Recent years have seen the growth of major new grassroots movements for racial justice. Examples include the Black Lives Matter movement, which developed in the wake of protests following the shooting of 17-year old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida (26 Feb, 2012); and the Baltimore Uprising, which took place in response to police brutality and the death of Freddy Gray (19 April, 2015). These protests against violence and police brutality have taken place against a backdrop of severe poverty and disadvantage in black communities. What is the historical background of these contemporary movements for racial justice? How did racial injustice develop in the past, and what are its ongoing legacies today?

In this unit, we explore the themes of ‘race and justice’ in both historical and contemporary perspectives. We examine legacies of racism and colonialism, and the impact of these legacies on the lives of people today. We will also explore philosophical questions such as why slavery is wrong; whether we should think of race as real or as socially constructed, or even whether we should do away with the concept altogether; what racism is, and what makes it morally objectionable; and what responsibilities we might have today as a result of historical legacies of racial injustice. Along the way we will discover how major black intellectuals, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin and Martin Luther King, Jr., have used a combination of public philosophy and the arts as vehicles for challenging racial injustice. Given current events unfolding in the US, we give some particular attention to understanding the African American context. The history of racial injustice in America is unique, but has many lessons of wider relevance that we will draw on in order to examine issues of race and justice in the UK and the global arena; including topics such as colonialism and its legacies, multiculturalism, and immigration.

In summary, this unit offers us a chance to explore some of the most profound and systematic forms of injustice and oppression that have affected our societies, and to learn how people have sought to overcome this injustice.

**Structure**

We will have one lecture per week, and one seminar per week. The course will be taught by
Dr Joanna Burch-Brown and Dr Megan Blomfield, both of whom are lecturers in the Philosophy Department at University of Bristol. In addition to lectures and seminars, there may be guest lectures and film showings.

Requirements and Assessment:

For this unit, you will be required to:

- Attend class, seminars, and any special events such as guest lectures and/or movie-showings.
- Complete the required readings and viewings each week. Please complete the readings prior to the lectures.
- Make a presentation on a case study pertinent to the ideas examined in the unit.
- Submit a 1,500-word formative essay, during Week 5, for feedback. We will aim to return these essays within three weeks.
- **Summative assessment of the unit (100%) will be in the form of a 2,000-word (1st years) or 3,000-word (2nd years) essay on a topic related to the module, due at the end of term (exact date TBA).** You will be given a list of suggested topics. However, if you have your own proposal for a topic, please check this topic with your instructors.

We encourage you to relate at least one of your pieces of either formative or summative assessment to live issues in contemporary society.

Tentative schedule

Please read required material during the week prior to the lectures – it is essential that you do the readings in advance, since we will be actively analyzing material together in lectures. In addition, attendance at lectures and seminars is required, so please let us know if you are going to miss a session.

Below is a tentative schedule for the unit. However, aspects of this plan may change during the term, depending on what happens as we go along.

In addition to the required and recommended readings listed below, you may find the following texts useful:


**Week 1: What is wrong with slavery? Part I**

Many contemporary problems of racial justice are rooted in legacies of slavery and colonialism. Our aim this week and next is to consider racialized slavery in both historical
and philosophical perspective. We begin in the lecture with a brief introduction to the history of the transatlantic slave trade and its far-reaching aftermath, including looking at the roles played by British merchants, and Bristol’s role in particular. In the seminars, we turn from history to philosophy, and consider the question ‘What is wrong with slavery?’ Today it seems clear to us that slavery is wrong, and that the transatlantic slave trade and its aftermath are amongst the world’s great cultural disasters. However, for hundreds of years slavery was legally allowed to continue. What arguments were given in favour of slavery? What kinds of grounds were used to justify the continuation of this practice?

Using arguments for slavery as our focus allows us to introduce some key skills of philosophical analysis, learning some basics about how to formulate arguments using premises and conclusions. We will also learn a few ways to challenge arguments, such as challenging one of the premises, identifying suppressed premises, or arguing that the conclusion does not follow from the premises.

**Required:**

**Supplementary:**

**Week 2: What’s wrong with slavery? Part II**

This week we turn to arguments against slavery. Which ethical theories provide the best explanation of the wrongness of slavery? In the lecture we introduce three candidates: 1) Utilitarianism, 2) Kantian ethics, and 3) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s account of justice and the beloved community, grounded in an ethics of love. In seminars, we complement these philosophical theories with arguments from historically important abolitionists. Each student will research a piece of abolitionist writing, and report back to the larger group. Who was your abolitionist? What is the heart of this person’s argument against slavery? How does this argument compare with the argument given in the set text (R.M. Hare)?

