

PHI 394: Philosophy of Race
Arizona State University, Spring 2025

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:45pm
 Tempe COORL1-18

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Office hours: TBD

Course Description:

What is race? What is the function of race in society? What is racism? Should we use race-talk? What is the role of racial identities? What is racial justice and what distinguishes racial justice from other forms of social justice? These are some of the questions students will explore, as we survey the analytic philosophical literature regarding the metaphysics, semantics, and ethics of race and race theory. This course will provide a brief survey of some of the most influential race theories in Western culture from the 17th century onward, as well as the ethical and social implications of these race theories. In the process, students will learn how to use the tools of analytic philosophy to critically read, write, and engage in contemporary debates in the philosophy of race.

Course Objectives:

This course fulfills the ASU **Humanities, Arts and Design** General Studies requirement. Students completing a Humanities, Arts and Design course will be able to:

1. Analyze cultural, political, or social practices, texts, or discourses in historical or contemporary context.
2. Communicate coherent arguments or narratives using evidence drawn from qualitative or quantitative sources.
3. Identify perspectives or values as manifested in a given philosophical or religious framework or a given historical or cultural context.

Additionally, this course will aid students in the following:

4. To familiarize students with the tools of analytic philosophy through the practice of argument (re)construction and the evaluation of philosophical arguments [HUAD LO2].
5. To introduce students to contemporary metaphysical, ethical, social, political, and legal debates in the philosophy of race [HUAD LO1; HUAD LO3].
6. To demonstrate philosophy's practical import in antiracist education and reform [HUAD LO3].

7. To develop the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks necessary for confident and charitable communication on the topics of the topics of race, racism, and racial (in)justice [HUAD LO2].

Expectations:

Charity – I expect you to be a charitable interpreter of your interlocutors, be they your peers, myself, or the authors we read throughout the semester. Always assume that your interlocutors are after the truth, just as you are, and that their efforts to get at it are in good faith. If some statement you read or hear seems obviously false, attempt to find some interpretation of it which seems at least plausible, even if you do not ultimately accept it. Practically, what this means is to:

- Seek clarity before giving criticism,
- ask questions and give comments with the goal of helping develop your interlocutor's insights,
- give criticism in the context of strengths,
- receive feedback with generosity and curiosity (i.e., don't handwave an objection or take an objection personal).¹

Take care of one another.

Your health and wellness are more important than this class. If, at any point, you believe your health may be in jeopardy, please contact me to let me know, so that we can plan accordingly. And, please use the available resources on campus, found [here](#) and [here](#).

For information on ASU's policies regarding threatening behavior, see the *Student Services Manual*, [SSM 104-02](#).

For information on ASU's policies regarding discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, see [ACD 401](#).

To request accommodation for a disability, please register with the [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#) and submit the appropriate documentation from the DRC. For more information, see [SSM 701-03](#).

Course Structure: The standard format for in-person sessions consists of a brief lecture, followed by discussion or an in-class activity. Students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to the corresponding class meeting, and participate actively in discussions.

¹ Inspired by Miracchi, L. (Fall 2018). "MIRA Group Agreement and Reflection Practices" (Penn).

Assignments & Assessment:

1. Attendance & Participation [5%]
2. Discussion Questions [5%]
3. Homework Assignments (3) [15%]
4. Mid-term Paper (~1,500 words) [30%]
 - Outline [10%]
 - Final Draft [20%]
5. Final Group Presentation (20 minutes/group) [40%]
6. Reflection Paper (open page limit) [5%]

Attendance and Participation: For credit, students are expected to attend and participate in all scheduled course meetings and exercises, and to be present promptly at the start of instruction, unless prevented from doing so by illness or another compelling cause (e.g., religious observance/practices, university-sanctioned events/activities, or death of a loved one). Absences require advance notice or documentation of an illness or extenuating circumstance. Students are not allowed to miss days when peer-reviews or presentations are scheduled.

Discussion Questions (weekly assignment): Prior to each class meeting, students are expected to submit 2-3 questions related to the mandatory readings via the course's Canvas discussion board page. These will be graded as in/complete and will be used for class discussion. Students are allowed to forego posting questions on Canvas once in the semester. Anyone who foregoes posting more than once will lose points.

Homework Assignments: At the instructor's discretion, students will be given three homework assignments throughout their time in the course. All three assignments will focus on strengthening the students' abilities to reconstruction arguments using the tools of first order logic.

Mid-term Paper: Students will write a paper of ~1,500 words, critically evaluating an article covered in the first half of the course. The writing process will be broken into three steps. First, each student will submit a paper outline via Canvas. Next, students will exchange their outlines for in-class peer review. Finally, students will submit final drafts that take into consideration the feedback received from peers and the instructor.

Final Group Presentation: In groups, students will present and defend an argument responding to a question of interest related to the course. This will include defining key terms, highlighting key distinctions, rationale for each premise, and responses to potential objections. Each group will have 15 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A with peers and the instructor. Please note, while there may be class time for groups to meet, students should expect to meet outside of class to prepare their presentations.

Reflection Paper: Students will write a reflection paper (open page limit) answering the question, “What will you do with the information you’ve acquired in this course?”

Course Policies:

Attendance: *See above, under “Attendance and Participation.”*

Readings:

Textbooks

- Glasgow, J., Haslanger, S., Jeffers, C., and Spencer, Q. (2019). *What is race? Four philosophical views*. Oxford University Press.
- McGary, H. (2012). *The Post-Racial Ideal*. Marquette University Press.

(If you have trouble purchasing the textbooks listed above, please email me immediately, and I will get you access via our university library.)

