

PHIL 4352 AND 5352/AFST 3390/WS 4360

PHILOSOPHIES OF RACE AND RACISM

Spring 2016

Wednesdays 4:30-7:20

Old Main 306

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Office Hours: Mondays 2-4 and by appointment

Office Location: Worrell Hall 304

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the United States and beyond, few issues are as fraught, debated, confused, saddening and anger-provoking as concerns about race and racism in our contemporary social world. Though it is sometimes claimed that we now live in a “post-racial” society—one in which discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity no longer transpires—people are still (and rather constantly) debating issues such as whether people of color enjoy fair and equal access to universities and prestigious jobs; whether police discriminate and use disproportionate force against communities of color; whether the racial/ethnic “make-up” of the U.S. prison population is just; whether unperceived and unacknowledged “implicit biases” render most people racist (even if they don’t explicitly wish to be racist), among many others.

At the heart of these sociopolitical debates, one encounters perplexing philosophical questions about whether “race” is real (and, if so, in what sense it is “real”), what racism actually *is*, how racial identities may intersect with other social identities such as gender and economic class, and whether we ought to be trying to “move beyond race” as a society in hopes of achieving a truly “post-racial” world. This course aims to provide you with an introduction to philosophical perspectives on race and racism, placing particular (but not exclusive) emphasis on Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latina/o identities and experiences of racism in the context of the United States.

We will begin with a broad overview of (philosophical) “racial theories” and explore the nature of what has been called “racial thinking”. Then, we will move on to explore racial identity as a phenomenological identity. In the third section of the course, we will explore ways in which racial identity may intersect with other social identities, focusing in particular on gender and economic class. And, finally, we will delve into philosophical literature on mixed-race identities, the very nature of racism, and possible strategies for

combatting racism. Though most of the course assignments are readings, we will also view a number of films that deal with race and racism in order to generate collaborative discussion about course themes.

SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To gain an understanding of core philosophical debates about race and racism
- To develop philosophical/analytic writing skills through producing written work on an almost weekly basis
- To learn to connect philosophical questions about race and racism to relevant current events and policy debates
- To become skilled at discussing sensitive sociopolitical issues productively and with appropriate sensitivity
- To develop new philosophical perspectives on race and racism (ideally)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Undergraduate Students

- **Response papers.** You will write a three-page response paper addressing the readings and/or films assigned for each week. The first *two pages* of the response papers should provide a clear and concise overview of the readings for that day—focusing on and explaining the most important arguments made by the philosophers whose work you have studied that week. Your *third page* should feature a philosophical and personal reaction to those readings. At the end of class, you will be prompted to write a paragraph *at the end of the response papers* (so please leave some extra space) discussing how and whether your views on the readings have changed as a result of the class discussion and activities. **These short papers can only be turned at the end of class (not via email), and they cannot be made up.** You may, however, miss/skip or fail one of these assignments. After this missed or failed assignment, your grade will be lowered by one letter (for this assignment) for each response paper you miss or fail.
- **Group paper and presentation.** As part of a small group, you will write a 3-4 page paper on just one of the articles or chapters assigned for a particular day. This will allow you to focus with greater detail and care on a particular philosophical argument. In addition, in this paper you will connect the philosophical argument you have studied to current events pertaining to race and racism in our society. You will also, as a small group, give an in-class presentation on your paper. (Given the size of our class, I will be assigning groups and topics.)
- **Final exam.** You will complete a take-home final exam that will consist of essays and short answer questions about the readings and films from class. **The final will be due via email on May 11th.**

Graduate Students

- You will complete the “response paper” and “final exam” assignments listed above, but not the “group paper and presentation” assignments.

- **Term paper.** In addition to the assignments listed above, you will also write an 8-10 page paper on a philosophical question that pertains to Philosophies of Race and Racism. On Wednesday, March 23 you should come to class with 2-3 possible paper ideas to discuss and workshop as a group. By Wednesday, May 4th you should have submitted a detailed, 4-5 page outline for your paper which should be emailed to Dr. Reed-Sandoval (at least 24 hours before class) so that you can receive in-class feedback.
- You will also give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class on your outline on March 24th. **Your completed final papers will be due on May 14th.**
- Undergraduates who intend to go to graduate school in philosophy or a related discipline may petition to write a term paper alongside graduate students (and be graded like graduate students – see below) in order to develop a possible writing sample for graduate school applications.

