

PHI 411

Race and Identity

Fall 2022

M/W 3:45pm - 5:05 pm.

Sims 241

Instructor: Dr. Luvell Anderson

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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

Race and racism are prominent features of our everyday practices in both subtle and explicit ways. We draw on these notions to explain various experiences and phenomena. For instance, there are controversies in the United States, France, and Germany over *Critical Race Theory*, some believing that it exacerbates racism rather than fosters greater understanding. Race is also highlighted in campaigns like #OscarsSoWhite, which point out the lack of racial diversity at the Academy Awards ceremony. Race has also been used to explain voting habits and employment, wealth, and health disparities.

In this course, we examine the phenomena of race and racism, asking important questions like: What is race? What is racism? How does race and gender interact? Why is it bad to restrict immigration based on race? How does race impact one's ability to testify about one's knowledge? How are we to understand mixed race?

Course Objectives

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

- Distill the central argument of a text to its essentials, making clear its basic argumentative structure. Interpret charitably in order to understand a view in its most cogent form before subjecting it to criticism.

- Apply the critical tools of philosophical analysis, both orally and in writing, to boldly and effectively question prevailing social norms, hierarchies of power, or other traditional or current assumptions and theories about value. Identify and describe major political and philosophical critiques of racial identity
- Explain and defend a philosophical thesis in writing that is clear, concise, informed and well-organized. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of rival arguments and theories to reach an overall assessment of the comparative merits of different views.
- Explain the content of some contemporary philosophical answers to questions in race theory.

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:

1. Midterm
2. Short summaries
3. Final Project

Midterm: The midterm is intended to give you an opportunity to test your retention and understanding of the course material. It will be in short-essay format covering the texts we've read up until the midway point of the semester.

Summary: The summary is intended to help you discern how well you comprehend the course material. You will identify the article's main claims and arguments.

Final Project: This will be the major project we will spend the course working towards. You have options. You can write a traditional argumentative essay (2500 words). Another option is to do a podcast. This can be done individually or in a group (limit: 3 members). The project should demonstrate comprehension of major concepts and arguments discussed in the course, as well as application of those things to some contemporary issue involving race or racism.

One example of a final project is an Op-ed. The Op-ed is a written opinion piece between 800 to 1200 words in length, usually written for a newspaper or magazine. You will choose a contemporary topic and write an opinion on it using material from the course readings. For guidance on how to write an op-ed, see <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/oped-what-is-it-and-how-to-write-it-1360714>.

*See me to discuss further options.

Grade Breakdown

Midterm: 30 pts
Summaries (10): 20 pts
Rough Draft: 15 pts
Final Project: 35 pts

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, 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 Thinking about Race Philosophically

- 8/29 Introduction
8/31 Paul Taylor, "The Language of Race"

Week 2 The Metaphysics of Race

- 9/5 Labor Day. No Class.
9/7 Nina Jablonski, "Skin Color and Race"

Week 3

- 9/12 Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races"
9/14 Quayshawn Spencer, "What 'biological racial realism' should mean"

Further Reading: Jon Mikkelsen (2013) *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*

Week 4 Metaphysics (cont)

9/19 Sally Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race"

9/21 Adam Hochman, "Replacing Race: Interactive Constructionism about Racialized Groups"

Further Reading: Glasgow, Haslanger, Jeffers and Spencer (2019) *What is Race? Four Philosophical Views*

Week 5 Metaphysics (cont)

9/26 guest lecture, Raúl Pérez

9/28 W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races"

Week 6 Theories of Mixed Race

10/3 Ron Sundstrom, "Being and Being Mixed Race"

10/5 Linda Martín Alcoff, "Mestizo Identity"

Week 7 Theories of Racism

10/10 K. Anthony Appiah, "Racisms"

10/12 Joshua Glasgow, "Racism as Disrespect"

Week 8 Politics of Race

10/17 Andrew Valls, "Racial Justice"

10/19 No Class

Week 9 Politics of Race

10/24 Bernie Boxill, "Black Reparations"

10/26 Harrington and Kaufman, "Black Reparations – Two Views"

Week 10 Politics of Race

10/31 Charles Kamasaki, "US Immigration Policy: A classic, unappreciated example of structural racism"

11/2 Sahar Akhtar, "Race beyond our borders: Is racial and ethnic immigration selection always morally wrong?"

Week 11 New Directions

11/7 Rachel McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice"

11/9 Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silence"

Week 12 New Directions

11/14 Mark Slagle, "An ethical exploration of free expression and the problem of hate speech"

11/16 No class

Week 13 Thanksgiving Break

11/21 No Classes

11/23 No Classes

Week 14 Workshop

11/28 Presentations

11/30 Presentations

Week 15 (11/23): Workshop

12/5 Review

12/7 Project Due