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Office hours: M/W, 1–2:30pm, Arnold 112

PHILOSOPHY OF RACE
PHIL 313, SPRING 2022
11:30–12:20am M/W/F, Armstrong Hall 119

Course description: We will begin this course on the epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and political philosophy of race with an examination of several varieties of racism and race-thinking. Studying the ethics of lay, scientific, and medical (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? If so, how, precisely? 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 reading two books concerning those social and political ends—Charles Mills's classic *The Racial Contract* and Olúfémi O. Táíwò's brand new *Reconsidering Reparations*.

Brief grading breakdown

Two participation logs: 10%
Two quizzes: 10%
Media analysis: 10%
Pro-and-con list exercise: 10%
Two argument sketches: 20%
Thesis paper outline: 15%
Thesis paper: 25%

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

quiz due 1/24

Part II: Ethics

Week 3: Varieties of racism

Week 4: Does racism necessarily involve ill-will?

Week 5: Race science and medicine

media analysis due 2/7

Part III: Metaphysics

Week 6: Is race illusory?

participation log and quiz due 2/14

Week 7: Sociopolitical and cultural construction

pro-and-con lists due 2/21

Week 8: Biological realism and its discontents

Week 9: 'Race': metaphysical or normative?

argument sketch due 3/7

Part IV: Political Philosophy

Week 10: Integration and insurrection

argument sketch due 3/25

Week 11: The racial contract

Week 12: The future of the racial contract

outline due 4/8

Week 13: Outline consultations

Week 14: Reconsidering reparations

participation log due 4/22

Week 15: The arc of the moral universe

thesis paper due 4/29

Detailed grading breakdown

Writing workshops

All of the assignments described below will prepare you for writing a paper defending an original thesis in the philosophy of race. Detailed expectations for the pro-and-con list exercise, argument sketches, thesis paper outline, and thesis paper will be discussed during our regular in-class writing workshops.

Participation (10%)

The main aim of this course is for each student to thoughtfully and respectfully participate in discussions of complex and controversial philosophical issues concerning race and racism. Participation will be self-graded via two logs detailing your engagement (in class and on Discord). Participation logs will be due on 2/14 and 4/22.

Two quizzes (10%)

At the end of each of the units on epistemology (1/24) and ethics (2/24), 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).

Media analysis (10%)

An analysis of the varieties of racism being discussed in two 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 giving a reason 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 reasoning.

Pro-and-con list exercise (10%)

Two pro-and-con lists which give reasons for and against believing an interesting claim in the philosophy of race will be due on 2/21.

Two argument sketches (20%)

A sketch, in premise-conclusion form, of an original argument in the philosophy of race, which may or may not build off of one of your pro-and-con lists, will be due on 3/7. After a consultation with me about your first sketch, a second sketch will be due on 3/25.

Thesis paper outline (15%)

An outline of your thesis paper will be due on 4/8. Your outline must center on an original argument sketch, which may or may not be one of the two already graded.

Thesis paper (25%)

Your 1,000–3,000-word paper will be due on 4/29. It will be graded both on its intrinsic quality and on how much of an improvement it is over the thesis paper outline.

Other policies, expectations, and advice

Course materials

This course has two online hubs:

- Our eCampus page, where you will find pdfs of all required readings, places to submit your assignments, and your grades.
- Our Discord server, where you will find announcements and interact with me and your classmates outside of the classroom.

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

Contacting me

You should reach out early and often about any issues you're having with the course. Sending me a message on Discord is the easiest way to ask me a quick question and get a quick answer. For more involved or sensitive questions, please use email. I'll respond to all questions posed on Discord or via email within one work day.

Office hours

I'll be available on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1–2:30pm, via Discord (text, audio, or video) and in my physical office (Arnold 112). That time is specifically set aside to talk to students; I highly recommend taking advantage by dropping in and asking any and all questions you have about the course.

Late policy

Please note that assignments must be uploaded to eCampus by classtime on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted unless an extension of the deadline has been granted. If you need to request an extension, please email me as soon as you can. In most cases, I will happily grant a 48-hour extension, no questions asked.

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/>).

Attendance

Attendance is not required, but failing to attend class will hurt your participation grade. Much more importantly, attending and engaging in class is essential to learning the material, not to mention cultivating critical thinking skills and a philosophical frame of mind (and thus getting your time and money's worth for taking this course).

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.

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; and (4) analyze news and cultural media and confront practical quandaries in civic life.

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.

