

PHIL 380H / AFST 380S
African American Philosophy
Fall 2010

Prof. Lisa Tessman

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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://web.me.com/ktgphd/CBWP/Welcome.html>

California Roundtable for Philosophy and Race:

<http://www.californiaroundtablephilosophyrace.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: The required text as well as the books to choose from for the reading groups are available at the University Book Store and are on reserve at the library. Each student must have a copy of the day's reading—either the book itself or a photocopy—available to refer to in class.

Required text:

Tommy Lott, *African-American Philosophy: Selected Readings*. Prentice Hall, 2002.

Books to choose from for reading groups:

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Penguin Classics, 1982. ISBN#: 0-14-039012-X.

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (unabridged). Penguin Classics. ISBN#: 014018998X.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*. Crossing Press. 1984. ISBN#: 0895941414.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream: Writings & Speeches That Changed The World* (edited by James Washington). HarperCollins. ISBN#: 0-06-250552-1.

Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. Vintage Books. ISBN#: 0-679-74313-8.

Course Description:

This course surveys works in African American Philosophy. Themes include: slavery and freedom; Black nationalism; assimilation; racism, and social and political justice; gender and sexuality in relation to race. Twice during the semester, students will form reading groups to read

more work by an author whose work we will have read a bit of, and students will develop their paper topics based on what they have read and discussed in the reading groups.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize students with some of the major authors and issues in African American Philosophy.
- To have students develop their own critical thinking about the texts as well as about the issues discussed.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills, such as: understanding difficult texts; analyzing, constructing, and responding critically to arguments; engaging in conceptual thinking; developing, articulating, and defending their own positions both verbally and in writing; thinking in complex and original, but still disciplined, ways.

Course Requirements:

1) Attendance is required unless you are ill. Students are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in all class meetings. Please avoid scheduling travel, appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. However, **IF YOU ARE ILL PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS** (or to my office). Do email me before class time if you are ill and will be missing class; since you will still be completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day, please get in touch with another student to find out what you missed.

2) Preparation and participation (worth 25% of the final grade). Prepare for each class meeting by completing the assigned reading, taking careful notes, and jotting down any questions that you may have. Preparation for class should enable active participation in class. Especially if you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in classes, you might want to spend some time in advance jotting down what you would like to say in class. Since I do expect for every student to regularly contribute ideas to discussions, I also expect that everyone in the class will facilitate this for each other by making the classroom a place for disagreement, but not for disrespect. Excellent participation involves consistent, thoughtful contributions to discussions: expressing your understanding of the material, developing and thinking critically about your own positions, and listening carefully and respectfully to others. *No laptops or other electronic distractions in class, please.*

3) Two papers (each worth 25% of the final grade). Each student will write two papers, each 1,400-1,600 words in length (please include a word count at the top of the first page). Students will devise their own paper topics. The topic must engage with the book that the student's reading group has read, and must also make use of the work of at least one other author that has been assigned and that is relevant for the student's topic. The first paper will be developed in stages: when the first draft is due there will be a revising workshop in class, and when the second (final) draft is due, students will present their papers in class. The second paper will also be presented in class on the day that it is due. Each paper must be submitted via *turnitin.com before class time* on the day that the paper is due.

4) Final Exam (worth 25% of the final grade). The final exam consists of short (125-150 word) answers to questions about specific readings.

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.

Schedule:

ALL READINGS ARE IN *AFRICAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY: SELECTED READING* UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.

Wed., Sept. 1

Introductions

Wed., Sept. 15 Antebellum Critical Thought

David Walker, "Speech at the First General Colored Association."

Maria W. Stewart, "An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall."

Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America."

Wed., Sept. 22 Emigration and Diaspora Thought

Martin Delaney, "The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States."

Edward Blyden, "The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America," and "The African Problem and the Method of Its Solution."

Marcus Garvey, "Race Assimilation," "The True Solution to the Negro Problem," "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself," "The Negro's Place in World Reorganization," "Aims and Objects of Movement for Solution of Negro Problem," and "Racial Ideals."

Wed., Sept. 29 Assimilation and Social Uplift

Frederick Douglass, "An Address to the Colored People of the United States," "The Present and Future of the Colored Race in America," and "The Lessons of the Hour."

Anna Julia Cooper, "Has America a Race Problem? If So, How Can It Best Be Solved?"

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races" and "The Talented Tenth."

Wed., Oct. 6 Reading groups

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*

OR: W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, at least chapters I, II, IX, XI

Wed., Oct. 13 Contemporary Black Feminist Thought

Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought."

bell hooks, "Shaping Feminist Theory."

First draft of papers due; revising workshop.

Wed., Oct. 20

Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex..."

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," and "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference."

Papers due; presentations.

Wed., Oct. 27 Civil Rights and Civil Disobedience

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” and “A Time to Break Silence.”

Bayard Rustin, “Dr. King’s Painful Dilemma.”

Wed., Nov. 3 Marxism and Social Progress

Lucy E. Parsons, “Address to the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World.”

Ralph J. Bunche, “Marxism and the ‘Negro Question.’”

W.E.B. DuBois, “Socialism and the Negro Problem.”

W.E.B. DuBois, “Marxism and the Negro Problem.”

Wed., Nov. 10 Rebellion and Radical Thought

Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation.”

Huey Newton, “Functional Definition of Politics,” and “Prison, Where Is Thy Victory?”

Angela Davis, “Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation.”

Cornel West, “The Paradox of the African American Rebellion.”

Wed., Nov. 17 Black Women Writers on Rape

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Lynching, Our National Crime,” and “Illinois Lynchings.”

Alice Walker, “Advancing Luna—And Ida B. Wells.”

Valerie Smith, “Split Affinities: The Case of Interracial Rape.”

Joy James, “Sexual Politics: An Antilynching Crusader in Revisionist Feminism.”

Wed., Dec 1 Reading groups

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

OR: Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream: Writings & Speeches That Changed The World* (edited by James Washington)

OR: Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) & Charles Hamilton, *Black Power*.

Wed., Dec 8 “Philosophy and the African-American Experience”

Charles Mills, “Non-Cartesian *Sums*: Philosophy and the African-American Experience” in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. [on electronic reserves]

Papers due; presentations.

FINAL EXAM TO BE GIVEN DURING EXAM PERIOD: Dec. 13, 2:00-4:00, in FA 247.