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PHILOSOPHY OF RACE
PHIL 313, SPRING 2021

Class meetings: 11:30–12:20am M/W/F, Clark Hall 104 **Open zoom hours:** 12:30–2:00pm, M/W

We will begin this course on the ethics and metaphysics of race with an examination of several varieties of racism and race-thinking. Studying the ethics of lay, medical, and scientific (mis)uses of the concept of race will inevitably lead us back to the basics. What is race, anyway? Is it biologically real? Is it illusory? Is it socially constructed? As we'll see, several theorists have converged on the view that these metaphysical questions should be pursued always with an eye towards pragmatic ends in the fight against racism. Thus, we'll conclude by debating the merits of three of those social and political ends: reparations, integration, and insurrection.

Brief grading breakdown

Participation: 10%
Three quizzes: 15%
Media analysis: 15%
Two argument sketches: 20%
Thesis paper outline: 20%
Thesis paper: 20%

Grade scale

A: 90–100%
B: 80–89%
C: 70–79%
D: 60–69%
F: 0–59%

Brief schedule

Part I: Epistemology

Week 1: MLK as philosopher of race
Week 2: Standpoint epistemology and racialism

Part II: Ethics

Week 3: Varieties of racism
Week 4: Does racism necessarily involve ill-will?
Week 5: Race science and medicine

Part III: Metaphysics

Week 6: Is race illusory?
Week 7: Is race real?
Week 8: Sociopolitical and cultural construction
Week 9: Biological realism and its discontents
Week 10: What's needed from metaphysics?

Part IV: Social and Political Philosophy

Week 11: Reparations
Week 12: Integration
Week 13: Policing and insurrection

Conclusion

Week 14: Wrap-up
Week 15: Writing workshop

quiz due 1/29

media analysis due 2/8

group 1 argument consultations 2/15

quiz due 2/19

group 2 argument consultations 2/22

group 3 argument consultations 3/1

group 1 argument consultations 3/8

group 2 argument consultations 3/15

group 3 argument consultations 3/22

quiz due 3/26

group 1 outline consultations 4/5

more group 1 outline consultations 4/12

group 2 outline consultations 4/19, 4/21

group 3 outline consultations 4/26, 4/28

thesis paper due 5/7

Detailed grading breakdown

Argument sketches, outline, and thesis paper (60%)

The two argument sketches and the paper outline will directly prepare you for writing a 1,000–2,000 word final paper defending an original thesis in the philosophy of race. After the first few weeks of the semester, most Monday class sessions will be reserved for one-on-one consultations in which you discuss these assignments with me via Zoom. Each assignment will be due by 9pm on the Sunday before your assigned group (1, 2, or 3) is scheduled for consultations. Detailed expectations for each of these assignments will be discussed during our in-class writing workshops on 2/8, 2/10, 3/24, and 4/30.

Media analysis (15%)

An analysis of the variety of racism being discussed in each of three popular media venues will be due on 2/7. You must identify the purported variety of racism discussed in each venue, and write one paragraph discussing why each purported variety of racism identified is (or is not) aptly called racism. You will earn credit for correctly identifying the variety of racism, and for the clarity, thoughtfulness, and persuasiveness of your paragraph discussion.

Three quizzes (15%)

At the end of each of the units on epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics, you will take a short quiz on eCampus designed to assess your knowledge of the unit we have just completed (and especially of the aspects of the unit we have just completed that will be necessary background for the next unit we are about to begin.)

Participation (10%)

This course will center on class discussion about a complicated subject matter, and thus will require each student's effective participation. Effective participation involves thoughtfully and respectfully engaging in live class discussions (and/or posting to our Discord server) in a manner that demonstrates you have done the assigned reading.

Attendance

Attendance is not required. Attending and engaging in class is nevertheless essential to cultivating critical thinking skills and a philosophical frame of mind (and thus getting your time and money's worth for taking this course). Much less importantly, it is also the easiest way to earn participation credit. Class meetings will not be recorded, and (due to their interactive nature) cannot be recapped, for those not present in person.

Late policy

Late assignments will not be accepted unless an extension has been granted. If you need to request an extension of the deadline for any assignment, please email me at least 48 hours prior to the original due date. (In general, you should reach out early and often about any issues you're having with the course.)

Detailed schedule**Part I: Epistemology**

1/20: MLK as philosopher of race

Reading: King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
Shelby, "The Philosopher King"

1/22: Thinking and talking about race—and its connection to the events of Jan 6th, 2021

Reading: Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (3–8)
Anderson, "Whiteness is the Greatest Racial Fraud"

1/25: Situated knowledge

Reading: Toole, "From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression"

1/27: The dangers of standpoint epistemology

Reading: Taiwo, "Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference"

1/29: Racialism

Reading: Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (8–18)
Appiah, "The Case for Capitalizing the 'B' in Black"

Submit epistemology quiz by 9pm on Friday the 29th

Part II: Ethics

2/1: Varieties of racism

Reading: Appiah, "Racisms" (also listen to ["Race, Racisms, and Solidarity"](#))

2/3: More varieties of racism

Reading: Shelby, *Dark Ghettoes: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (23–29)
Kelly and Roedder, "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias"

2/3: Racial preferences without racial bias?

Reading: Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes"

Submit media analysis by 9pm on Sunday the 7th

2/8: Initial writing workshop

2/10: Writing workshop cont.

