

# IPW LECTURES

## Queer Normativity and the Politics of 'Gender'

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### Abstract

The so-called 'gender wars' of contemporary Western feminism have divided feminists into two opposed camps: 'TERFs' and 'trans rights activists'. I argue that this debate has had two interlinked effects on feminist theorising. First, this debate unfolding heavily on social media platforms tends to create confrontation and, by extension, entrench dichotomous thinking. At the same time, the space for poststructuralist accounts of gender is shrinking due to the increasing ontologisation of gender in queer discourse. Both of these trends, I contend, constitute a normalisation of queer theory, subsuming it within a politics of recognition and ontopolitics. I examine how these trends are contrary to broader feminist projects aiming to challenge dichotomous thinking, and to the poststructuralist/queer ethos of deconstructing gender epistemologies. Finally, I insist that poststructuralist, especially Foucauldian, feminism is still relevant and necessary for feminists to understand its own present.

**Jemima Repo** is Reader in Political and Feminist Theory at Newcastle University, UK. She specialises in gender theory, and feminist politics. Her book *The Biopolitics of Gender* won the 2017 International Studies Association Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Book Prize and she was the recipient of the 2021 Okin-Young Award in Feminist Political Theory from the American Political Science Association. She is currently working on a book on the commodification of feminist activism, and articles on social reproduction.