

Call for Abstracts: Feminist Takes on Post-Truth Politics

Special Issue Philosophy and Social Criticism

This volume solicits essays that address the politics of (post-)truth as a distinctive matter of concern for feminist philosophy.

Post-truth, both as a political phenomenon and an emergent discourse, has not yet been extensively addressed from feminist points of view. As a political phenomenon, post-truth represents a crisis of democratic legitimacy and democratic norms, the disruption of trust in shared governance, and the unspooling of a shared world. As a discourse, post-truth is deployed to both describe and construct reality: on the one hand, it has become shorthand for the dissolution of political norms of truth; on the other hand, it is weaponized as a way of furthering that dissolution by making claims to truth or reality less and less legible.

Our concern is that citizens in a post-truth world have lost access to a shared political community and are led to dis-invest from caring about a common world. Feminist theory can re-orient us toward action in the world: by recognizing “what we’re up against” (Ahmed), it ‘stays with the trouble’ (Haraway), even, or especially, in light of a rising sense of civic nihilism and despair. As feminists and democratic theorists, we affirm the need for a shared reality, but we also acknowledge the necessity in democratic politics for ongoing, agonistic, challenge to the regime of the given, in order to build a genuinely common world. Given the realist, materialist, pragmatist, antagonistic, and public presuppositions/dimensions of feminist theory, feminist politics attends critically to what is and how it is failing us, rather than to abstract, normative ideals of what could be. Because feminist theorists recognize the ways in which overlapping systems of oppression intersect, feminist theory provides unique analytical resources that would better enable democratic theorists to understand and combat the phenomenon.

This volume will explore the embodiment of truth in truth-tellers and in material practices and will highlight the dual values of contesting the given order and striving to create a common world. Given the ways in which post-truth undermines the conditions for democratic thinking and action and diminishes practices of truth-telling, it seems crucial that feminist philosophers address both the phenomena and discourses of post-truth in order to take up the crisis, catastrophe, and possibilities of contemporary reality. We anticipate contributions from multiple perspectives including those of decolonial studies, democratic theory, critical phenomenology, and new materialism, and making use of figures as varied as Arendt, Foucault, Rancière, Mouffe, Latour, Haraway, Ahmed, Guenther, Brown, Honig, Hill Collins, Zerilli, among others.

This special issue will be keyed into resources that emerge from the continental feminism literature and will be attentive to the institutional and democratic contexts in which post-truth emerges.

Among the questions we ask here:

Does (political/feminist/democratic) truth require or assume a shared reality? How can there be a common ‘ground on which we stand’ if the ground itself is open to contestation?

How can democratic political practices and institutions sustain a sense of a ‘shared reality,’ while allowing for contestation and plurality? (How) do publicity, materialism, and truth-

telling act as interlocking constraints on, or worldly conditions of, the role of truth in democracy?

How can feminist theory engage with post-truth discourses which appropriate the arguments of emancipatory movements that have previously been excluded from the public conversation? Do post-truth challenges to democracy stand on the same footing as emancipatory movements that expand the political?

How does post-truth bring us face to face with core assumptions about how democracy works and the standing of truth within? How does it undercut emancipatory and democratic politics? How does it highlight tensions between deliberative and antagonistic views of democracy?

Given democratic contestation, is there an inevitability of post-truth within a democratic context? Will democratic truth always present itself as a field of battle? Must we understand post-truth as a (necessary or inevitable) feature of democratisation?

How do epistemic and political authority establish both truth and post-truth? How are norms such as ‘rationality’, ‘publicness’ or ‘truth’ used as (exclusionary) political techniques? What counts as true and who counts as a truth-teller?

How does feminist theory’s insight into the widening of what is considered political, (exemplified by the slogan ‘the personal is political’) give it unique insight into post-truth culture?

What are the repercussions of rendering the status of truth perpetually embattled and insecure? How does post-truth politics further the anti-democratic project of delegitimization and distrust and creates a spiral of dissolving public reality?

How is post-truth (discourse or politics) used as a weapon of white supremacy and/or of patriarchal hierarchy/misogyny?

(How) can feminist politics help us move beyond/out of post-truth politics? (How) can feminist theory contribute to a recovery of democratic truth?

We welcome both theoretical and praxis-oriented approaches to these questions.

Submission Timeline and Expectations

- Abstracts with provisional title should be **500-750 words** and submitted in either .doc or .pdf
- Please include in your email your name and university affiliation
- Deadline for Abstracts is **April 15, 2021**
- Authors will be notified whether they are invited to submit full papers for peer-review by May 15, 2021.
- Papers (no longer than **5000 words**) will be due by **November 15, 2021**

Abstracts should be sent to Special Issue Editors Catherine Koekoek (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and Emily Zakin (Miami University) at feministposttruth@gmail.com