ENGL 680/WGST 680
Theories of Gender
--Ethics and Gender

Gender has been among the most robust, resilient, and supple categories of theoretical inquiry over the past fifty years in Theory across the disciplines. To review the major statements in gender theory in just fifteen weeks would be a monumental, potentially haphazard, and perhaps unsatisfying task. This course, then, will explore the major ideas in gender theory through the particular lens of ethics. We will review key claims of feminist ethics alongside contemporary ethical theory written by men. The incongruity in the sentence above reveals a remaining incongruity in ethical theory itself; while there is an active inquiry within feminism as to the constitution of ethics, there is no equivalent exploration of masculinity and the moral good. Rather, the major statements of ethical theory written by men in the past fifty years often assume a unitary (and perhaps by default, masculine) subject.

Our tasks in this class will be two-fold, to review and address the major statements in feminist ethics and to discern or invent a theory of gendered ethics that encompasses men or masculinity.

Because this subject has not been widely explored in English Studies in this particular form, all of our assignments will be designed to build toward an anthology or reader in Gender and Ethics. If we have success in our efforts, I will pursue a publisher and student work in research and compiling backgrounds, profiles, and contexts for understanding will be credited in this collaborative anthology.

All readings will be available on eCampus. Assignments include: writing biographical and theoretical head notes, compiling and annotated bibliography, and reporting on critical reception of ethical theory.