

PHL 334: STUDIES IN ETHICS, RACE AND JUSTICE

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Description and Objectives

This will be a difficult course. In fourteen weeks, we will cover over a century's worth of work in ethics and considerations of race. We will necessarily leave out a number of important thinkers. It is not at all controversial anymore to say that we live in a multicultural society. Nevertheless, the question is the extent to which the concerns of members of various cultures should be recognized in relation to the dominant, majority culture of a given society. What recognition does each minority group deserve? Must one, for example, give up one's Arab identity in order to become American? What does it mean to have one's identity "recognized" by a particular government or society? Is diversity a good in itself? And how are we to think of these questions in relationship to the history of colonialism and racism that has infected the historical relationship between Europe and the United States and the so-called third world, between "whites" and "blacks"?

We will be addressing these questions while reading philosophers who comment about what politics should be about. We will begin with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's account of the social contract, being sure to go beyond the text to address the ways in which politics is discussed today in terms of individualism vs. communitarianism. We will then turn to Frantz Fanon's searing account of colonialism in *Black Skins / White Masks*. There, the young Fanon describes what will become the politics of recognition, described in our reading from Charles Taylor, while also denoting the dangerous "othering" that occurs in certain pernicious forms of communitarianism. Tommy Shelby's *We Who are Dark* is an excellent work on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. and the types of politics necessary to provide the recognition and equality Fanon describes.

But I think the point is not just to study how we shouldn't mistreat others because of their race, but rather to get out of our own Western traditions we often study and work in Africana philosophy itself. In the latter part of the course, we will do just that, reading two very recent works (both published this year) from Paul Gilroy and Dismas Masolo. The first is a description of different ethical demands placed upon our contemporary politics, while the latter describes African systems of thought and their own ethical systems of communitarianism.

Finally, the department of philosophy provides the following bare minimum learning outcomes for this course. These are not "assignments" for the course, but rather the bare minimum of what you should be able to do upon the completion of this course:

[put in learning outcomes from Dept.]

To this list, I would add that I expect you to read these works, provide clear summaries of the arguments involved, as well as an ability to compare the philosophical figures under study. From the beginning of the course, you should begin to think about topics you can explore through these different thinkers in order to prepare a 15-20 page final paper. You are expected at all times to keep up with the material and to avoid all sources that have not been checked by me: Wikipedia is a wonderful amateur resource, but should not stand in for your close readings of these texts.

Requirements

Reading: You **must** read the assigned texts prior to class and it is highly recommended that you read these texts at least twice. Given the breadth of this survey course, it will be important for you to keep up with the readings. This will be made even more difficult in this course due to the amount of materials we need to cover in such a short amount of time. **Use a dictionary to look up words that you don't understand**, and come to class with any questions you have. This is a work-intensive class, as you will see below. You should do your best to keep up with the readings and

homework assignments from the beginning, since it will be difficult, if not impossible, to catch up later on.

Quizzes and Essays (40%): Quizzes will be given as in-class tests or short essays. The quizzes will be short answer and will go over the previous material we have read. There will be no make-ups for the quizzes or short essays. If you keep up with the readings and homework and meet with me when needed, you should have no problems with the quizzes.

Class Participation and Handout (20%): You will be expected to attend each class having read the relevant materials, having completed the assigned homework, and being able to comment upon them to other members of the class. Your participation grade will be assessed with the following in mind: (1) attendance (no more than three absences during the course, no exceptions) and (2) level and quality of participation. If you are shy, you will need to get over this rather early in the class, given the importance of class participation in your overall grade. I cannot overstate the need for class participation. If you are not in class or not paying attention in class, you will get hopelessly lost. You will also find the class unbearable if the only thing you hear is the sound of my voice.

Part of your participation grade will be assessed on the handout that you will provide to the class on one (or perhaps more, depending on the size of the class) of the readings below. You will sign up for at least one of the readings below, then come to the class on the day the reading is due with a two-page handout on the reading (single-spaced). What you do with these two pages is up to you: you can do a summary of the reading; you can quote parts of the reading that you didn't understand and ask questions; you can provide a response to the whole or part of the reading; or you can do some combination of any of these. Do not be overwhelmed by this assignment: I recognize that you are coming to this reading for the first time. I'm just looking for you to be able to respond to it in one of the ways listed above.

If you suffer from any disabilities, such as a social phobia and/or a physical or mental condition, which you believe may impede your progress and participation in the course, either with regard to the class itself or quizzes and exams, please let me know as soon as possible. I have worked with students with special circumstances before and I will be glad to do so again in order to make this classroom as inclusive as possible.

Extra Credit: Each semester, I make extra credit available to students because I am aware that simply one bad class, missing notes or a bad cold during finals week can greatly affect one's grade. I will come up with extra credit assignments during the quarter, provided that you are keeping up with the homework assignments.

Final Paper (40%): The final paper will be based upon a topic chosen by you. Further specifics will be provided during the semester.

