In terms of the intellectual issues that the progressive essay is meant to deal with, we are first, here, concerned with where we are coming to in our own grasp of feminism and its relevance to our own lives. We spoke on Wednesday about feminist consciousness-raising and read Sandra Bartky’s essay on the nature of feminist consciousness. I hope this has already gotten us well into the exercise of thinking about what it means to call oneself a feminist, not just in terms of the theoretical commitments we might have, but rather in terms of the experience of the having of those beliefs. Many of you have already come into the class with varying strengths of feminist beliefs, so for this first component of the progressive essay, I would like us to lay bare our beliefs and think about what it is like to hold them.

Consider the following questions:

- Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why? What specific beliefs do you hold that you associate with being a feminist?
- Do you call yourself a feminist? How does it feel when you do (or don’t)?
- When did you first feel the stirrings of a feminist sensibility of yourself? What was that like? Did it scare you, excite you…?
- Can you relate to the notion of a “divided consciousness” that Bartky talked about? Explain.
- If you don’t consider yourself a feminist, why are you in a feminist philosophy class? What would it take for you to be a feminist? Are there things about calling yourself a feminist that override what you might believe about the way the world should be?
- What do you imagine your grandmothers’ lives were like when they were your age? Could you live like that? What would you like your life to be like 10 years from now? What would you like the world to be like 10 years from now?
- What social issues are most important to you? Why? What political issues are most important to you and why? What personal issues are most important to you and why? What are the connections, if any?

N.B. I don’t expect you to answer these questions all in their turns; instead, use them to guide your reflection on the nature and status of your own feminist consciousness, wherever you feel you are in its emergence.

This statement should be at least 1 page in length, but you may make it as long as you like. Please, e-mail it to me as an attachment in Microsoft Word by 5pm on February 18.