All other course readings will be posted on Canvas.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of *3% per day late*, unless (i) student has a documented illness or other extenuating circumstance (e.g., death of a loved one), or (ii) student has an anticipated conflict (e.g., athletic competition or religious observance), in which case, the student should contact the instructor *in advance and in writing* (e.g., an email message) for an extension. *Please note, corrupted files will count as a non-submission.*

Academic Integrity: Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with ASU’s [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Engaging in academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, engaging in unauthorized collaboration with or making use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software, etc.) on any assignment will result in a severe grade penalty for that assignment and may be reported to the Academic Integrity Officer for SHPRS. For more on academic integrity, please visit [Academic Integrity](#) on the Office of the University Provost webpage.

Emails and Meetings: Here’s an article on [email etiquette](#). Expect <48-hour turn around. If addressing your email is better suited for office hours, then I will respond by telling you to schedule a time to meet for office hours. Additionally, I will have regularly scheduled office hours (see above) throughout the semester.

Additional Resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<https://plato.stanford.edu/>)

Pryor, J. (2012). "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>).

Purugganan, M. and J. Hewitt (2004). "How to Read a Scientific Article" (<https://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~cainproj/courses/HowToReadSciArticle.pdf>).

****Students cannot record video or audio from lectures without written permission from the instructor.****

Class Schedule²

Week 1 – What is the philosophy of race? Why does it matter?

No readings.

Week 2 – Race Theory: Its Beginnings

- Bernier, "A New Division of the Earth" (1684)
- Blumenbach, *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa 3rd Edition* (1795), pp. 264-76

Week 3 – Biological Racial Realism versus Racial Antirealism

- Spencer, "How to be a biological racial realist" in *What is Race?* (2019)
- Hochman, "Replacing race" (2017)

[Optional]

- Haslanger's, Jeffers's, and Glasgow's responses to Spencer in *What is Race?* (2019)

Week 4 – Race as sociopolitical versus sociocultural

- Haslanger, "Tracing the sociopolitical reality of race" in *What is Race?* (2019)
- Jeffers, "Cultural constructionism" in *What is Race?* (2019)

[Optional]

- Jeffers's, Glasgow's, and Spencer's responses to Haslanger in *What is Race?* (2019)

² This schedule is tentative and may be revised during the semester.

- Haslanger's, Glasgow's, and Spencer's responses to Jeffers in *What is Race?* (2019)

Week 5 – Basic Racial Realism and Radical Racial Pluralism

- Glasgow, "Is race an illusion or a (very) basic reality?" in *What is Race?* (2019)
- Spencer, "A more radical solution to the race problem" (2019)

[Optional]

- Haslanger's, Jeffers's, and Spencer's responses to Glasgow in *What is Race?* (2019)

Week 6 – Racial Identities

- Appiah, "Synthesis: For Racial Identities," *Color Conscience* (1996)
- Zack, "How Mixed Race is Not Constructed: US Identities and Perspectives" (2017)
- Tuvel, "In defense of transracialism" (2017)

[Optional]

- Listen to "[Identical Twins Become Divided by Race in 'The Vanishing Half'](#)" (NPR)

Mid-term paper outline due this week!

Week 7 – Racism as cognitive versus volitional

- Appiah, "Racisms" (1990)
- Garcia, "The heart of racism" (1996)

[Optional]

- Peebles, "Toward a virtue-based account of racism" (2024)

Mid-term paper peer-review due this week!

Week 8 – Racism as ideological

- Shelby, "Is racism in the 'heart'?" (2002)
- Shelby, "Racism: Ideological, Institutional, and Structural" in *Dark Ghettos* (2016), 22-27
- Haslanger, "Racism, ideology, and social movements" (2017)

Mid-term final paper due today!

Week 9 – *Spring Break*

Week 10 – Race and Epistemology

- *Selection from* Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007)
- Mills, "White Ignorance" (2007)
- Alcoff, "On judging epistemic credibility" (2000)

Week 11 – What is racial justice?

- Mills, "Retrieving Rawls for Racial Justice" in *Black Rights/White Wrongs* (2017), 161-80
- *Selection from* Shelby, *Dark Ghettos* (2016)

[Optional]

- *Selection from* Sundstrum, *Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (2008)

Week 12 – Integration and Separatism

- Anderson, "The Imperative of Integration" in *The Imperative of Integration* (2010)
- Shelby, "Integration, inequality, and imperatives of justice" (2014)
- McGary, "Racial Integration and Racial Separatism: Conceptual Clarifications" in *Race and Social Justice* (1999)

Week 13 – Reparations

- Boxill, "A Lockean Argument for Black Reparations" (2003)
- Reed Jr., "The Case Against Reparations" (2016)
- Steele, "... Or a Childish Illusion of Justice?" (2003)

[Optional]

- Darby, "Reparations and racial inequality" (2010)

Week 14 – Is a post-racial world possible? Is it desirable?

- McGary, *The Post-Racial Ideal* (2012)

Week 15 – Students' Choice

Student will vote to determine which of the following topics to end the course with:

- Interracial Marriage (Mills 1994; Allen 2000)

- Affirmative Action (McGary 1999; Bowen and Bok 1998; Anderson 2010; Fryer Jr. and Loury 2005)
- White privilege (McIntosh 1989; Zack 2015; Sullivan 2017)
- White supremacy (Mills 1997; Garcia 2001)
- Racial profiling and policing (Zack 2015; Boonin 2011)
- Race and medicine (Roberts 2011; Yudell et al. 2016; Spencer 2018; Hardimon 2017; Peebles *forthcoming*)
- Color blindness (Anderson 2010; Blum 2001)
- Race and Gender (Crenshaw 1995, 357-383; Crenshaw 2003)

Reflection Paper Due Today.

Final group presentations to take place on the scheduled day for final exams for this course!