

Philosophy of Race

Philosophy 153

Winter 2017

UCSC

Instructor: Prof. Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther

Classroom: Cowell 134

Meeting Times: Tuesdays&Thursdays 9:50 – 11:25 am

Email: rgw@ucsc.edu

Webpage (teaching): <http://www.rgwinther.com/Courses.html>

There is an [eCommons](#) page for this course.

NARRATIVE

What are race and ethnicity? What does it mean to identify with a group(s) or population(s) of origin, and which political and ethical consequences might it have to do so? How have the history and sociology of colonialism impacted race concepts and understandings of the metaphysics of race, in the USA and globally? What is the relation of the putative genetic structure of *Homo sapiens* to racial or ethnic identity, to the potential “reality of race,” and to private or public interventions based on such information? Is multiculturalism necessarily good, or might it have pernicious effects, for instance to women or certain non-culturally defined minorities? Are ethics, universal rights, and even philosophy generally biased, written from the vantage point of white rich men, in implicit defence of their position and power, particularly as abstract principles are concretized in political reality? Is (was?) a post-racialist society realistic or even desirable, and in current extreme right-wing Federal administration times, what is the status of post-racialism?

COMMUNICATION

Please ask all questions about the content or format of the course *during classtime*. If you’re wondering about X, almost certainly some of your peers also will be. A non-asked question is a lost teaching opportunity and potentially a question never answered! We’ll have “open questions” session for a few minutes during every class. Please consult my webpage (teaching) for my policy regarding student emails.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. A weekly 1 page maximum think piece. It will be due on Tuesday and Thursday. Bring it on Tuesday and talk about it. Revise and resubmit for Thursday’s class. Five of these will be graded. (50% of your grade)

It is possible to cluster 2 (or max. 3) of these think pieces into a single, rewritten longer think piece. However, you must come speak to me during office hours if that is an option you wish to choose.

You have the option of redoing any think piece. In that case, turn in the old think piece with my comments and grade on it together with your revised work. Do not expect further comments.

N.b. All think pieces must be turned in on paper. **Do not email think pieces to the Professor.**

2. Group Project (30% of your grade; see below)

3. In-class participation, via small group discussions and cold-calls (approx. 10 students per class hour); engagement and passion. (20% of your grade)

METHODS & EXPECTATIONS

+ **Dialogue.** Practice communicating ideas effectively with fellow students, the professor, and any guest lecturers. Try brainstorming out loud while remaining open-minded about ideas that may conflict with yours. You are encouraged to ask questions and challenge assumptions. Be active and engaged!

+ **All assignments are mandatory.** Your assignment will drop by one full letter grade for every day it is late. Your final grade will also drop by one full letter grade if you miss any assignment.

+ **Attendance is mandatory.** Attendance will be taken at every class and section. Although I do NOT recommend that you do so, you may miss up to two classes, no questions asked. After that, you must talk to me, and realize that you may risk failing the course.

+ **No Electronics.** We will achieve course aims by asking you to be seriously committed to this class. This will include (i) doing all the reading and (ii) *turning off* all cell phones, computers, and access to social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) while in the classroom (lecture or section). I implore you to try to take notes by hand, the “old school” way – you can reformulate those into a Word doc later. **Dare to turn off all your electronics during classtime.**

GROUP PROJECT

For the group projects, you will work on a specific course-relevant theme as described above and explained in class. Use the class readings, but also do your own research (e.g., at McHenry Library, on the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, etc.). You will be divided into a group of 4-5 people. These are your peers for the entire quarter. You will also evaluate one another. For the projects you have four options (which do not exclude one another):

- i. a poster of your topic, which can be made directly physically or through PowerPoint
- ii. a well-organized skit or dialogue of your topic
- iii. a board game or card game showing extensive knowledge and analysis of your topic. What would the objective of the game be? What would the rules be?
- iv. A video. Here is an example from another class Prof. Winther taught: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3OrcJXi1mw>

You are also allowed to choose and develop a medium of your own. But please check it by the TA *and* professor for approval.

Timeline

Week 8: show preparatory materials, including a bibliography, to the Professor during class.

Week 9: mini dry-run on March 9.

Week 10: in-class presentations

Each of the three milestones will be part of your group project grade! Moreover, you will also evaluate your group peers as part of your grade.

WRITING ADVICE

Writing is essential to our craft as philosophers. Your writing can always improve. Here are some relevant online resources. Read and enjoy.

1. The two best books on writing!
<https://www.amazon.com/Writing-Your-Dissertation-Fifteen-Minutes/dp/080504891X/>
<http://www.amazon.com/Stein-Writing-Successful-Techniques-Strategies/dp/0312254210/>
2. Guidelines for philosophical writing:
<http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/research/wp.html>
<http://www.anthonyflood.com/blanshardphilostyle.htm>
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>
3. Guidelines for essay writing, in general:
<http://www.westmont.edu/~work/material/writing.html>
4. Oxford English Dictionary. You have online access to this extraordinary resource at:
<http://www.oed.com.oca.ucsc.edu/>
5. “Politics and the English Language.” Please read this funny and useful essay by George Orwell (author of *1984*) here:
<http://www.resort.com/~prime8/Orwell/patee.html>
6. From the inimitable Kurt Vonnegut:
<http://kmh-lanl.hansonhub.com/pc-24-66-vonnegut.pdf>
7. “10 tools for improving your writing” by RG Winther:
http://www.rgwinther.com/10_tools_for_improving_your_academic_writing_Winther_et_al_26_7_16.pdf

Reading carefully is also critical. Here is a great guide for learning and practicing this skill:
<http://www.amazon.com/How-Read-Book-Intelligent-Touchstone/dp/0671212095/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me, after class or in office hours, **as soon as possible**, preferably within the first week of the Quarter. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

WARNING

Here is one guideline for proper citation and attribution of other people’s work”

<https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/citesources>

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Please consult:

https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

COURSE READINGS

The three books, Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, Rattansi’s *Multiculturalism*, and Childs’ *Transcommunalism* are available at BayTree Bookstore, on campus.

Week 1 (January 10 and 12)

UNESCO and its Programme: “The Race Question” (1950)

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1952. *Race and History*. Paris: UNESCO.

Week 2 (January 17 and 19)

RG Winther. 2015 *Are We All Africans? Genomics and Race*. Cambridge University Press proposal + reviews.

Week 3 (January 24 and 26)

Mills, Charles W. 1988. “But What Are You *Really?*” In Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, pp. 41-66, Cornell University Press.

Week 4. (January 31 and February 2)

Fanon, Franz. 1952/2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.

Tuesday: Foreword, Introduction, Ch 1 “The Black Man and Language”

Thursday: Ch. 4. “The So-Called Dependency Complex of the Colonized”, part of Ch. 7 “The Black Man and Hegel.”

Week 5 (February 7 and 9)

Childs, John Brown, 2003. *Transcommunalism. From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapters 1 and 5; commentaries by Stefano Varese and Hayden White.

Week 6 (February 14 and 16)

Rattansi, Ali. 2011. *Multiculturalism. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. (All)

Week 7 (February 21 and 23)

Bernasconi, Robert. 2003. Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up. The challenge of Enlightenment racism to the study of the history of philosophy. *Radical Philosophy* 117: 13-22.

Week 8 (February 28 and March 2)

TBD

Week 9 (March 7 and 9)

Kolchin, Peter. 2002. Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America. *The Journal of American History* 154-173.

Week 10 (March 14 and 16)

Group presentations