

Critical Theories of Race
PHIL 608A/456D / AFST 480P / LACS 480X
Spring 2009

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Websites to browse:

Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy: <http://web.mac.com/shaslang/SGRP/Welcome.html>
Collegium of Black Women Philosophers: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cbwp/>
California Roundtable for Philosophy and Race: <http://www.caroundtable.org/>
Philosophy Born of Struggle: <http://pbos.com/>
Society for the Study of Africana Philosophy: <http://www.africanaphilosophy.net/>
The Future of Minority Studies Research Project: <http://www.fmsproject.cornell.edu/index.htm>

Texts:

Please support Binghamton's only locally owned, independent bookstore, RiverRead Books, by buying the texts there (5 Court Street, downtown Binghamton; 217-7292; riverreadbooks@stny.rr.com). The texts that are not available at RiverRead Books should be available at the campus bookstore. Texts that are marked with an asterisk below are books from which we will be reading at least 40 pages; I suggest that you buy them in order to avoid doing an enormous amount of copying. We will be reading shorter selections from the other texts, so decide for yourself whether to buy them or copy from them. All texts are on reserve. In some cases the whole book is on reserve, in other cases just the assigned chapter or article is available, on electronic reserves. You must always have a copy of the reading with you in class, so if you do not buy a book, please do photocopy from it rather than just read the reserve copy, or if you get a copy of it electronically, print it. Please do all of your copying/printing of reading material well before the week that the reading is due, so there will not be problems with the reserve copies being unavailable when they are needed.

- *Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Penguin Classics, 1982. ISBN#: 0-14-039012-X.
- *Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (unabridged). Dover Thrift Editions. 2001. ISBN#: 0-486-41931-2.
- *W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (unabridged). Dover Thrift Editions. 1994. ISBN#: 0486280411.
- "The Conservation of Races" in *The Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*, edited by Eric Sundquist (Oxford, 1996). ISBN#: 0-19-509178-7.
- *W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth" in *The Negro Problem: Centennial Edition*, Contributions by Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, et al. (Humanity Books, 2003). ISBN#: 1-59102-106-5.
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*. Edited by James Washington (HarperSanFrancisco). ISBN-13: 978-0062505521.
- *Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). ISBN#: 0679743138.

- “Plan de la Raza Unida” and “The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán”; in the Appendix to Armando Rendón, *Chicano Manifesto* (Berkeley, CA: Ollin & Assoc., 1971).
- John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New Press, Re-Issue edition, 1993). ISBN#: 1565840801.
- Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981).
- Lorraine Bethel, “What Chou Mean We, White Girl?” *Conditions: Five* (1979).
- *Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation In the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 1994). ISBN #: 0-415-90864-7.
- Ian F. Haney Lopez, Appendix A: “The Racial Prerequisite Cases” in *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 1996).
- Karen Brodtkin, “How Did Jews Become White Folks?” in *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
- Matthew Frye Jacobson, “Introduction: The Fabrication of Race,” in *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Frances Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female,” [1969] in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970).
- Elizabeth Spelman, “Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought,” in *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).
- María Lugones, “On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism,” in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991). Reprinted in: María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995).
- María Lugones. “Purity, Impurity and Separation” in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). ISBN#: 0-7425-1459-5
- *Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). ISBN#: 0-8014-3454-8.
- *Charles Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). ISBN#: 0-7425-1302-5.
- **Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, edited by Lewis Gordon (Routledge, 1997). ISBN#: 0-415-91451-5.

Cornel West, "Black Strivings in a Twilight Civilization" in *The Cornel West Reader* (Basic Civitas Books, 1999). ISBN#: 0-465-09110-5.

Derrick Bell, "Preface" to *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (Basic Books, reprint edition, 1993). ISBN#: 0465068146.

*Tommie Shelby. *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Harvard University Press, 2005). ISBN# 0-674-01936-9

*Linda Martin Alcoff. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self* (Oxford University Press, 2006). ISBN#: 0-19-513735-3

Course Description:

We will begin this course by reading slave narratives, to be followed by the work of turn-of-the-(20th) century theorist W.E.B DuBois, and then will jump ahead to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement, as well as other radical literature on racial politics from that time period. We will move from there to consider the social construction of race, with its relation to racism. Because in the first part of the course we will be reading quite a bit of material that is not itself written *as* philosophy (much of it is narrative, speeches, history or sociology), part of what we will be practicing is finding a philosophical angle from which to discuss the material. The latter part of the course will include a consideration of some of the widely different approaches taken by critical theorists of race, covering topics such as: the status of race as illusory, real, and/or constructed; theorizing multiple oppressions together; the politics of identity and the value or disvalue of racialized identities; existential understandings of race and racism; how to conceive of white supremacy; the role of solidarity; the strategies of resistance tied to different conceptions of race and racism.