Detailed schedule of readings

(* = primary; † = optional)

Required books

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell University Press, 1997)
 Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (Oxford University Press, 2022)

Recommended books

Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments* 5th Edition (Hackett, 2017)
 Joshua Glasgow, Sally Haslanger, Chike Jeffers, and Quayshawn Spencer, *What is Race? Four Philosophical Views* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

Part I: Epistemology

1/10: Thinking well about race and racism

1/12: Thinking, talking, and writing about racialism

Reading: Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (3–18) *
 Appiah, “The Case for Capitalizing the ‘B’ in Black”

1/14: The color of skin and the content of character

Reading: Anderson, “Whiteness is the Greatest Racial Fraud”
 King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (also listen to “[I Have a Dream](#)”) *
 Shelby, “The Philosopher King”

1/19: Situated knowledge

Reading: Toole, “From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression”

1/21: The dangers of standpoint epistemology

Reading: Táíwò, “Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference”

Part II: Ethics

1/24: Ideological racism

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

1/26: Institutional, structural, and systemic racism

Reading: Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (23–29)

1/28: Implicit racism

Reading: Kelly and Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias” *
 Machery, “Anomalies in Implicit Attitude Research” †

1/31: Racism as vice

Reading: Garcia, “The Heart of Racism” (1–19)

2/2: Against moralizing racism

Reading: Mills, “‘Heart’ Attack” (29–51 †, 51–62 *)

2/4: Racial preferences without racial bias?

Reading: Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes”

2/7: Race science**Reading:** Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (82–104) †**2/9: Mismeasurement and bias in science and medicine****Reading:** Lewis et al., “The Mismeasure of Science” †

Weisberg, “Remeasuring Man” *

Garcia, “The Misuse of Race in Medical Diagnosis”

2/11: Health disparities between populations (and start of writing workshop)**Reading:** Roberts, “Debating the Cause of Health Disparities”**Part III: Metaphysics****2/14: Du Bois’s anti-essentialist conception of race (and end of writing workshop)****Reading:** Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races” *

Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument” (21–29)

2/16: Du Boisian race as illusory**Reading:** Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument” (29–36) *

Taylor, “Appiah’s Uncompleted Argument” (103–107)

2/18: Du Boisian race as real**Reading:** Taylor, “Appiah’s Uncompleted Argument” (108–128)**2/21: Processes of social construction****Reading:** Hacking, “Looping Effects of Human Kinds”Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (253–259) †**2/23: Race as socio-politically or culturally constructed****Reading:** Haslanger, “Tracing the Sociopolitical Reality of Race” (24–34)

Jeffers, “Cultural Construction” (48–50)

2/25: The roles of race-talk in social science (and start of writing workshop)**Reading:** Khalifa and Lauer, “Do the Social Sciences Vindicate Race’s Reality?”**2/28: Tailoring metaphysics for medicine (and end of writing workshop)****Reading:** Spencer, “How to be a Biological Racial Realist” (73–94)**3/2: The ordinary sense of the term ‘race’ and population genetics****Reading:** Spencer, “How to be a Biological Racial Realist” (94–104)**3/4: The basic reality of race?****Reading:** Glasgow, “Is Race an Illusion or a (Very) Basic Reality?” (118–123, 139–144)**3/7: What ought we to do with ‘race’ talk?****Reading:** Mallon, “‘Race’: Normative, not Metaphysical or Semantic” †

McPherson, “Deflating ‘Race’” †

3/9: 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) *

3/11: First argument sketch consultations (no full class meeting)

Part IV: Social and Political Philosophy

3/21: A case for integration (and writing workshop)

Reading: Anderson, "The Imperative of Integration"

James, "The Burdens of Integration" †

Jeffers, "Anderson on Multiculturalism and Blackness" †

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

Anderson, "Reply to my Critics" †

3/23: A case for insurrection

Reading: McBride, "Insurrectionist Ethics and Racism"

3/25: Ethical policing amidst racial injustice

Reading: Wills, "Bad Guys & Dirty Hands" †

3/28: *Second argument sketch consultations (no full class meeting)*

3/30: The Racial Contract

Reading: Mills, *The Racial Contract* Ch. 1

4/1: The racial norming of spaces and individuals

Reading: Mills, *The Racial Contract* Ch. 2 (41–62)

4/4: The continued enforcement of the Racial Contract

Reading: Mills, *The Racial Contract* Ch. 2 (62–89)

4/6: The Racial Contract as the only actual social contract

Reading: Mills, *The Racial Contract* Ch. 3

4/8: Looking backward to look forward?

Reading: Reed, "The Case against Reparations" †

Baldwin, "Faulkner and Desegregation" †

4/11: *outline consultations (no full class meeting)*

4/13: *outline consultations (no full class meeting)*

4/18: Reconsidering reparations (and writing workshop)

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 1

4/20: Reconsidering world history

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 2

4/22: The constructive view

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 3

4/25: What's missing

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 4 †

4/27: What's next

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 5 †

4/29: The arc of the moral universe

Reading: Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* Ch. 6 †