

**Topics in Social Theory and Practice**  
24.236/24.636

**Instructor:**

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**Description**

An in-depth consideration of a topic in social theory with reflection on its implications for social change. Such topics might include (differing by term): race and racism; punishment and prison reform; global justice and human rights; gender and global care chains; environmentalism and industrial agriculture; bioethics, disability and human enhancement; capitalism and commodification; sexuality and the family. Readings will be drawn from both social science and philosophy with special attention to the normative literature relevant to the issue.

*Topic Fall 2014: Race and Racism*

Controversies about race and racism continue to play an important role in the public domain. This term we will consider the following questions: What is race? Do races exist? If so, in what sense? What is the relationship between race and ethnicity, race and class, race and gender, race and citizenship? How should we understand racial injustice? Does racial injustice continue to exist? If so, what steps might legitimately be taken to end it?

**Course URL:** <https://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/24/fa14/24.236>

All course materials open to the public here:

<http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/linguistics-and-philosophy/24-236-topics-in-social-theory-and-practice-race-and-racism-fall-2014/index.htm>

**Prerequisites:** one philosophy subject or permission of the instructor

**Time and Place:** MW 9:30-11, 56-154

**Texts:**

Most readings for the course will be articles that will be available on the course's Stellar site. The following texts are also useful:

- Lawrence Blum. 2002. *I'm Not a Racist, But....* Cornell University Press.
- Bernard Boxill. 2001. *Race and Racism*. Oxford University Press.
- Charles Mills. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Cornell University Press.
- Tommie Shelby. 2005. *We Who Are Dark*. Harvard University Press.
- Naomi Zack. 2002. *Philosophy of Science and Race*. Routledge.

**Other Resources:** TBD

**Undergraduate Requirements:**

All students will be responsible for each week's reading and will write 10 weekly response papers of approximately 400-600 words. Response papers may focus on study questions provided in the text, on questions raised in class, in the media, or in personal reflection on the assigned reading. Further guidance will be provided in class. We will also experiment with the forms in which we write. Students may write their response papers on the class blog, in the form of letters to the editor, and/or op-ed pieces.

Students will each co-lead one class, providing questions for discussion on that day.

A longer research paper (min. 2500 words) will be due **December 10, in class**. A 300 word project proposal must be submitted by 10/22 and draft must be submitted by 11/24.

An important theme of the course will be that there are different perspectives from which one can view a single phenomenon. Because of this, class *attendance* and *class participation* are especially important components of the course. Students are expected to attend all or nearly all classes, and to come to class *having completed the assigned readings indicated for that day*.

Please keep a copy of all work you turn in. Late work will be accepted only under exceptional circumstances, and will be penalized unless an extension is granted in advance. Failure to perform in any of the grading areas listed below will result in a failure of the course.

Graduate requirements:

Graduate students enrolled in the course will be expected to read both the required readings listed and also additional recommended readings. Additional recommended readings will be suggested throughout the course. Depending on the number of graduate students in the class, a separate discussion session may be required in lieu of response papers. A single 20-25 page research paper is due at the end of the term. A paper proposal should be submitted 10/22.

NOTE: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. It is also illegal. Plagiarism occurs when you take someone else's words and present them as your own; but even borrowing someone else's ideas can count as plagiarism if you don't cite the source. If in doubt, provide a citation. If you have questions, speak to your instructor. Penalties for proven plagiarism can range from failing the course to expulsion. .

EVALUATION:

Grading for undergraduates will be as follows:

Class participation and leading discussion - 20%

Ten response papers - 40%

Research paper and presentation - 40%.

Graduates: 80% final paper, 20% attendance, participation, etc.

The class does not have a final examination. *Please be aware that **plagiarism of any kind will be severely punished***, up to and including not only flunking the paper, but also having a letter placed in your file at the Institute. Plagiarism includes using another's arguments without acknowledging them, borrowing text wholesale, paraphrasing text in excessive quantity without attribution, borrowing someone else's arguments and merely rearranging them.

## SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Wednesday, 9/3: Introduction

### I. What, if anything, is race?

Monday 9/8: Racialism and Race Naturalism

Blumenbach, F. Joahann, "On The Natural Variety of Mankind," in R. Bernasconi and T. L. Lott, *The Idea of Race*. (Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), pp.27-37.

Stocking, George W., Jr. 1994. The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race. *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (1):4-16.

Wednesday 9/10: History of Race

Lawrence Blum, "Race: A Brief History with Moral Implications." In his *I'm Not a Racist...But*.

Monday 9/15: Race Eliminativism 1

Screening: *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, episode 1 "The Difference Between Us."  
[http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

Reading:

Michael Bamshad and Steve Olsen, "Does Race Exist?" *Scientific American* December 2003.  
[http://www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence\\_blum/courses/318\\_11/readings/bamshad\\_does\\_race\\_exist.pdf](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence_blum/courses/318_11/readings/bamshad_does_race_exist.pdf)

Wednesday 9/17: Race Eliminativism 2

Anthony Appiah, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections, Part I" in K. A. Appiah and A. Gutmann, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 30-74.

Monday 9/22: Race and Health Care

Risch et al. 2002. "Categorization of Humans in Biomedical Research: Genes, Race and Disease," *Genome Biology* 3(7).

