

PHI/AS 245: Philosophy of Race
Fall 2013
Updated 9/22/13

Instructor: Beth Hackett

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-5 & by appointment

Class Meetings: MW 2:00-3:15

Classroom: Buttrick 217

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Readings

White By Law, Ian F. Haney Lopez (NYU Press: 2006)

Available in campus bookstore

Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race & Inheritance, Barack Obama (3 Rivers Press, 2004)

Available soon in campus bookstore

Assigned Articles

Distributed in class or accessed via Moodle

Course Description: This course is an introduction to philosophy of race in the U.S today; no background in philosophy or race studies is assumed. We will begin by examining the widely held belief that race is a meaningful scientific concept. We will then investigate the claim that race, rather than being biologically given, is socially constructed. We'll try to determine what is meant by this claim, and then look in some detail at the role that law is said to have played in the construction of race in the U.S. With all this as background, we will turn to work that analyzes racial identity and racism. We'll then survey four approaches to the elimination of racist oppression.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

1. Identify and re-state succinctly the main arguments in philosophical articles.
2. Locate and interpret trustworthy sources of information on raced-based disparities in the U.S.
3. Use arguments and statistics introduced in class to construct critiques of some common confusions/misunderstandings about race in the U.S.
4. Compare and contrast the four definitions of "racist" discussed in the class.
5. Describe and state one strength and one weakness of each of the four anti-racist schools of thought introduced in class.

Course Requirements: Because this course involves much in-class discussion, consistent attendance is particularly important. Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings. All home-work & exams must be typed. Please keep a copy of all work you turn in. ***Late work will be accepted only under exceptional circumstances; whenever possible, extensions must be arranged in advance.*** Failure to perform in any of the grading areas listed below will result in failure of the class. ***This class operates under the principles of the honor code.***

Credit and workload: AS/PHI 245 is a 4-credit course. In addition to in-class time, you will be spending a minimum of 4 hours per week in preparation for our class sessions, including reading (and re-reading) assigned articles and books and completing weekly short written assignments. You should also plan to spend an additional 5-7 hours per week re-writing the short assignments, viewing films outside of class, working on the demographics presentation, and completing the

take-home midterm & final exams.

Course Evaluations: Students in this class are expected to complete an on-line course evaluation. Your evaluation of the course is extremely valuable to me, the Philosophy & Africana Studies Programs, and the administration; I take your feedback seriously and will use it to improve the course.

Disability Accommodations: I will make every effort to implement students' "Academic Advising/Disability Services Classroom Accommodation Checklists." If you are eligible to receive accommodations due to a disability, please meet with me as early in the semester as possible so that we can make whatever arrangements are called for.

Grading:

- 20% attendance and participation (including viewing films outside of class)
- 20% home work assignments (approx. weekly short written exercises)
- 5% race-based statistics presentation
- 25% take home midterm exam
- 30% take home final exam

Tentative Course Outline

INTRODUCTIONS

- Aug. 28 What is philosophy? What is race? Who's here & why?
Zack arguments distributed

- Sept. 2 *NO CLASS, Labor Day*

RACE AS A SCIENTIFIC/BIOLOGICAL CONCEPT

- Sept. 4 "Race: the Power of an Illusion," Part 1 (56 min.) – viewed in class

- Sept. 9 Zack, 31-40, 41-57, 59-62, 66-71 (notes 122-128)
Zack arguments due; "huge differences" assignment distributed

- Sept. 11 Jorde & Wooding, "Genetic Variation, Classification and 'race'"
Collins, "What we do and don't know about 'race'"

- Sept. 16 Zack, Jorde & Wooding, and Collins, cont.
"huge differences" assignment due

- Sept. 18 Zack, Jorde & Wooding, and Collins, cont.

RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

*Sunday, Sept. 22: "Race: the Power of an Illusion," Part 2 (56 min.)
8:00pm, Buttrick 217*

- Sept. 23 Wendell, "The Social Construction of Disability"

- Sept. 25 *Meet in McCain 211*
race-based statistics research session

**Sunday, Sept. 29: “Edward Said on Orientalism” (57 min)
8:00pm, Buttrick 217**

Sept. 30 “Race: the Power of an Illusion,” Part 3 (56 min.) – viewed in class

Oct. 2 **race-based statistics presentations**
social construction assignment distributed

Oct 7 Lopez, *White By Law*
1 paragraph abstract due

Oct 9 Lopez, cont.
MacIntosh, “White Privilege”
“Remarks by the President on Trayvon Martin (7/19/13)
(read & listen/watch line)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/19/remarks-president-trayvon-martin>
social construction assignment due

**Sunday, Oct. 13: “The Pathology of Privilege” (57 min.)
8:00pm, 217 Buttrick**

Oct 14 & 16 *Take-home midterm exam distributed*
Review sessions

RACE AS IDENTITY

Oct. 21 Espiritu, “Ethnicity and Panethnicity”
Alcoff, “Is Latina/o Identity a Racial Identity?”

Oct. 23 Espiritu & Alcoff, cont.
Obama writing assignment distributed

Friday, October 25 by 5:00pm: Take-home midterm exam due via Moodle

Oct. 28 “Black Is, Black Ain’t” (57 min.) – viewed in class

Oct. 30 Obama, *Dreams From My Father*
Obama writing assignment due

Nov. 4 Obama, cont.

DEFINING ‘RACIST’

Nov. 6 Wise, *Between Barack and a Hard Place*, pp. 83-88, 104-107
Lopez, pp. 147-62
Blum, “‘Racism’: Its Core Meaning”
Haslanger, “Oppressions: Racial and Other”

Nov. 11 Wise, Lopez, Blum & Haslanger, cont.
- *'racist' definition debate*

APPROACHES TO ELIMINATING RACISM

Nov. 13 **Sameness (Humanism)**
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Scalia, opinion in *Croson*
Obama, "The Race Speech" (3/18/2008) (read & listen/watch line)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-th_n_92077.html
(compare Lopez 123-126 & 156-162)

Nov. 18 **Postmodernism**
"Representation and the Media" (55 min.) – viewed in class

Nov. 20 Appiah, "Part 2. Synthesis: For Racial Identities"
(compare Lopez 123-126)

Nov. 25 **Difference (Ethnocentrism)**
Jackson, "I am - Somebody"
Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races"
Gooding-Williams, "Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy"
(compare Lopez 127-129)

Nov. 27 *NO CLASS, Thanksgiving*

Dec 2 **Dominance**
Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex"
Lopez (129-138) revisited

Dec. 4 debate 4 approaches
Take-home final exam distributed

Dec. 9 review

Final exam due Dec. 17 – via Moodle