

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Critical analysis of a recognized  
philosophical work  
PHL504E

DEGREE EXAMINATIONS

NOVEMBER

2019

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Time: 3 hours  
Subject: PHL504E  
Marks: 100

This paper consists of 3 pages including the cover page

Internal Examiners  
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External Examiners  
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INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ALL questions in sections A and B.  
Choose TWO questions from Section C.

## **Section A: Identify, explain, evaluate. (20 marks)**

1. **Please identify the main claim, explain, and evaluate the argument in the quotation below. (10 marks)**

“The reason that the body has so much presence in the West is that the world is primarily perceived by sight. The differentiation of human bodies in terms of sex, skin color, and cranium size is a testament to the powers attributed to "seeing." The gaze is an invitation to differentiate. Different approaches to comprehending reality, then, suggest epistemological differences between societies. Relative to Yoruba society, which is the focus of this book, the body has an exaggerated presence in the Western conceptualization of society. The term "worldview," which is used in the West to sum up the cultural logic of a society, captures the West's privileging of the visual. It is Eurocentric to use it to describe cultures that may privilege other senses. The term "world-sense" is a more inclusive way of describing the conception of the world by different cultural groups. In this study, therefore, "worldview" will only be applied to describe the Western cultural sense, and "world-sense" will be used when describing the Yoruba or other cultures that may privilege senses other than the visual or even a combination of senses.” Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The invention of woman*, 1994, p 2- 3

2. **Please identify the main claim, explain, and evaluate the argument in the quotation below. (10 marks)**

“The idea that gender is socially constructed — that differences between males and female are to be located in social practices, not in biological facts — was one important insight that emerged early in second-wave feminist scholarship. This finding was understandably taken to be radical in a culture in which difference, particularly gender difference, had always been articulated as natural and, therefore, biologically determined. Gender as a social construction became the cornerstone of much feminist discourse. The notion was particularly attractive because it was interpreted to mean that gender differences were not ordained by nature; they were mutable and therefore changeable. This in turn led to the opposition between social constructionism and biological determinism, as if they were mutually exclusive. Such a dichotomous presentation is unwarranted, however, because the ubiquity of biologically rooted explanations for difference in Western social thought and practices is a reflection of the extent to which biological explanations are found compelling.” Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The invention of woman*, 1994, p 8

## **Section B: Annotated bibliography (30 marks)**

Please provide 6 entries to an annotated bibliography relating to the themes covered in *The Invention of Women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourses*.

- Each entry counts 5 marks
- Your entries will be marked for relevance to the themes covered in the book, as well as for the accuracy of your summaries of the main argument of the book / article, and your evaluation of the source.

## **Section B: Essay questions (50 marks)**

**Please choose TWO (2) of the questions below, and write a critical philosophical essay in which you respond to this question. Each question will count 25 marks.**

**Each essay should be at least 2 – 3 written pages.**

1. Is it possible to interpret and study another culture without prejudice? Defend your answer with an argument which refers to Oyewumi's text "The Invention of woman" in some detail.
2. Relate Oyewumi's claims in her text "The Invention of woman" with regards to epistemology to the question of decolonization of the academy in South Africa today.
3. Critically discuss the notions of "world sight" vs "world sense" in Oyewumi's text "The Invention of woman".
4. Can we utilise Oyewumi's claims with regards to the absence of gender in Yoruba society to combat Gender-Based Violence in our current context? Defend your answer with an argument which refers to Oyewumi's text "The Invention of woman" in some detail.