Phil 332 / ALST 332 - Philosophy of Race and Racism

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Synopsis

Race and racism are global phenomena that not only explain a way in which people are categorized, but the way both individuals and institutions regard one another. Most of us take it that we are members of some race (perhaps multiple races) and that sometimes our membership in said races partially determines how we are treated. Additionally, we spend a good amount of time examining race issues such as racial conflicts, how racism can affect one’s economic well-being (for better or worse), and whether or not treating people based on race is just (e.g. racial profiling). And while we make use of the concepts of race and racism quite readily in these debates, we spend surprisingly little time and effort trying to figure out just what races are and what racism is. This course will serve as a sustained investigation into the concepts of race and racism through an examination of metaphysical, psychological, ethical, linguistic, and political problems associated with race.

Important Dates

Requirements

No first year students will be enrolled unless they have taken one course in the philosophy department. One course in philosophy is recommended but not required for sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Goals

The first goal is to put you in a position where you can meaningfully contribute to several discussions concerning race and racism. This course will also get you up to speed on contemporary discussions in the philosophy of race and racism, with special focus on the metaphysics of race, the psychology of racial identity, the wrongmaking features of racism, and issues in contemporary and distributive justice as they relate to race. After taking this course (and under the assumption that you have been keeping up with the reading for the appropriate classes, writing essays, and coming to office hours when clarification is needed) you should be equipped to read and understand professional articles on issues concerning philosophy of race. The second goal is to improve your abilities to argue and write about issues concerning race and racism.

Grading

Evaluation

Participation – 25%
Two 3-4 page papers – 25% (weighted evenly)
One 7-8 page Global Engagement paper – 25%
Final Exam – 25%
Participation

Participation will be determined by attendance, preparedness (having read the assigned readings before class and coming to class with questions), and discussion. Part of learning philosophy is to learn how to engage in argumentation (and not just exchange opinions) with others, so being informed on the matters we are discussing and practicing verbal argumentation is essential to learning philosophy.

If you miss a class you should always contact a classmate to see what you missed and what the next assignment is. You should not plan on missing more than 3 classes (excused or otherwise). The occasional homework assignment (no more than 5) will also figure into participation.

Part I: Metaphysics of Race: Racialism and Eliminativism

Introductory Lecture and Racialism


Critiques and Reinterpretations of Du Bois


Preliminaries in Philosophy of Language and Racial Eliminativism


Part II: Racial Identity

Double Consciousness, Dynamic Nominalism, and the Other


Homework 1: Library Assignment
Part III: Metaphysics of Race: Social Constructivism and New Scientific Explanations of Race


Social Constructivism


Homework 2: Mills Chart


Folk Biology of Race


Part IV: Racism

Explicit Racism


Homework 3: One page abstract of your GE paper.


Implicit Racism

Take the Implicit Association Test (take skin tone test and race (black/white) test and one other test of your choosing).
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html>

Read Background
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html>
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/ethics.html>
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html>
**Homework 4:** Take Race IAT and Weapons IAT. Bring in a print out of your results to turn in (it won’t have your name on it).


**Homework 5**


**Part IV: The Civil Rights Movement and Affirmative Action**

Civil Rights and the Origins of Affirmative Action


*Discrimination: The Analysis Debates (Most of these debates are reprinted in The Affirmative Action Debate (ed.) Steven Cahn 2002, 2nd Ed.)*


*Is Affirmative Action a Justified Practice? Backward and Forward Looking Arguments*