Course Requirements and Grading for Undergraduates:

Class preparation and participation: You are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in ALL seminar meetings. Please avoid scheduling travel, medical appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. Two or more missed classes without documentation of a medical excuse or other emergency will result automatically in failure of the course. Repeated lateness or early leaving will add up to an absence. No laptops or other electronic distractions in class please.

Written assignments on discussion board: For the readings assigned for the eleven class meetings between February 4th and April 22nd (inclusive), please choose any ten out of these eleven for which you will prepare a 250-300 word piece of writing. This piece of writing should consist of one paragraph in which you demonstrate your understanding of the reading by concisely articulating its key points (without quoting any passages), and one paragraph in which you present an original response to the reading. If there are several different readings for that week, focus on the theme that connects them instead of writing separately about the key points in each article. Please post your written piece to the discussion board for the class (on Blackboard) by 5:00 PM ON THE MONDAY BEFORE THE CLASS MEETING FOR WHICH THE READING IS ASSIGNED. You are responsible (for the same ten out of the eleven weeks) for reading everyone else's posting, and must post a response (100-200 words) to at least one other person's writing by 11:00 PM on Tuesday evening. Please check the discussion board again after this time to read other students' responses (to your posting or to other postings). Your 250-300 word piece should be written as a formal paper (i.e. avoid the informality that is sometimes considered acceptable on email, etc; plan on drafting, editing, and revising just as you would for any paper that you turn in for a class); your response to

someone else's posting may have more of an informal tone and style, but please do use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Credit is given only if you post both your written assignment and your response to someone else's posting on time, and within the specified word limits (word limits are strict). Each week's written work (including both your 250-300 word piece of writing, and your response to another posting) will earn a $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{-}$. I read all postings and may incorporate them into class discussion, but I do not comment on them in writing. Students should each come to see me individually around midterm to discuss their written work and class participation.

Seminar paper: A 3,000 word (plus or minus 100 words) seminar paper is due on the last day of class. Please see me individually to discuss your ideas for a paper topic. The paper will be developed in stages, with a 1,000 word draft due on April 29th (to be worked with in a writing/revising workshop). A full letter grade will be deducted from the final paper grade for each day that either the first or final draft is late. If you wish to consult any sources outside of what has been assigned for this course, please speak with me about it before doing so. The 1,000 word draft should be submitted via the digital dropbox (before class time on April 29th), and the final version must be submitted via turnitin (before class time on May 6th). I will not make written comments on the 1,000 word draft but will be happy to discuss drafts with students who come to see me individually. On the last day of class, undergraduates will do short (about 10 minute) presentations based on their seminar papers.

Grading:

25% class participation.

25% written work on discussion board.

50% seminar paper.

Plagiarism: I follow the Philosophy Department policy on plagiarism (see separate sheet). Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code, available at: http://bulletin.binghamton.edu/program.asp?program_id=703#1

Course Requirements and Grading for Graduate Students:

Graduate student grades are based primarily on the seminar paper; however, unsatisfactory work on other aspects of the course can reduce the final grade.

Written assignments on discussion board: Graduate students will complete the same written work on the discussion board as undergraduates, with the following small difference: instead of choosing which of the eleven weeks to skip on the discussion board, please complete the discussion board written assignments on every week except for the week(s) in which you will be doing the class presentation. Graduate students will not receive weekly grades on their discussion board writing, but should feel free to come see me to discuss their writing.

Class presentation / discussion: Each graduate student will have at least one opportunity during the semester to present an original interpretation/further development/critique of the reading and to lead a class discussion. The presentation itself should be between 15-20 minutes (please practice and time the presentation so that you go neither under nor over this amount of time), and the rest of the hour taken up with discussion, facilitated by the presenter. If you are

unsure about being able to speak from notes for 15-20 minutes, I would suggest that you write a short (2500-3000 word) paper so that you can simply read the whole paper for your presentation. Do not spend any time summarizing the reading; rather, focus on your own original ideas about it. Keep in mind that your presentation must be accessible to undergraduates.

