

Practice Final

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Here are the three selections. Choose one, and write your final paper about it.

1 Frye on Oppression

“The statement that women are oppressed is frequently met with the claim that men are oppressed too. We hear that oppressing is oppressive to those who oppress as well as to those they oppress. Some men cite as evidence of their oppression their much-advertised inability to cry. It is tough, we are told, to be masculine. When the stresses and frustrations of being a man are cited as evidence that oppressors are oppressed by their oppressing, the word ‘oppression’ is being stretched to meaninglessness; it is treated as though its scope includes any and all human experience of limitation or suffering, no matter the cause, degree or consequence. Once such usage has been put over on us, then if ever we deny that any person or group is oppressed, we seem to imply that we think they never suffer and have no feelings. We are accused of insensitivity; even of bigotry. For women, such accusation is particularly intimidating, since sensitivity is one of the few virtues that has been assigned to us. If we are found insensitive, we may fear we have no redeeming traits at all and perhaps are not real women. Thus are we silenced before we begin: the name of our situation drained of meaning and our guilt mechanisms tripped” (p. 1).

2 Haslanger on Womanhood

“S is a woman iff

- i) S is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female’s biological role in reproduction;
- ii) that S has these features marks S within the dominant ideology of S’s society as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S’s occupying such a position); and
- iii) the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S’s systematic subordination, i.e., along some dimension, S’s social position is oppressive, and S’s satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination” (p. 42).

“One might complain, however, that there must be some women (or rather, females) who aren’t oppressed, and in particular, aren’t oppressed as women. Perhaps there are; e.g., some may ‘pass’ as men, others may be recognizably female but not be subordinated in any way linked to that recognition. I’m not convinced that there are many cases (if any) of the latter, but I’ll certainly grant that there could be females who did not satisfy the definition that I’ve offered. In fact, I believe it is part of the project of feminism to bring about a day when there are no more women (though, of course, we should not aim to do away with females!). I’m happy to admit that there could be females who aren’t women in the sense I’ve defined, but these individuals (or possible individuals) are not counterexamples to the analysis. The analysis is intended to capture a meaningful political category for critical feminist efforts, and non-oppressed females do not fall within that category (though they may be interesting for other reasons)” (pp. 45–46).

3 Choo on Military Service

“The neoliberal labor market and the resultant obsession with meritocracy, both of which impel many to perceive the period spent fulfilling one’s military service as a waste of time when it comes to preparing for the future, affect this transformation process. As a result, the assertion that women, along with men, should also share the suffering and sacrifice that result from obligatory military service has gained strength. However, strictly speaking, this is a call for the equal distribution of suffering, unrelated to the demand for equal opportunity to participate in the military service regardless of gender. This is why calls for reforming the conscription system merely end in demands for more compensation for men, failing to move forward to a discussion on the purpose, function, and qualification of the military. Men belonging to the current young generation began to experience a crisis of masculinity, anxiety, and started to bear hostility towards feminism. However, no alternative masculinities can replace the old hegemonic ones while modern gender relations are reconstructed in neoliberal era, and this is the main reason for the amplification of frustration and anxiety among young men in Korea today.

“For young feminists, conscription is regarded merely as the main retort made by anti-feminists. These feminists also think that the current conscription system is unfair, but they regard the military as an issue that has nothing to do with women. More importantly, when fighting against men who argue the unfairness of conscription, women are constructed as referring to those who share common experiences of pregnancy and childbirth and, thus, they maintain the exclusionary attitude that solely biological women can experience and understand womanhood. Young women with such attitudes are limited to seeking to eliminate discrimination and violence that hinder an individual’s well-being and place responsibility on the individual, rather than reconstructing gender, which is a principle of organizing society” (pp. 494–495).