**Required:**
- R.M. Hare, ‘What is wrong with slavery?’ - This is a famous paper, but many have found it problematic. We’d like for you to read this carefully, but not uncritically. Does Hare succeed in offering the best arguments against slavery? Does his account provide an adequate explanation of the wrongness of slavery? What can you identify as strengths and weaknesses of his approach?
- [http://antislavery.eserver.org/tracts](http://antislavery.eserver.org/tracts) - Identify one piece of abolitionist writing. You'll report back on these in small groups to fellow students in seminars. Who was your abolitionist? What is the heart of this person's argument against slavery? What are a few of the key details of their argument?

**Supplementary:**
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written by Himself*. 
Week 3: Is race real?

The concept of race has not always existed. Instead, it developed over time, and in a particular historical and cultural context. In this week, we will read some of the writings from historical philosophers and social thinkers, concerning the concept of race and the differences between racial groups. In particular, we will introduce what Paul Taylor identifies as the ‘classical racism’ and early scientific racism of figures like Kant and Hume. We will then turn to a philosophical question. Does race really exist?

Required:


Recommended:

- Hume, footnote on race (find in lecture powerpoints).
- Tommie Shelby, 2005, We Who Are Dark, Harvard University Press.
- Ryan Very, ‘Kant’s Racism’ (unpublished manuscript).

Supplementary:

Week 4: Racial Discrimination

In this week’s class we will discuss various questions relating to racism and racial discrimination. We start by asking: when is racial discrimination racist? In attempting to answer this question, we will look at a number of rival accounts that purport to tell us what racism is, and why it is morally objectionable. We will finish by considering what should be done about racism.

Required:


Recommended:


Further:

- Frantz Fanon. 1952. ‘The Lived Experience of the Black Man’ (also translated as ‘The Fact of Blackness’), Chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks*.
**Week 5: Some Challenges from Anti-Racist Thinking**

In this class we will explore two concepts developed by theorists and activists working to understand, expose and fight against unjust discrimination: *white privilege* and *white ignorance*.

**Required:**
- Peggy McIntosh. ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack’. Available at: [nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack](http://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack) (the article appears below the ‘Notes for Facilitators’ section).

**Recommended:**

**Further:**
- W E B DuBois. 1896. ‘The Souls of White Folk’: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter_II](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter_II)
**Week 6: Reading and Skills Week**

**Required movie:**
- Black Power Mix Tapes 1967-1975
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_QUvuPw7eQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_QUvuPw7eQ)
  Also available in the library.

**Recommended movie:**
- Marley, directed by Kevin MacDonald, 2012.

**Week 7: Black Feminist Thought**

In this class we turn to Black Feminist Thought. We begin by introducing Professor Patricia Hill Collins and her work, focusing in particular on her discussions of black feminist methodology. We then examine the concept of intersectionality (associated with Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw). We will look at how the idea of intersectionality has been used to criticise mainstream and academic feminism as being problematically fixated on the emancipation of white middle- and upper-class women; and for failing to attend to the particular challenges and oppressions faced by women of colour.

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
- Audre Lorde. 1983. ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’. Available at: [http://bixby.ucla.edu/journal_club/Lorde_s2.pdf](http://bixby.ucla.edu/journal_club/Lorde_s2.pdf)
Week 8: Emancipation and beyond

In the aftermath of slavery and Jim Crow, African American writers produced an extraordinary body of philosophical and literary work exploring black experience and challenging racial injustice. Key figures in this tradition from past and present include writers like Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Alain LeRoy Locke, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, and many more.

We will start this week by introducing you to some of these key intellectuals and the major cultural movements they participated in, including the Harlem Renaissance, the ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement, and Black Existentialism. Our aim will be to learn from the ways in which these writers used diverse artistic forms to communicate about experiences of injustice, shape ideals of justice and equality, and build movements for social change.

In the seminars we’ll focus in on Black Existentialist thinkers in particular, exploring key philosophical ideas and themes from the work of W.E.B Du Bois and James Baldwin.

Required
- W.E.B. Du Bois. 1903. ‘Chapter 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings’, from *The Souls of Black Folk*. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=XSFSoCxSff8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=souls+of+black+folk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAGoVChMI8d-7jffGxwIVQmvbCh0f0wF#v=onepage&q=souls%20of%20black%20folk&f=false

Recommended:
- W.E.B. Du Bois – *The Souls of Black Folk*. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=XSFSoCxSff8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=souls+of+black+folk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAGoVChMI8d-7jffGxwIVQmvbCh0f0wF#v=onepage&q=souls%20of%20black%20folk&f=false

Supplementary:
- James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*
- James Baldwin, *Another Country*
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
- Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
- James Baldwin debates William F Buckley (1965) video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFeoS41xe7w
- Barack Obama, Eulogy at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (38 minutes). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9IGyidtFI
- Jordan Flaherty, *Baltimore: A Moment to a Movement* (20 minutes). In this 20-
minute documentary, award-winning journalist and filmmaker Jordan Flaherty looks beyond police brutality to unearth conditions of poverty and disadvantage that fueled recent mass protests in Baltimore.