Seminar paper: Seminar papers of 5,000-6,000 words are due on Friday, May 8th via email. Please see me individually to discuss your ideas for a paper topic. The paper will be developed in stages, with a 1,000 word draft/outline due on April 29th (to be worked with in a writing/revising workshop). Seminar papers are expected to draw on material that has been assigned to the class, as well as additional research (where relevant).

NO INCOMPLETES WILL BE GIVEN UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

SCHEDULE:

Wed., Jan. 28

Introductions.

Class exercises for thinking about race and racism.

Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union": <http://www.barackobama.com/tv/>

Slave Narratives

Wed., Feb. 4

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

The Turn of the 20th Century

Wed., Feb. 11

W.E.B. DuBois:

"The Conservation of Races" (pgs 38-47) in *The Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*, edited by Eric Sundquist (written in 1897)

"The Talented Tenth" (pgs 31-75) in *The Negro Problem: Centennial Edition*, (written in 1903)

The Souls of Black Folk (1903): Ch. I, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"; Ch. II, "Of the Dawn of Freedom"; Ch. IX, "Of the Sons of Master and Men"; Ch. XI, "Of the Passing of the First Born".

Racial Politics in the United States, 1950s-70s

Wed., Feb. 18

Martin Luther King, Jr. *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*:

"The Power of Nonviolence" (1958)

"The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness" (1960)

"The Time for Freedom Has Come" (1961)

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)

"I Have a Dream" (1963)

"Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom" (1966)

"Where Do We Go from Here?" (1967)

"I See the Promised Land" (1968)

Wed., Feb. 25

Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power*, chapters I-II.

"Plan de la Raza Unida" and "The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán" (in the Appendix to Armando Rendón, *Chicano Manifesto* pgs. 301-302, & 306)

From John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso*, "The Mojo and the Sayso" (pgs. 93-117)

From Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back*:

Jo Carrillo, "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You"

Chrystos, "I Don't Understand Those Who Have Turned Away From Me"

Judit Moschkovich, "—But I Know You, American Woman"

doris davenport, "The Pathology of Racism"

Lorraine Bethel, "What Chou Mean We, White Girl?" *Conditions: Five* (1979): 86-92.

The Social and Legal Construction of Race

Wed., March 4

Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation In the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*:

Introduction to Part I, Chapters 1, 4, 5

Wed., March 11

Appendix A: “The Racial Prerequisite Cases” (pgs 203-209) in Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law*.
Karen Brodtkin, chapter 1, “How Did Jews Become White Folks?” (pgs. 25-52 & 190-192) in *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*.
Matthew Frye Jacobson, “Introduction: The Fabrication of Race” (pgs 1-12 & 283-285) in *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

Theorizing Multiple Oppressions

Wed., March 18

Frances Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female” (pgs 340-353) in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970).
Elizabeth Spelman, “Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought” (pgs 114-132 & 206-209) in *Inessential Woman*.
María Lugones, “On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism” (pgs 35-44) in *Feminist Ethics* (ed. Claudia Card) or reprinted in María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*.
Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (pgs. 357-384) in *Critical Race Theory*.
María Lugones, “Purity, Impurity and Separation” in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (pgs.121-148).

White Supremacy

Wed., March 25

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Introduction and Chapter 1.
Charles Mills, *From Class to Race*, Chapters 7 & 8.

Black Existential Philosophy

Wed., April 1

From *Existence in Black*, ed. Lewis Gordon:
Lewis Gordon, “Introduction” and “Existential Dynamics of Theorizing Black Invisibility.”
Naomi Zack, “Race, Life, Death, Identity, Tragedy and Good Faith.”
Bill Lawson, “On Disappointment in the Black Context”
Bernard Boxill, “The Fight with Covey”
Cornel West, “Black Strivings in a Twilight Civilization” (pgs 87-118 & 571-579) in *The Cornel West Reader*.
Derrick Bell, “Preface” (pgs ix-xii) to *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*.

Wed., April 8: no class (Spring Recess)

Contemporary Work: Solidarity and Identity

Wed., April 15

Tommie Shelby. *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*: Introduction, chapter 4, chapter 6, and Conclusion.

Wed., April 22

Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*:
Part One: Introduction, chapters 1 & 2 (pgs 5-46)
Part Four: chapters 10, 11 & 12, Conclusion (pgs. 227-290)

Wed., April 29

1,000 word draft due.
Revising workshop.

Wed., May 6

Undergraduate seminar papers due.
Undergraduate class presentations.

Graduate students: Seminar paper due via email on Friday May 8th.