PHI 400/600

African American Philosophy

Spring 2022 M/W 12:45pm - 2:05 pm. HL 105

Instructor: Dr. Luvell Anderson
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Office hours: by appointment

All information in this syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and communicated by email and/or on Blackboard. Students are responsible for regularly checking their email and the Blackboard site for this class.

Course description

Philosophy is a social practice situated in a specific social context. This means the particular questions seen as central to it and the preferred approaches for answering them can vary across cultures. "Philosophy" is typically presented as a universal practice where, in contrast, "Asian Philosophy" or "Indigenous Philosophy" or "African American Philosophy" are presented as specialized supplements. In reality, the thing called "philosophy" is also culturally specific, "Euro-Philosophy" or "Anglo-American Philosophy". This does not mean there isn't overlap in questions or methods between the various variants. But, as this class aims to show, there are some important divergences as well.

This class aims to explore African American Philosophy by examining some questions that emerge from the experiences of Black Americans. We will begin with an obvious question, What is African American philosophy? From there, we will investigate African American philosophical thought concerning key concepts like freedom, citizenship, forgiveness, oppression, and moral discourse, African American identity, and arguments for and against reparations.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to:

- Identify and describe major views about African American identity
- Identify and describe major views on Black reparations

- Analyze discussions of contemporary issues in an informed manner
- Apply theory to popular discussions of race and identity issues

Texts

We will use a variety of texts in the course. All texts will be available on **Blackboard.** These texts are considered required reading and you are expected to read the assigned texts before class.

Assessment

Each assessment is designed to help us achieve our course objectives. Assignments will consist of the following:

For PHI 400

- Preliminary Diagnostic
- Midterm exam
- Final Diagnostic

For PHI 600

- 2 short papers (5-7 ppg)

Grading scale

A+	99-100
A	95-98
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	65-69
D	61-64
F	≤ 60

Communication

Any important announcements, advice, changes to the class schedule, etc. will be communicated by email or on the course homepage on Blackboard. You are responsible to regularly check your SU email account as well as the Blackboard page for the class.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail in the Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found here: http://class.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Academic-Integrity-Policy_final.pdf.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct can result in an automatic failing grade for this course, or a report to the appropriate Academic Judiciary, or both. If you are feeling pressured for time or confused, don't plagiarize! Instead, come get help.

Disability Statement

Any student who anticipates physical or academic barriers based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately. Students with disabilities should also contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at disabilityservices@syr.edu or Phone: Voice: (315) 443-4498.

Ground rules

- Be respectful. Do not disrupt class by coming in late or leaving early, holding private conversations, being rude, etc.
- If you have questions about the course material, ask for clarification. Don't stay confused!
- Everyone has an equal right to be heard. Listen carefully to what your colleagues have to say and let them finish.
- Every viewpoint merits consideration, even if you disagree.
- Talk to each other, not just to the professor.
- Debate and disagree politely and respectfully. Object to arguments, but refrain from personal attacks and insults.
- Avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, Transphobic or otherwise inappropriate comments. Speak up if you feel like someone is using derogatory language, but try to be charitable in your interpretation of their intentions.

Class schedule

Changes, additions, substitutions, or cancellations may be expected during the semester. They will be announced on Blackboard for this class.

Week 1 What is African American Philosophy?

1/24 Introduction
1/26 Charles Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums"

Week 2 What is African American Philosophy? (cont)

1/31 Anthony Appiah, "African American Philosophy?"
2/2 Lewis Gordon, "Reasoning in Black: Africana Philosophy under the Weight of Misguided Reason"

Suggested readings: Lucius Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy); Paul C. Taylor, "Contemporary Africana Philosophy" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Week 3 Slavery and its afterlife

2/7 McGary and Lawson (ML), "Oppression and Slavery"
2/9 ML, "Paternalism and Slavery"

Suggested reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave;* Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Week 4 Slavery and its afterlife (cont)

2/14 ML, "Resistance and Slavery"
2/16 ML, "Citizenship and Slavery"

Week 5 Slavery and its afterlife (cont)

2/21 ML, "Moral Discourse and Slavery"
2/23 ML, "Forgiveness and Slavery"

Week 6 African American Identity

2/28 W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"
3/2 Frank Kirkland, "On Du Bois' Notion of Double Consciousness"

Suggested readings: Countee Cullen, "Heritage"; Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois*, chapters 2 and 3

Week 7 African American Identity (cont)

3/7 Frank Wilderson, "Blacks and the Master/Slave Relation"

3/9 Lindsey Stewart, "'Sing[ing] a Song to the Morning': The Politics of Joy"

Suggested readings: Frank Wilderson, *Afropessimism*; Lindsey Stewart, *The Politics of Black Joy: Zora Neale Hurston and Neo-Abolitionism*

Week 8 Spring Break

3/14 **No Class**
3/16 **No Class**

Week 9 African American Identity (cont)

3/21 Tommie Shelby, "Two Conceptions of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity"
3/23 Marquis Bey, "The Trans*ness of Blackness, The Blackness of Trans*ness"

Suggested readings: Martin Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*

Week 10 Gender/Sexuality

3/28 Combahee River Collective Statement; Amy Jacques Garvey, "The Role of Women in Liberation Struggles"
3/30 Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and gender"

Suggested readings: Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*, Vivian May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*

Week 11 Gender/Sexuality (cont); Aesthetics

4/4 Jennifer Nash, "Rethinking Intersectionality"
4/6 Paul Taylor, "Assembly, not Birth"

Suggested readings: Paul C. Taylor, *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics;* Jennifer Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*

Week 12 Aesthetics (cont)

4/11 Nicholas Whittaker, "What's So Bad about Digital Blackface?"
4/13 Pacific APA, No Class

Week 13 Reparations

4/18 Mullen & Darity, "Myths of Racial Equality"

4/20 Bernie Boxill, “Black Reparations”

Suggested readings: William Darity and Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century*

Week 14 Reparations (cont)

4/25 Glenn Loury, “Trans-Generational Justice—Compensatory vs. Interpretative Approaches”
4/27 Derrick Darby, “Reparations and Racial Inequality”

Week 15: Last Week

5/2 TBD
5/4 **Last Class.**