



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DEPARTMENT
OF PHILOSOPHY

SeRiC
FILO

Seminari delle
Ricerche in Corso

SeRiC - Seminari delle Ricerche in Corso 2024/2025

EMOTIONAL RESISTANCE AGAINST INTERNALISED OPPRESSION

07/02/2025, 11-13

Mondolfo Room,
Department of Philosophy, Zamboni 38

Maria Laurencia Saenz Benavides

Research Fellow, University of Bologna

Abstract: Social oppression tends to affect people's self-image and sense of self-worth. Oppressed people may develop a sense of self entangled with pervasive disempowering feelings such as self-disgust, self-hatred, guilt, and shame, which can be understood as the emotional dimension of internalised oppression. For example, women's relationship to their bodies tends to be dominated by feelings of shame and self-loathing, which often prompts them to engage in harmful practices such as extreme weight-loss programmes and risky surgical interventions. Resisting internalised oppression may therefore involve developing forms of emotional resistance, attempting emotional transformations as a form of self-emancipation. But how should we think of emotional resistance? And how should we think of these attempts at emotional resistance as something that individuals can achieve? In order to address this question, first person narratives give us a privileged, authoritative perspective into what emotional resistance to oppression can consist of. Narratives of resistance can show us how oppressed people fight back against the debilitating emotional effects of internalised oppression. However, while narratives of oppression offer crucial elements that allow us to draw a descriptive account of emotional resistance, the normative question of what we want emotional resistance to be remains open. Trying to resist the debilitating effects of oppression is often thought of as attempting to transform so-called "negative" emotions (shame, fear, guilt, self-hatred, etc.) into "positive" emotions or attitudes (pride, courage, assertiveness, self-love, etc.). In this talk I will examine why we should challenge this way of thinking about emotional resistance. But if we challenge the idea that it requires changing the "negative" into "positive", what picture of emotional resistance are we left with? In a second part, I will ask whether emotional resistance can consist of an exploration of the "negative". My overall aim is to contribute to opening the spectrum of how we think as legitimate forms of resistance, by allowing a more messy, imperfect picture of it.

The event can be attended remotely by following the link or scanning the
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The seminar is part of the doctoral teaching offerings for the PhD program in Philosophy, Science, Cognition, and Semiotics at the Department of Philosophy, University of Bologna, for the academic year 2024/2025.

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