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:

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 avialable on the course’s Stellar site. The following texts are also useful:

Lawrence Blum. 2002. I’m Not a Racist, But.... Cornell University Press.

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

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
Reading:

Wednesday 9/17: Race Eliminativism 2

Monday 9/22: Race and Health Care
Michael Root, “The Use of Race in Medicine as a Proxy for Genetic Differences”
Also recommended:

Wednesday 9/24: Racial Neo-Naturalism
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

Monday 10/6: Intersectionality

Also recommended:
Kimberle Crenshaw: “Mapping the Margins.”

Wednesday 10/8: Race Constructionism I

Monday 10/13: Columbus Day – no class

Wednesday, 10/15: Race Constructionism II

Also recommended:
Osagie K. Obasogie, “For We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight,” in Blinded by Sight.

Monday, 10/20: Racial Identity


Wednesday, 10/24: Latino/a Identity

Monday 10/27: Panethnicity

Wednesday, 10/29: Racialization of Arab-Americans
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

Monday 11/17: Social Justice
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).


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

Wednesday, 12/3: Prisons (Guest lecturer: Jerome Hodges)
Also Recommended:
Monday, 12/8: The Case for Reparations
   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: