

PHILOSOPHY OF RACE: PHIL 327
Winter 2018

TR 1:05PM-2:25PM Burnside 1B24 Instructor: Emily R. Douglas TA: Celia Edell	Office Hours: Leacock 932, R 3:35-4:25 Email: emily.douglas@mcgill.ca Office hours: Leacock 923, M 11:35-12:25 Email: celia.edell@mcgill.ca
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Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to the philosophy of race by surveying some key debates and analyses, including:

- *the metaphysical status of race*; what is race? what kind of reality does it possess?
- *the relationship between the concept of race and racism*; how do we identify discourses as racist? can one have an idea of race that is not racist? Does opposition to racism entail opposition to race?
- *the intersections of race, gender, and national or ethnic identity*; how do these overlap in lived experience? how are they conceptually and genealogically related as concepts?
- *racialized experience or subjectivity*; how is race lived? can we give an account of the subjective (first person) reality of race?
- *mixed-race*; given challenges to the metaphysical status of race, can we make any sense of the notion of mixed-race? what political role might mixed-race play? what questions arise from the notion of “passing”?
- *responses to racism*; what models are available for addressing racism? what should we do? (how) do we continue to think and speak about race?

This survey class that will provide a foundation in major philosophical debates in philosophy of race, centering works from racialized theorists. We will begin with two assumptions: that we do not live in a world of racial equality (that is, racism exists); and that this is neither a natural nor a necessary state of affairs. We will examine, for example, W.E.B. DuBois’ early efforts to give an account of the concept of race, the psychological experience of racial oppression, and politically salient forms of racial identity. The class will finish by considering how to address the effects of institutionalized as well as personal racism.

While certain perspectives and interests students bring to the class may not be addressed in the syllabus, students will be encouraged to explore them in their final papers.

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). The philosophy of race is a particularly exciting place to see the immediate relevance of metaphysical questions, as well as a place of dialogue between the traditions of analytic and continental philosophy.

Note, finally, that this course is an introduction to the philosophy of race and not an introduction to the social history of race or racism.

Class Format & Policies

Technology: Please *put away phones and computers during class*. Put your cell phone on silent and do not text during class; if you need to answer something in an emergency, step outside of the classroom. *Laptops are not permitted except with permission*. If you have a particular reason for which you need your laptop, please discuss it with me. Powerpoints will be posted on MyCourses after each lecture.

Texts: All readings will be posted on MyCourses in PDF format. We will read most, if not all, of *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis, which you may purchase on your own if you wish, but it will also be available online.

Email: Please include 'PHIL 327' in the subject line of any emails to myself or the TA. We will respond to emails within 48 hours, excluding weekends.

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 myself and the TA about accommodations you require as soon as possible.

Requirements:

Reading: This is officially a lecture course, but you should come having read the material, ready to ask questions and discuss in both small and large groups. Please look ahead to anticipate more difficult or lengthy assignments and note that you are responsible for all of the assigned material even if we do not get around to a detailed discussion of it in class.

Assignments

Reading Journal: Two times 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 to the professor. You must turn in the first one no later than February 13, the second no later than March 29. The reaction may be purely intellectual (that argument was brilliant! it was illogical! It was morally bankrupt! etc.) or personal (that is very revealing! that is so true! that is such a distortion of my experience! that makes me feel horrible! that makes liberation seem possible! I want to change my life! etc.), but you will analyze your reaction at a theoretical level. What did you think before? How did this reading affect your previous ideas? What made the text so provocative for you?

This assignment will be graded based on the care you take in doing it. We will not consider whether you are "right" or "wrong." (30% of grade)

Reading journals must be handed in as hard-copies, and must be turned in on the reading for a given week. For example, if you wish to hand in a reading journal on February 6, you must have written on one of the papers from Piper, Gordon, Ahmed, or Harris.

Two short papers: There will be two brief papers (1000 words each) that will analyze a passage, concept, argument, question, or problem drawn from the readings. I will post further instructions closer to the due date. (30% each)

Peer review of rough drafts: You will be required to exchange rough drafts of the short papers *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. It will be graded. (5% each)

Late Assignment Policies

Late assignments will suffer a 1/3 grade deduction per day. Thus an evaluation of A- will become a B+, should it be one day late. There will be no exceptions without valid medical documentation that is promptly submitted to the teaching assistant.

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 reading 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.

McGill Policy Statements

Academic Integrity: 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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information). Note that the code stipulates that any assignment suspected of plagiarism should be submitted directly to the associate dean for review.

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. *Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).*

Notes: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.