GRADES

For Undergraduate Students

- Response Papers – 60% of final grade
- Group paper and presentation – 20% of final grade
- Final Exam – 20% of final grade

For Graduate Students

- Response Papers – 40% of final grade
- Term Paper – 40% of final grade
- Final Exam – 20% of final grade

REQUIRED TEXTS

(Note: some of these are available in ebook form through the UTEP library.)

1. Paul Taylor. 2013. *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Second Edition) Polity Press
2. Michael Branton. 1998. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge University Press
3. Linda Martín Alcoff. 2006. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*. Oxford University Press
4. Angela Davis. 1983. *Women, Race and Class*. First Vintage Books.
5. Cedric R. Robinson and Robin D.G. Kelly. 1986. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. The University of North Carolina Press.

COURSE POLICIES

1. *Respect and open-mindedness.* This is a space for an open exchange of ideas; you are encouraged to voice your opinions and explain them philosophically. You should, however, do so with a spirit of respect and open-mindedness—not only towards the varied philosophical texts you will read for class, but also toward your classmates (whose views

may differ from your own). Furthermore, in choosing to take this class you agree to engage respectfully with the views we shall explore throughout the course.

2. *Academic Integrity.* Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UTEP community, students accept the expectations of the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the morally sound path. Students enrolling in UTEP assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UTEPs function as an educational institution. Students should review the university's policies at: <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?PageContentID=2084&tabid=30292>

3. *Students with Disabilities Act.* UTEP seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for persons with disabilities. If the student has a systematic physical, cognitive, or psychological disability and requires accommodations, she or he should contact the instructor by the second week of classes so arrangements can be made with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915-747-5148 or cass@utep.edu.

4. *University Writing Center.* If you would like help writing papers for this course (from brainstorming ideas to revising for grammar and content), please contact by email uwc@utep.edu or by phone 915/747-5112, or visit the University Writing Center located in Library 227.

5. *Miscellaneous Privacy Policies.* Publishing notes and other class materials from this class on websites is prohibited (even if you consider these materials to be "your own interpretation" of class lectures, etc.) Filming or otherwise recording the class is prohibited unless special permission is sought from the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 20th

- Introduction to course
- In-class watch: *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989)

Wednesday, January 27th

- Introducing Philosophies of Race and Racism
- Paul Taylor. 2013. *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Second Edition) Polity Press. Part I, "Theory": "What Race-Thinking Is," "Three Challenges to Race-Thinking," and "What Races Are: The Metaphysics of Critical Race Theory," pp. 1-116.

Wednesday, February 3rd

- Introducing Philosophies of Race and Racism
- Paul Taylor. 2013. *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Second Edition) Polity Press. Part II, "Practice": "Existence, Experience, Elisions," "The Color Question," and "From Anchor Babies to Obama: Are We Post-Racial Yet?" pp. 121-202.

Wednesday, February 10th

- Introducing Philosophies of Race and Racism
- Michael Branton. 1998. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge University Press. Sections on "Race as Designation," "Race as Lineage," "Race as Type," and "Race as Subspecies," pp. 1-116

Wednesday, February 17th

- No class - UTEP closed to accommodate the Pope's visit
- At-home watch *The Birth of a Nation* (1915, Griffith and Gish) (Trigger Warning, to be discussed in class) (available via Blackboard)

Wednesday, February 24th

- Introducing Philosophies of Race and Racism
- Michael Branton. 1998. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge University Press. Sections on "Race as Status," "Race as Class," and "Race as Social Construct," pp. 117-235.

