she reads with great pleasure.

Toril Moi is James B. Duke Professor of Literature and Romance Studies, and Professor of English, Theater Studies and Philosophy at Duke University. She is the author of a number of books, including *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Blackwell 1994; 2nd edition OUP 2008), and *What Is a Woman? And Other Essays* (OUP, 1999). The latter contains two extensive essays on Beauvoir, which were republished as a separate book under the title *Sex, Gender and the Body: The Student Edition of What Is a Woman?* (OUP, 2005).

Laurie L. Patton is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Duke University. She has taught Asian Religions at Bard College and Early Indian Religions at Emory University where she became Associate Professor in 1998. From 2000 – 2007, Dr. Patton served as chair of the Department of Religion and in 2008 was appointed Charles Howard Candler Professor of Religions and director of the Center for Faculty Development. Dr. Patton is the author or editor of eight books on South Asian history, culture, and religion. One of her edited volumes, *Jewels of Authority*, focuses on gender and the classical textual traditions of Hindu India. She has also recently translated the classical Sanskrit text, “The Bhagavad Gita,” for the Penguin Classics Series. Dr. Patton has also written two books of poetry. Her current research for two forthcoming books focuses on religion in the public sphere and on women and Sanskrit in contemporary India. In 2005, Dr. Patton received the Emory Williams award, Emory University’s highest award for teaching. Dr. Patton has lectured widely on religious pluralism and religion in the public sphere. She was the founder and co-convenor of a Religion, Conflict and Peace Building Initiative at Emory, and recently consulted with the White House Office of Faith-Based Community Partnerships on interfaith literacy and the U.S Department of Education’s Initiative on Civic Engagement. From 2008-2011, Dr. Patton served as president of the American Society for the Study of Religion.

Stella Sandford is Principal Lecturer in Modern European Philosophy in the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, London. She is the author of *Plato and Sex* (Polity, 2010), *How to Read Beauvoir* (Granta/Norton, 2006) and *The Metaphysics of Love: Gender and Transcendence in Levinas* (Athlone/Continuum, 2000) and co-editor (with Mandy Merck) of *Further Adventures of the Dialectic of Sex: Critical Essays on Shulamith Firestone* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). She is a long-standing member of the editorial collective of the bi-monthly British journal *Radical Philosophy* and a member of the executive committee of the UK Society for Women in Philosophy.

Dr Ursula Tidd is Senior Lecturer and head of the department of French Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. She is the author of three monographs: *Simone de Beauvoir, Gender and Testimony* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); *Simone de Beauvoir* (Routledge ‘Critical Thinkers’ series, 2004) and *Simone de Beauvoir* (Reaktion Books, ‘Critical Lives’ series, 2009) as well as articles and chapters on Beauvoir’s autobiographies, fiction and philosophy. She has given papers

at conferences on Simone de Beauvoir in France, Sweden, Germany, China, the USA, Canada and the UK. Her current major projects are writing a monograph on the Francophone Spanish Holocaust writer Jorge Semprún (forthcoming with Legenda/MHRA 2013) supported by a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship, and co-editing a book of essays (with Jean-Pierre Boulé) on contemporary international cinema read through the lens of Beauvoirian theory: *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Beauvirian Perspective* (forthcoming with Berghahn Books in 2012).

Linda Zerilli is Charles E. Merriam Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and in the College and Director, Center for Gender Studies at the University of Chicago. She has published articles in the areas of feminist theory, democratic theory, and Continental philosophy. Zerilli is the author of *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill* (Cornell, 1994) and *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago, 2005). Her new book project is titled *Towards a Democratic Theory of Judgment*.

Duke University Graduate Students

Amey Victoria Adkins is a second year PhD student in the Graduate Program in Religion (Christian Theological Studies) and Women's Studies. Her research interests include theological considerations of the global sex trade, trafficking in human persons, Mariology and Marian devotion, critical race theory and feminist theory, particularly at their points of intersection in Christian social thought.

Azeen A. Khan is a sixth year PhD student in the English Department and Women's Studies at Duke University. Her research interests include Postcolonial Theory and Literature.

Ali Altaf Mian is a PhD student in the Graduate Program in Religion and Women's Studies at Duke University. His research interests include Muslim law and ethics, Islam in South Asia, continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, and feminist theory. His most recent publication is "Muslim Political Philosophy & the Affective Turn: Farabi on Language, Affect, and Reason" in the *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*.

Ashley King Scheu received her PhD in French literature from the Department of Romance Studies at Duke University in May, 2011. Her dissertation, entitled "What Can Philosophical Literature Do? The Contribution of Simone de Beauvoir," examined Simone de Beauvoir's aesthetic conception of the philosophical novel both in her theoretical writings on literature and in her early novels. Ashley has a forthcoming article on Simone de Beauvoir and the philosophical novel in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. Her current research interests include 19th and 20th century French literature, French existentialism, the work of Simone de Beauvoir, the intersection between philosophy and literature, studies of aesthetic theory and practice, feminism and women writers, and WWII literature and history.

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