Cheating: I have failed students in the past for plagiarism, and I will not hesitate doing so again if necessary. There may be those of you who will be tempted to cheat for a host of reasons. I won't care, so don't. I've caught cheaters in the past, including the last time I offered this course, and have failed those students for doing so. **If you are caught cheating in this class, no matter the assignment, you will be failed for the course.** You are expected to read the student handbook on the proper use of sources as your first assignment; a lack of knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse that will be accepted for any infractions of university policies.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The books below should be available in the bookstore. I have provided the ISBN number for the books so that you can order them online, where you might find them for cheaper. Also, I will provide a number of texts on the course web site as downloadable pdf files. I have ordered

recommended texts that I think are clear and useful for several of the more difficult philosophers we are reading. You are far better off with these secondary resources than going online.

Assigned Texts:

Paul Gilroy, *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (ISBN: 9780674035706)

D. A. Masolo, *Self and Community in a Changing World* (ISBN: 0253222028)

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins/White Masks* (ISBN: 0802143008)

Tommy Shelby, *We Who are Dark* (0674025717)

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (ISBN: 0-87220-068-X)

Nancy, *Truth of Democracy* (ISBN: 082323245X)

ASSESSMENT:

You will be assessed a final grade in this class based upon a combination of your quiz, paper, and in-class discussion grades:

Class Participation	Quizzes and short papers	Final Paper:
20 points	50 points	30 points

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Note well: the dates for readings and quizzes might change as we move along. In addition, I may change certain readings as the semester progresses based upon student interest or other factors.

Date	Description	Assignments and Quizzes
Wed, 9/1	Introduction to the Course.	
Mon, 9/6	Labor Day	<i>No Class</i>
Wed, 9/8	The background to contemporary discussions of justice.	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book I.
Mon, 9/13	Individualism and Communalism.	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book II.
Wed, 9/15	Civic ties.	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , III-End.
Mon, 9/20	The explosion of communalism	Fanon, <i>Black Skin/White Masks</i> .
Wed, 9/22	Colonialism and its psychic effects.	Fanon, <i>Black Skin/White Masks</i> .
Mon, 9/27		Fanon, <i>Black Skin/White</i>

		<i>Masks.</i>
Wed, 9/29	Equality and recognition	Fanon, <i>Black Skin/White Masks.</i>
Mon, 10/4		Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." Essay 1: In this paper, you will describe a Fanonian "social contract." First, describe what Rousseau means by the social contract, then describe how this contract is or is not performed under the colonialism Fanon describes. Finally, are Rousseau and Fanon far apart when it comes to the notion of equality? Why or why not? 3 pages, single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman font (10 points)
Wed, 10/6	Dialogue and Prejudice	Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition"
Mon, 10/11		Selections from Sheth, <i>Toward a Political Philosophy of Race</i> , pp. 87-110.
Wed, 10/13	Immigration as an example of Othering.	Selections from Sheth, <i>Toward a Political Philosophy of Race</i> , pp. 129-146.
Mon, 10/18		Tommy Shelby, <i>We Who are Dark</i> Essay 2: Taylor describes a politics of recognition. What does he mean by this term. Show how Sheth describes how such a politics of recognition is not to be found in the types of othering she finds historically. 3 pages, single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman font (10 points)
Wed, 10/20		Tommy Shelby, <i>We Who are Dark</i>
Mon, 10/25		Tommy Shelby, <i>We Who are Dark</i>
Wed, 10/27		Paul Gilroy, <i>Darker than Blue</i> , pp. 1-54.
Mon, 11/1		Paul Gilroy, <i>Darker than Blue</i> , pp. 55-119.
Wed, 11/3		Paul Gilroy, <i>Darker than Blue</i> , pp. 120-178.

		<p>Essay 4: Choose one topic in common between Shelby and Gilroy's works and describe how Shelby and Gilroy agree or differ on this topic. Why is this topic important? Do not be vague and too general: pick a topic that is important to them but goes beyond banal "let's be nice to each other" types of truisms.</p> <p>3 pages, single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman font (10 points)</p>
Mon, 11/8		Paul Gilroy, <i>Darker than Blue</i> , cont'd.
Wed, 11/10	Doing philosophy differently.	Masolo, <i>Self and Community</i> , pp. 1-17, pp. 17-50
Mon, 11/15	Liberty and equality in African philosophy.	Masolo, <i>Self and Community</i> , pp. 102-134.
Wed, 11/17	African communitarianism.	Masolo, <i>Self and Community</i> , pp. 135-181.
Mon, 11/22	More on African communitarianism.	Masolo, <i>Self and Community</i> , pp. 182-222.
Wed, 11/24	Thanksgiving	
Mon, 11/29	Cont'd	<p>Masolo, <i>Self and Community</i>, pp. 222-end.</p> <p>Essay 4: Choose one topic in ethics and politics and show how Masalo differentiates the treatment of that topic in Western and African concepts. Who are the major thinkers of this topic in the West and in Africa? On what do they agree? On what do they differ?</p> <p>3 pages, single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman font (10 points)</p>
Wed, 12/1	Democratic values	Nancy, <i>Truth of Democracy</i>
Mon, 12/6		Nancy, <i>Truth of Democracy</i>
Wed, 12/8		
Mon, 12/13		
Mon, 12/20	FINAL PAPERS DUE	5 pm.