Wednesday, March 2nd

- Race as Phenomenological Identity
- Selections from Fanon and Young (posted on Blackboard)
- Linda Martin Alcoff. 2006. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*. Oxford University Press, Chapter 7, "The Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment," Chapter 8, "Racism and Visible Race," and Chapter 9, "The Whiteness Question," pp. 179-226.
- George Yancy and Emily S. Lee, "Asian, American, Woman, Philosophy," in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/philosophers-on-race/>
- George Yancy and John D. Caputo, "Looking 'White' in the Face," in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/philosophers-on-race/>

Wednesday, March 9th

- No class – enjoy Spring Break!

Wednesday, March 16th

- Intersectionality: Race, Gender and Class

- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” in *Stanford Law Review* vol. 43 no. 6 (July, 1991) pp. 1241-1299 (available via Blackboard).
- Michael Hames-García, Chapter 1, “Who Are Our Own People?” and Chapter 2, “How Real is Race?” pp. 1-67 in *Identity Complex: Making the Case for Multiplicity* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011) (available via Blackboard)
- In-class watch: Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw on Race, Gender, Inequality, Intersectionality, and Black Lives Matter:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNKbGFoYC1Q>

Wednesday, March 23rd

- Angela Davis. 1983. *Women, Race and Class*. First Vintage Books.
- At home watch: *The Black Power Mixtape* (2011, Goran Olsann):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_tCnSTIPEE

Wednesday, March 30th

- Intersectionality: Race, Gender and Class
- No reading for today, but you should get started on the readings for the next two weeks.
- In-class watch: *Malcolm X* (Spike Lee, 1992)

Wednesday, April 6th

- Intersectionality: Race, Gender and Class
- Cedric R. Robinson and Robin D.G. Kelly. 1986. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. The University of North Carolina Press. Part I, “The Emergence and Limitations of European Radicalism,” and Part II, “The Roots of Black Radicalism,” pp. 1-174.
- At home watch: *The Black Power Mixtape* (2011, Goran Olsann):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_tCnSTIPEE

Wednesday, April 13th

- Intersectionality: Race, Gender and Class
- Cedric R. Robinson and Robin D.G. Kelly. 1986. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. The University of North Carolina Press. Part III, “Black Radicalism and Marxist Theory,” pp. 175-319.

Wednesday, April 20th

- Beyond the Black-White Binary

- Linda Martin Alcoff. 2006. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*. Oxford University Press. Part 4: "Latinos and the Categories of Race," "Latinos, Asian Americans and the Black-White Binary," and "On Being Mixed," 227-284.
- Naomi Zack, "The Fluid Symbol of Mixed Race," access at https://www.academia.edu/13423622/The_Fluid_Symbol_of_Mixed_Race
- George Yancy and David Haekwon Kim, "The Invisible Asian," in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/the-invisible-asian/>

Wednesday, April 27th

- Racism in Philosophical Perspective
- Lawrence Blum, "Racism: Its Core Meaning," "Can Blacks Be Racist?" and "Varieties of Racial Ills" in *"I'm Not a Racist, But ...": The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) pp. 1-77. (available via Blackboard)
- George Yancy and Paul Gilroy, "What 'Black Lives' Means in Britain," in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/paul-gilroy-what-black-means-in-britain/>
- George Yancy and Judith Butler, "What's Wrong with 'All Lives Matter'?" in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/philosophers-on-race/>
- George Yancy and Naomi Zack, "What 'White Privilege' Really Means," in the *New York Times* (*The Stone*), access at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/philosophers-on-race/>
- Please review the website for the Black Lives Matter movement at <http://blacklivesmatter.com>

Wednesday, May 4th

- Immigration and Anti-Latina/o Racism in the United States
- José Jorge Mendoza, "Immigration and the Presumptive Rights of Immigrants," in *Critical Philosophy of Race* vol. 2, no. 1 2014 pp. 68-83
- At home watch: *Farmingville* (Cambini and Sandoval, 2004) (available via Blackboard)
- Amy Reed-Sandoval, "The Metaphysics of Illegal Identity" (work in progress; to be distributed later in course)
- MA students to give presentations of their papers at the end of class.

Take home final due via email on **May 11th**.