2/12: Racism as vice

Reading: Garcia, "The Heart of Racism"

2/15: first argument sketch consultations (group 1)

2/17: Against moralizing racism

Reading: Mills, "'Heart' Attack: A Critique of Garcia's Volitional Conception of Racism"

2/19: (Mis)using race in medical diagnosis

Reading: Garcia, "The Misuse of Race in Medical Diagnosis"
Roberts, "Debating the Cause of Health Disparities"

Submit ethics quiz by 9pm on Friday the 19th

Part III: Metaphysics

2/22: first argument sketch consultations (group 2)

2/24: Essentialism and Du Bois's non-biological conception of race

Reading: Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races"

Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument" (21–29)

2/26: Du Boisian race as illusory

Reading: Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument" (29–36)

Taylor, "Appiah's Uncompleted Argument" (103–107)

3/1: first argument sketch consultations (group 3)

3/3: No class (Non-Instructional Day)

3/5: Du Boisian race as real

Reading: Taylor, "Appiah's Uncompleted Argument" (108–128)

3/8: second argument sketch consultations (group 1)

3/10: Processes of social construction

Reading: Hacking, "Looping Effects of Human Kinds"

3/12: Race as socio-politically real and/or culturally constructed

Reading: Haslanger, "Tracing the Sociopolitical Reality of Race" (24–34)

Jeffers, "Cultural construction" (48–50)

3/15: second argument sketch consultations (group 2)

3/17: Tailoring metaphysics for medicine

Reading: Spencer, "How to be a Biological Racial Realist" (73–94)

3/19: The ordinary sense of the term 'race', biology, and basic reality

Reading: Spencer, "How to be a Biological Racial Realist" (94–104)

Glasgow, "Is Race an Illusion or a (Very) Basic Reality?" (118–123, 139–144)

3/22: second argument sketch consultations (group 3)

3/24: Midterm writing workshop

3/26: Is there a single correct metaphysics of race?

Reading: Haslanger, "Reply to Glasgow, Jeffers, and Spencer"

Spencer, "Reply to Glasgow, Haslanger, and Jeffers" (220–232)

Submit metaphysics quiz by 9pm on Friday the 26th

Part IV: Social and Political Philosophy

3/29: Flex day

3/31: Cases against and for reparations

Reading: Reed, "The Case against Reparations"

Taiwo, "Reconsidering Reparations"

4/2: *No class (Spring Holiday)*

4/5: outline consultations (group 1)

4/7: A case for integration

Reading: Anderson, "The Imperative of Integration"

4/9: On whom would the burdens of integration fall?

Reading: James, "The Burdens of Integration"

Jeffers, "Anderson on Multiculturalism and Blackness"

Taylor, "Whose Integration? What's Imperative?"

Anderson, "Reply to my Critics"

4/12: outline consultations (group 1)

4/14: A case for insurrection

Reading: McBride, "Insurrectionist Ethics and Racism"

4/16: Ethical policing amidst racial injustice

Reading: Wills, "Bad Guys & Dirty Hands"

Conclusion

4/19: outline consultations (group 2)

4/21: outline consultations (group 2)

4/23: course wrap-up

4/26: outline consultations (group 3)

4/28: outline consultations (group 3)

4/30: final writing workshop

Submit thesis paper by noon on Friday the 7th

Other advice, policies, and expectations

Some tips

Set aside at least six hours a week, outside of class, to engage in the sustained, attentive, and reflective thinking which philosophical reading demands. Come to each class having read—and reread as many times as are necessary for comprehension—the assigned text(s). Ask questions. Contribute to class discussion when you have something to say. Listen to your peers carefully and respectfully whether or not you have something to say. Come chat with me in office hours whenever you want to review (or delve deeper into) something we have read or discussed in class.

Accommodations

If you have good reason to be exempt from (or subject to a modified version of) any policy on this syllabus, please let me know. We'll work something out. If you have a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this course, please let me know and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>).

Plagiarism

Don't do it. Exercise academic integrity, as defined by the WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity. Plagiarism (or abetting another student plagiarizing) will result in an automatic zero on the plagiarized assignment, as well as a formal complaint. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

Statement of non-discrimination

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Our discussions will be predicated on these commitments.

COVID-19 statement

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements, including remote proctoring software.

In a face-to-face environment, our commitment to safety requires students, staff, and instructors to observe the social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines set by the University at all times. While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when applicable and wear the required PPE. Should a student forget to bring the required PPE, PPE will be available in the building for students to acquire. Students who fail to comply will be dismissed from the classroom for the class period and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for further sanctions.

If a student becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester, they should notify the instructor. The student should work with the instructor to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes.

Expected learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be better able to:

- 1) explain the fundamental contours of several debates in the ethics, metaphysics, and social and political philosophy of race and racism;
- 2) apply philosophical insights while discussing vexed social issues thoughtfully, charitably, and respectfully;
- 3) develop and defend original philosophical theses in clear and concise argumentative prose;
- 4) analyze news and cultural media and confront practical quandaries in civic life.

Course materials

All required readings are available on eCampus.

This course will have two online hubs: the eCampus page (where you will find readings, quizzes, places to submit your media analysis and thesis paper, and your grades) and our [Discord server](#) (where you will find course announcements, interact with me and your classmates outside of the classroom, and submit argument sketches and outlines).

Please email me ASAP if you have any trouble accessing any course materials.

Recommended book

What is Race? Four Philosophical Views (Oxford University Press, 2019)

by Joshua Glasgow, Sally Haslanger, Chike Jeffers, and Quayshawn Spencer