Michael Root, "The Use of Race in Medicine as a Proxy for Genetic Differences"

Also recommended:

Root, Michael. 2000. "How We Divide The World." *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 67, Supplement. Proceedings of the 1998 Biennial Meetings of the Philosophy of Science Association. Part II: Symposia Papers. (Sep., 2000), pp. S628-S639

Wednesday 9/24: Racial Neo-Naturalism

Philip Kitcher, "Race, Ethnicity, Biology, Culture," in *Racism*, L. Harris (ed.), New York: Humanity Books.

Michael Hardimon, "The Idea of a Scientific Concept of Race"

Also recommended:

Robin Andreasen, "A New Perspective on the Race Debate"

Joshua Glasgow, "The New Biology of Race"

*Monday, 9/29: No class*

*Wednesday, 10/1: Social Construction*

Ron Mallon. "A Field Guide to Social Construction." *Philosophy Compass* 2 (1): 93–108.  
Sally Haslanger, "Gender & Social Construction: Who? What? When? Where? How?"

*Monday 10/6: Intesectionality*

Kimberlé Crenshaw. 1993. "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew." In *Words that Wound*.

Also recommended:

Kimberle Crenshaw: "Mapping the Margins."

<http://multipleidentitieslgbtq.wiki.westga.edu/file/view/Crenshaw1991.pdf>

*Wednesday 10/8: Race Constructionism I*

Robert Gooding-Williams, "'Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy'" *Constellations*, Spring 1998.

*Monday 10/13: Columbus Day – no class*

*Wednesday, 10/15: Race Constructionism II*

Ron Mallon. 2006, "Race: Normative, Not Metaphysical or Semantic," *Ethics* 116 (3): 525–551.

Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 2000.

*Also recommended:*

Osagie K. Obasogie, "For We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight," in *Blinded by Sight*.

*Monday, 10/20: Racial Identity*

Ian Hacking. 1986. "Making Up People." In *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, edited by T. C. Heller, M. Sosna and D. E. Wellbery. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Sally Haslanger, 2012. "You Mixed?" In *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. Oxford University Press.

*Monday 10/22: Midterm reflection. No new reading. Project proposals due in class.*

*Wednesday, 10/24: Latino/a Identity*

Linda Alcoff, "Is Latino/a Identity a Racial Identity?" In *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States*.

*Monday 10/27: Panethnicity*

Yen LeEspiritu, *Asian-American Panethnicity*, Ch 1. Temple University Press, 1994.

*Wednesday, 10/29: Racialization of Arab-Americans*

Amaney A. Jamal, Nadine Christine Naber. 2008. *Race and Arab-Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*. Syracuse University Press. Introduction and Ch. 9.

Also: <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/ac210web3/home>

### III. Racism

Monday, 11/3: Racism

Lawrence Blum, "Racism: Its Core Meaning." in his *I'm Not a Racist..But.*  
Anthony Appiah, "Racisms." In *In My Father's House*.

Wednesday, 11/5: Racial Prejudice

Jorge Garcia, "[The Heart of Racism](#)"  
Tommie Shelby, "[Is Racism in the Heart?](#)"

*Also Recommended:*

Charles Mills, "Heart Attack"  
Selection from *Applying Ethics*, ed. Jeffrey Olen, Vincent Barry, Julie van Camp, pp. 7-23.

Monday 11/10: Veterans' Day – no class

Wednesday, 11/12: Racial Discrimination and Disparate Impact

Gertrude Ezorsky, 1991. "Overt and Institutional Racism." In *Racism and Justice: The Case for Affirmative Action*.

Monday 11/17: Social Justice

Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (January 1999), pp. 287-337  
Iris Young, "Five Faces of Oppression." In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

*Also recommended:*

Sally Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other"

Wednesday, 11/19: Race and Social Value

Christopher LeBron, *The Color of our Shame* (selections).

Next 4 classes devoted to topic modules selected by class. Details available on

[OCW: http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/linguistics-and-philosophy/24-236-topics-in-social-theory-and-practice-race-and-racism-fall-2014/readings/](http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/linguistics-and-philosophy/24-236-topics-in-social-theory-and-practice-race-and-racism-fall-2014/readings/)

Monday, 11/24 – Inter-culturation, Cultural Appropriation, and Commodity Fetishism

*Draft of final paper due*

Wednesday, 11/26 – (optional class)

Screening of [Free Angela and All Political Prisoners](#)

Thanksgiving Break – no reflection paper this week

Monday, 12/1: Racial Profiling

Lever, Annabelle. "[Why Racial Profiling is Hard to Justify. A Response to Risse and Zeckhauser.](#)" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33, no. 1 (2005): 94–110.

Wednesday, 12/3: Prisons (Guest lecturer: Jerome Hodges)

Alexander, Michelle. "Introduction." In *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2012. ISBN: 9781595586438.

[The Abolitionist Toolkit, Part 2: Information Sheets \(PDF\)](#). Critical Resistance.

*Also Recommended:*

Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press, 2003. ISBN: 9781583225813.

*Monday, 12/8: The Case for Reparations*

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "[The Case for Reparations](#)." *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

Rosen, Rebecca J. "[Ta-Nehisi Coates on Not Knowing How Much You Don't Know](#)." *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2014.

*Note: The Rosen reading also contained a video of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Jeffrey Goldberg discussing Coates' article "The Case for Reparations." The class watched a clip from the video and then had an open discussion based on questions provided in this session's lecture notes.*

*Wednesday, 12/10: Last class. Final paper due, short student presentations.*

*Also Recommended:*

hooks, bell. "gangsta culture: a piece of the action." Chapter 2 in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. Routledge, 2003. ISBN: 9780415969277.