

PHIL 327: Philosophy of Race

Fall 2019 / ENGTR (Trottier) 1090

Monday & Wednesday 04:05 PM-05:25 PM

Instructor Information

Instructor

Celia Edell

Email

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(she/her)

Office Location & Hours

Leacock 932, MW 2:30-3:30
and by appointment

General Information

The land on which this class takes place is traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations

Description

The concept of race raises several questions for philosophers. For example: what is the true meaning of “race” and should we “see color”? In what ways are some bodies more defined by race than others? How is race phenomenologically experienced? How do we answer questions of ambiguous or complex racial identity? What counts as racist? Why is racism morally wrong? What is institutional racism? What is the political utility or disutility of racism? What is white privilege and white ignorance? What should be done about racism?

How we answer these questions will have great impact on how we think about our identities, understand ourselves and each other, approach the fight against racial oppression, and envision the world we want to live in.

This course will provide an introduction to the philosophy of race by surveying some key debates and analyses, exploring recent philosophical work on the concept of race, and considering the political effects of racial identities. We begin with two important assumptions: (1) that racism still exists and (2) that this is neither a natural nor necessary state of affairs.

Students should note that while there are no prerequisites for this class, it is an intermediate-level class in philosophy. They should therefore be prepared to read a substantial amount of sometimes quite difficult material, and to learn how to read, write, and discuss philosophy (better).

Assignments and Grades

Attendance & Participation	15%	(Ongoing)
Journals (10% x 2)	20%	(Twice during term, first by Oct 9, second by Nov 25)
Presentation	15%	(Presentation schedule to be determined)
Term Paper Outline	10%	(5% for participating in peer review, 5% for quality of outline)
Term Paper	40%	Due December 2

Participation, worth 15%: This includes participation in the discussion period of class, as well as attendance in class in general.

Reading Journals, worth 10% each (20% total): Twice during the term, you will choose a reading to which you have a strong reaction. You will turn in one page (500 words) analyzing it. The first journal must be submitted no later than October 9th, the second no later than Nov 25th). The reaction may be purely intellectual (this argument was brilliant! It was illogical! It was morally bankrupt! Etc.) or personal (this reading rings true to my experience! It was a distortion of my experience! It makes me feel horrible! It makes me feel hopeful! Etc.) – but you will analyze your reaction at a theoretical level. Consider: what did you think before reading this and how did this reading affect your previous ideas? What made this text provocative for you?

Reading journals must be handed in on the reading for a given week. For example, if you wish to hand in a reading journal on September 23rd, you must have written on Jeffers or Spencer.

In-Class Presentation, worth 15%: Once during the term, in groups of 2 or 3, you will offer a short (5-10 minute) in-class presentation about a theme from that day's reading that stimulates discussion through an activity and/or by applying the theory to a current issue, historical example, or media illustration. You will help direct the class in discussion through guiding questions/puzzles. These presentations will begin week 3, schedule to be decided in week 2.

Term paper outline, worth 10%: You will exchange term paper outlines (1-2 pages) *in class* with one of your peers and fill out an evaluation form. The feedback you provide on your peer's paper should be thoughtful and constructive. Hand in the outline and the evaluation form. 5% of the outline grade is for constructively participating in peer review, and 5% for quality of outline as determined by professor. Both the outline and form will be returned in the following class.

Term paper, worth 40%: This essay (5-6 pages, 12 pt. font double-spaced, 1-inch margins) should center around one or more of the readings in the syllabus, defending a position on one of the issues that we have considered. You will explain your position, offer at least two well developed arguments that support it, and consider and respond to at least one objection.

Class Format & Policies

Email: Please include 'PHIL 327' in the subject line of any emails. I will do my best to reply within 48 hours, excluding weekends.

Technology: Please turn your phones to *silent* when in class. Computers should only be used for course-related activities. Please ensure they do not affect the vision of those around you.

Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and think you may encounter barriers in this class, you are strongly encouraged to contact OSD (Office for Students with Disabilities) and register. Please also inform the professor about accommodations you require as soon as possible.

