

Teaching Feminist Logic vs. Feminist Teaching of Logic

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Feminist and Decolonial Approaches to Philosophy
Barcelona, Spain
08 September 2025

Plan for the talk

- Feminist logic
- Teaching logic
- Feminist teaching of logic

Feminist logic

- What it is.
- Why it matters.

Feminist logic: What is it? (1)

- Feminist logic must reject classical binary negation (Plumwood 1993).
- There are formal features that *some* but not all logics possess which “enhance the methodologies of feminist theorizing” (Eckert & Donahue 2020, p. 428, on Plumwood).
- Logic is *one* avenue to truth, not an *exclusive* avenue (Ayim 1995).
- Logic being feminist involves “some appropriate special relationship between it and the movement for gender equality” (Russell 2024, p. 80).
- “Feminist logic, then, is a theory of logical consequence that is grounded in feminist philosophy of logic” (Fairbank forthcoming), where feminist philosophy is “a discipline that is singled out by its interests and methodology: it is philosophy of logic that answers and is answerable to feminist philosophy” (Fairbank forthcoming).

Feminist logic: What is it? (2)

A (not-exhaustive!) classification of “the collection of projects known as ‘feminist logic’ or, a bit more carefully, feminist approaches to logic (and its philosophy)” (Saint-Croix & Cook 2024, pp. 21–22):

- ➊ Projects in philosophical logic, attempting to formalize notions used in the positions, arguments, and disputes of feminist philosophy (what Restović (2023) calls “logic for feminist ends” (p. 321).)
- ➋ Debates in philosophy of logic, about which logics are correct or useful, when evaluated from a feminist perspective.
- ➌ Pedagogical projects, re-examining classroom practices; cf. intervention and access projects (Eckert & Donahue 2020).

To this we can also add:

- Feminist history of logic/recovery projects (Eckert & Donahue 2020).

Feminist logic: Why it matters

- New tools, new topics—new insights? (Mangraviti 2023).
- An increasingly important part of the history of logic (see bibliography!).
- Some logicians might want to be feminists; some feminists might want to be logicians (Uckelman 2025a).
- Ways to counter biases (Russell 2024).
- Inclusion vs. exclusion (Uckelman 2025a).

Teaching logic

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Metacognition/metacognitive reflection: How much do we actually think about what we are doing when we are teaching logic, and why we are doing it? (Especially in a philosophical context!)

Our teaching needs theory, analysis, and our best, most careful and philosophical selves (Meskhidze et al., 2019, p. 170).

Content vs. Method

- Content (what we teach)
- Method (why we teach it)

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- Content (what we teach)
 - ▶ Arguments for teaching feminist logic are aimed at getting us to think about the *content* of what we teach in logic and philosophy classes.
- Method (why we teach it)
 - ▶ Arguments for feminist teaching of logic are aimed at getting us to think about *how* we teach this content, regardless of *what* the content is.

Feminist teaching of logic

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So...

- What is feminist teaching (of logic)?
- Why does it matter?

Feminist pedagogy (1)

Feminist pedagogy begins with a vision of what education might be like but frequently is not. This is a vision of the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects. Feminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning—engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change (Shrewsbury 1987, p. 6).

Feminist pedagogy (2)

- is a liberatory process
- focuses on creating spaces of emancipation and transformation
- cares about inclusion and exclusion
- is about “making space for collective care in the classroom”, where this care is a collective responsibility of all members in the classroom (Wilkinson 2025, p. 8)
- highlights the importance of autoethnography (Wilkinson 2025, pp. 2–3; Coia and Taylor 2013, p. 10).

How does this apply to teaching logic?

Feminist teaching of logic: Some autoethnography (1)

- Goals:
 - ▶ How to follow directions
 - ▶ How to reason from a definition
 - ▶ **Not** (necessarily): “for them to learn logic”!
 - ▶ How to fail in front of their peers
- Barriers:
 - ▶ Lack of application ($\neq$ laziness!)
 - ▶ Fear

(Details discussed in Uckelman 2025b)

Some autoethnography (2)

- Setting explicit expectations:
 - ▶ *Everyone* is expected to participate.
 - ▶ *Anyone* can decline to participate at any time, without repercussion.
- How does this work?
 - ▶ Small groups, lots of exercises.
 - ▶ Cold-calling *without* censure.
 - ▶ Elicit volunteers.
 - ▶ Logic by democracy.
 - ▶ Scribe vs. answerer.

Trauma-informed pedagogy (1)

I'd been teaching like this for many years before someone informed me that this is actually a recognized method: Trauma-informed pedagogy!

To be trauma-informed, in any context, is to understand how violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have figured in the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the provision of services and the design of systems so that they accommodate the needs and vulnerabilities of trauma survivors. A central tenet of this view is that individual safety must be ensured through efforts to minimize the possibilities for inadvertent retraumatization, secondary traumatization, or wholly new traumatizations in the delivery of services (Carello & Butler 2014, p. 156).

Trauma-informed pedagogy is feminist pedagogy insofar as they share the same aims / strategies.

Feminist teaching of logic: Why it matters (1)

Two questions to ask:

- What kind of trauma do students bring to (symbolic) logic classes?
- How can we design our classes to minimise the impact of this trauma?

Why it matters (2)

- If we care about logic, we should care about making logic accessible (Uckelman 2025a).
- If we want our classes to be accessible, we should be think carefully about our teaching methods; we should aim for inclusive, rather than exclusive, pedagogy.
- Feminist/trauma-informed pedagogy seeks to create spaces for this type of inclusion, whatever the content being taught.
- Feminist teaching of logic matters because it is a way to ensure our discipline remains as robust and as strong and as future-proof as it can be—recruiting the next generation of logicians widely.

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