

# Glossary of Feminist Terms:

**Female-bodied** - XX chromosomed (XXX, and X also possible, even XY with Androgen Insensitivity) person who is biologically considered female. Defined by the appearance of facilities with which to bring to term and then deliver a child.

**Female-socialized** - raised in the female gender performance, and therefore performing "feminine" characteristics.

**Feminine** - of, characteristic of, or befitting female gender performance. Feminine is also often used to describe a lack of masculine performance from a male-bodied person.

**Feminism** - a political discourse and movement aimed at transformation away from patriarchy and towards a society free from gender oppression. It involves various movements, theories, and philosophies, all concerned with issues of oppression and privilege based on gender. According to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves. The first wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third extends from the 1990s to the present. It should be noted however that there are some significant limitations of the "wave" metaphor. Some see it as a way of subverting movements and creating arbitrary divisions, while others note its eurocentricity and us-centricity.

**Gender** - A social construction that may refer to gender roles or expression: the behavioral characteristics that are considered 'masculine' or 'feminine' in a particular culture in a particular time. These can range from hair to clothing to the way people speak or express emotions. Gender may also refer to gender identity: our internal sense of ourselves as man, woman, or transgender (see 'transgender').

**Gender Identity** - the gender(s), or lack thereof, a person self-identifies as.

**Gender-(identity) oppression** - oppression related to gender norms in which people are expected to act in accordance with rules/expectations of femininity and masculinity based on their biological sex.

**Gender neutral pronoun** - a pronoun which does not associate a gender with the person being discussed. English pronouns are gender specific which may present a few problems: gender bias can be interjected into language, the gender of the person being discussed may wish to be masked (e.g. to avoid indicating whether a romantic partner is male or female), referent's gender may not be known, and implying one may be misleading or otherwise inappropriate, someone may be described poorly (or not at all) by the gender categories associated with "he" and "she," as in the case of a referent who identifies as genderqueer. **Why to not use "IT":** "It" tends to be used to refer to inanimate objects, thus use of "it" in reference to a person could be incredibly insulting. They & their and Zie & hir are most common in English. Zie is subjective, replacing she or he, and the Hir possessive and objective, replacing her or his.

**Genderqueer** - Someone who blurs, rejects, or otherwise transgresses gender norms. Also used as a term for someone who rejects the two-gender (binary) system.

**Heteronormativity** - institutionalization of heterosexuality in a society which results in the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles where heterosexuality is viewed as the only normal or acceptable sexual orientation. Instances of this include the idea that people fall into two distinct and complementary categories (male and female), that sexual and marital relations are normal only when between people of different sexes, and that each sex has certain natural roles in life. The heteronormative view is that physical sex, gender identity, and gender roles should, in any given person, align to either all-male or all-female cultural norms.

**Heterosexism** - The assumption that heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation. It is the daily manifestations of heteronormativity, which may include social, legal, economic, and religious discrimination; physical or emotional violence; isolation; etc.

**Homonormativity** - the assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into homosexual culture and individual identity. Homonormativity upholds neoliberalism rather than critiquing monogamy, procreation and binary gender roles as heterosexist and racist.

**Intersectionality** - a theory which seeks to examine the ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, species or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

**Male-bodied** - XY-chromosomed person (XXY, XYY also possible) who is biologically considered male. No facilities with which to bring to term or deliver a child.

**Male privilege** - the unearned privileges that men receive as a result of living in a male-dominated/patriarchal society and which are denied women and other non-male-identified persons

**Male-socialized** - raised in the male gender performance and therefore performing "masculine" characteristics.

**Masculine** - of, characteristic of, or befitting male gender performance. Masculine is also often used to describe a lack of feminine performance in a female-bodied person

**Misogyny** - Fear or hatred of women.

**Patriarchy** - a society or social system that is controlled by men or in which men have power

**Sex** - refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. This term is one that exists as a binary (male and female) and sex is generally distinguished as male or female based on the existence (or lack) of internal and external genitalia, certain gonads, sex chromosomes and genes, sex hormones, etc. This is not to be confused with gender or gender identity, which does not necessarily (although it does for some) align with the biological sex one is born with. For related terms see male-bodied and female-bodied

**Sexual Orientation** - refers to the gender someone is physically and emotionally attracted to. Someone may be attracted to either gender, to intersex genders, to both genders, or different genders at different times. Terms such as bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual, queer, pansexual or asexual all attempt to define different types of sexual orientation, of which there are many. Sexual orientation sometimes may be used somewhat interchangeably with: Sexual Identity and Sexual Preference.

**Sexism** - prejudice or action based on sex, especially discrimination against women; behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex

**Transgender** - A broad umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or presentation transgress traditional gender norms.

**Transsexual** - A person who lives as the 'opposite' gender of their sex. The process of changing one's gender can involve any or all of the following: changing use of pronouns, changing names, changing clothing, taking hormones, and/or undergoing sex reassignment surgery.

**Womanism** - adapted from the author, Alice Walker. In her book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*, Walker used the word to describe the perspective and experiences of "women of color". Although most Womanist scholarship centers on the African American woman's experience, other non-white theorists identify themselves with this term.