Week 9: Nonviolence, Black Power, and black solidarity

This week will introduce two twentieth-century social and political philosophies of great importance, both oriented towards fostering black solidarity and overcoming racial injustice. The first of these is the philosophy of non-violent resistance developed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King and his collaborators such as Rosa Parks, developed a philosophy of political resistance based on Gandhian methods and an ideal of unconditional Christian love. They sought to use non-violent methods of civil disobedience to force an overturning of the Jim Crow laws, a system of legally enforced racial segregation and exclusion which had developed in the US, in the decades following the Civil War. In the first part of this week, we will introduce the key elements of Dr. King’s practical philosophy.

A second social movement of great importance in this period was the Black Power movement. Critics of King’s philosophy argued that it was too passive in the face of the violent repression and extreme hardship and deprivation faced by black communities. Advocates of Black Power defended the right of black communities to take control of organising their own political communities, and to use violence in self-defence. Many argued that whites would never relinquish their power and social advantages, and advocated the development of separate black communities. In the second half of this week we will introduce the influential and controversial early black nationalist and pan-Africanist movements, considering important strengths and weaknesses of these political philosophies.

In the seminars we will turn to Tommie Shelby’s contemporary articulation of black solidarity as a valuable ideal for emancipation. Movements for black solidarity seek to accomplish a number of aims, including establishing a positive, shared identity, and supporting collective action against racial injustice. In Shelby’s articulation, this solidarity is grounded not on essentialist claims about race, but on shared experience of racial oppression and commitment to resisting this oppression (Shelby p. 11-12).

Required:
- Martin Luther King, ‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail’ (Please listen to full audio recording. 55 minutes)
- Black Power Mix Tapes 1967-1975
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_QUvuPw7cQ
  Also available in the library.

Recommended:
- Original footage from Civil Rights sit-in movement (13 minutes)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT9gLdTaWo
- Peter Seeger, ‘We Shall Overcome’
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJukOLGLgw
The Black Panther Party 10-Point Program:

Supplementary:

**Week 10: Rectifying Racial Injustice**

Though it is clear that world history has been characterised to a significant extent by egregious racial injustice; it is much harder to see what could possibly rectify such wrongs. This question is further complicated by the fact that the primary victims (and perpetrators) of some of the most grievous examples of racial injustice - slavery and many of the wrongs associated with colonialism, for example - are no longer alive. In this class we will consider what, if anything, should be done to rectify the racial injustices of the past, focusing in particular on the British context.

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
- Frantz Fanon. ‘Violence in the International Context’, from *The Wretched of the Earth*. Available on Blackboard.
- Iris Marion Young. ‘Responsibility and Historic Injustice’, Ch. 7 of *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford University Press 2011. Available online through the library.

**Further:**
Oxford University Press.

- David Olusoga. ‘The history of British slave ownership has been buried: now its scale can be revealed’, The Observer, 12 July 2015: theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/12/british-history-slavery-buried-scale-revealed
- James Nickel. 1974. ‘Should reparations be to individuals or to groups?’ Analysis 34(5): 154–60.

Other resources:

- Explore the online resources of the UCL Legacies of British Slave-ownership project: ucl.ac.uk/lbs/
- Learn about Bristol’s role in the transatlantic slave trade: discoveringbristol.org.uk/slavery/
- Watch the Oxford Union debate, ‘Does Britain Owe Reparations?’: youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxrLJv8HNlKF0J8zh7EjCg4iuiEWF7Tx0

Week 11: Race and Nation

In this week’s lecture we will use what we have learnt about race and racism so far in order to think about how racial justice can be achieved in the modern, multicultural state. We will start by looking outwards, considering the role of racial discrimination in immigration policy. Then we will turn our attention inwards, asking how to promote social justice in group-differentiated, multi-racial societies.

Required:

- Paul C Taylor. 2013. Race: A Philosophical Introduction, §1.4 (on racial projects) and Ch. 6 (‘From Anchor Babies to Obama: Are We Post-Racial Yet?’). Polity Press. Available on Blackboard.

Recommended:

- Sara Amighetti & Alasia Nuti. ‘A Nation’s Right to Exclude and the Colonies’, forthcoming in Political Theory. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12263779/A_Nations_Right_to_Exclude_and_the_Colonies_forthcoming_in_Political_Theory

Further:

- Paul Gilroy. ‘There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack’: The Cultural Politics of Race


Week 12: Revision week

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