Policy on Extensions/Lateness: No extensions will be granted without a medical note. Late work will be penalized at the rate of one-third letter grade per calendar day past the due date. For example, a paper that is evaluated as a B, if one day late, will be assigned a B-, and if two days late, it will receive a C+

Grading Criteria: To do excellent work in this course, you need to be able to do more than just reiterate what various authors have said in your readings or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand and comprehend the material, but that you have thought critically about it, fully fleshing out its subtleties and implications so that you can creatively apply the material at many levels. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; however "B" work doesn't capture the complexity of the issues and tends toward accurate summary rather than independent analysis. A "C" suggests a struggle with the material that manages an average, basic comprehension of it but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. An "F" indicates no understanding of the material.

Required Text

All readings will be posted on MyCourses in PDF format.

One book, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* by Paul C. Taylor, is available at *Paragraphe*.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Introductions	Sept 4: Class syllabus
Week 2	Race-thinking	Sept 9: Naomi Zack, “Ideas of Race in the Canonical History of Philosophy” Sept 11: Paul C. Taylor, “What Race-Thinking Is” (Chapter 1 of <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>)
Week 3	The Concept of Race	Sept 16: Paul C. Taylor, “Three Challenges to Race-Thinking” (Chapter 2 of <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>) Sept 18: Paul C. Taylor, “What Races Are: The Metaphysics of Critical Race Theory” (pages 68-86 of Chapter 3 in <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>), and Cheryl Harris “Whiteness as Property”
Week 4	Cultural Constructionism & Biological Racial Realism	Sept 23: Chike Jeffers, “Cultural Constructionism” Sept 25: Quayshawn Spencer, “What ‘biological racial realism’ should mean” [Guest lecture by Sarah Clairmont]
Week 5	Racialization	Sept 30: Gail Weiss, “Pride and Prejudice: Ambiguous Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Identities of Jewish Bodies” [optional reading: Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, “Are Jews White?”] Oct 2: Alia Al-Saji, “The Racialization of Muslim veils: a philosophical analysis” [Guest lecture by Muhammad Velji]
Week 6	Racialization	Oct 7: G.E. Clarke “White Like Canada”, and Bonita Lawrence “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview” Oct 9: (Yom Kippur) Sherene Razack, “Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: the murder of Pamela George” FIRST JOURNAL DUE BY TODAY
Week 7	Embodiment/ Experience	Oct 14: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving) Oct 16: Paul C. Taylor, “Existence, Experience, Elisions” (Chapter 4 of <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>)

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 8	Embodiment/ Experience	Oct 21: Frantz Fanon, "The experience of the black" Oct 23: Sara Ahmed, "A phenomenology of whiteness."
Week 9	Racism	Oct 28: Lawrence Blum, "Racism: Its Core Meaning" Oct 30: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racisms"
Week 10	Institutional Racism	Nov 4: Naomi Zack, "Racism and Neo-Racisms" Nov 6: Michelle Alexander, Introduction, <i>The New Jim Crow</i> , and Robyn Maynard, "Arrested (In)Justice: From the Streets to the Prison", <i>Policing Black Lives</i>
Week 11	Racism and Sexuality	Nov 11: Angela Davis, "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist" Nov 13: Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes"
Week 12	Ignorance	Nov 18: ESSAY OUTLINE PEER REVIEW Nov 20: Charles Mills, "White Ignorance"
Week 13	Responses	Nov 25: Linda Martín Alcoff, "What Should White People Do?", Sara Ahmed, "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism" SECOND JOURNAL DUE BY TODAY Nov 27: Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation"
Week 14	Reparations	Dec 2: Coates, "The Case for Reparations" FINAL PAPER DUE DEC 2

Additional Information and Resources

McGill Policy Statement

McGILL UNIVERSITY VALUES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. THEREFORE, ALL STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THE MEANING AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHEATING, PLAGIARISM AND OTHER ACADEMIC OFFENCES UNDER THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES. (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.