

# Race, Justice & Equality

Professor Jamie Lindsay  
Spring 2013

PHIL 3308  
MW 3:40-4:55pm  
Room: 4141B  
Section/Code: MW3/2972  
Office Hours: By appointment  
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- When and why might it be acceptable to distinguish people according to race?
- Is civil disobedience justifiable, under conditions of race-based oppression?
- What is the best way of approaching persisting inequality?

The focus of this course will be open philosophical discussion about these important and sometimes unsettling questions of value. In order to answer these questions, we will also have to wrestle with some questions that arise in relation to the scientific consensus that there is no biological or genetic evidence for race-based categories:

- Given the evidence of the human and life sciences, what is “race”?
- How does race intersect with nationality, class, gender and ethnicity?
- How is race related to identity, and how does racial identity affect one’s perception of the world?

Discussion of these topics will reveal that they involve many of the traditional concerns of philosophy, which we will explore in relation to contemporary political debates. Topics include affirmative action, “color-blind” policies, hate speech, multiculturalism, the rights of Indigenous peoples and reparations for slavery.

## Final Grade:

Blackboard Discussion (before each class):	25%
Short Essay (1):	10%
Group Research Presentation:	25%
Final Term Paper:	20%
Final Exam :	20%

## Course Requirements:

1. You are expected to read *all* assigned texts *before* the meeting for which they are assigned.

Required textbooks are available at Shakespeare and Co.:

- a. Paul C. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*
- b. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*

2. **Before class, you are required to post your reflections and/or questions about *all* readings that we will discuss.**
  - a. Approximately one-hundred word posts are sufficient, *per week*, and you are encouraged to use the Discussion Board as an opportunity to debate the material.
  - b. Posts are *not* graded for accuracy, though you will be assessed at the end of the course for the extent to which you engage in *discussion* of the material. Merely posting your thoughts without considering – and sometimes responding to – the posts of others is insufficient. The aim is *discussion*.
  - c. You are expected to use your Discussion Board posts to prepare for class, by reviewing and debating the central ideas of the readings with your classmates.
  - d. Blackboard discussion counts for 25% of the grade.
  - e. *If less than half of the class participates actively prior to a class meeting, Blackboard discussion will be supplemented with a reading quiz and/or classwork.*
3. **You are expected to attend all classes, having done the reading, and to review your notes from previous sessions before attending class.**
  - a. Lateness, absences, and lack of positive participation (or any negative participation) will affect your final grade dramatically.
  - b. *Your grade will be dropped by a letter for each unexcused absence after the third unexcused absence.*
4. **During the last month of the semester, there will be group presentations on several debates concerning race:**
  - a. Group presentations may be done in the area of your Term Paper, and should serve as an opportunity for you to research and discuss your ideas, both within your group, and then with the entire class.
  - b. Groups will have approximately four members, and should last at least thirty minutes.
  - c. Presentations should explore the philosophical debates in your subject area (so research is required); your group ought to present the primary arguments in the debate, and should explore the differences of view amongst group members. You need not agree with your group members.
  - d. Presentations *must* include a .ppt or .key slideshow, with any multimedia sources that would be helpful, and so requires that someone have a laptop (which can be checked out from the library).
5. **The Final Paper (seven to eight pages), defending an original thesis, requires an extended engagement with the material.**
  - a. The Final Term Paper will be your opportunity to exhibit what you have learned in the class. The paper should be tightly focused around a single thesis, and should develop an argument for that thesis while considering significant objections.
  - b. If you have not written a philosophy paper before, I invite you to make an appointment to come in for Office Hours to discuss your work, well before the end of term.
  - c. All outside sources must be cited, using any standard format (e.g. MLA, Chicago, etc.).

- d. Failure to cite sources is a violation of the Academic Integrity policy of Brooklyn College (i.e. it's *plagiarism*), and *must* be reported.
  - e. *Plagiarizing will result in failing the course.*
  - f. A draft or proposal will be due six weeks before the end of the semester, which *must be submitted as a hard copy*, in class.
- 6. The Final Exam questions will be distributed prior to the end of the semester.**
- a. The Exam will consist of short-answer questions requiring at most three sentences each.
  - b. The Exam will be open notes, but not open book.
- 7. By the end of the course you should be able to:**
- a. Articulate the basic features of several approaches to contemporary critical race theory, considered in relation both to political philosophy and to contemporary politics and society
  - b. Explain the differences between several accounts of 'equality'
  - c. Evaluate political speech using tools of critical race theory
  - d. Develop your own arguments in relation to debates concerning race, justice, and equality
  - e. Identify and state serious objections to your own views, and evaluate ways of responding to these objections

**NY Policy on Religious Observance:** Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

**CUNY Policy on Disability:** In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss specific accommodation needed with me immediately.

**CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity:** The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the

faculty member MUST report the violation. *Copying text from Wikipedia without proper citation counts as plagiarism.*

**Calendar:**

- 1/28: Linda Martín Alcoff, “In Arizona, Censoring Questions about Race”  
1/30: Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”  
2/4: *No new readings*  
2/6: Paul C. Taylor, “What Race-Thinking Is”\*  
2/11: *No new readings*  
2/13: Paul C. Taylor, “Three Challenges to Race-Thinking”\*  
2/18: *NO CLASSES*  
2/20: (Monday Schedule) *No new readings*  
2/25: Spike Lee Lecture, 4-5pm, Gold Room, Student Center  
2/27: Charles Mills, “Overview”, p. 1-40\*  
3/4: Paul C. Taylor, “What Races Are: The Metaphysics of Critical Race Theory”\*  
3/6: Paul C. Taylor, “Existence, Experience, Elisions”\*  
3/11: Charles Mills, “Details”\*; SHORT ESSAY DUE IN CLASS (hard copy)  
3/13: *No new readings*  
3/18: Paul C. Taylor, “The Color Question”\*  
3/20: Charles Mills, “‘Naturalized’ Merits”\*  
3/25: *NO CLASSES*  
3/27: *NO CLASSES*  
4/1: *NO CLASSES*  
4/3: *No new readings*; RESEARCH PAPER DRAFT/PROPOSAL DUE (hard copy, in class)  
4/8: Karl Marx, “Alienated Labor”  
4/10: Jasbir Puar (ed.), “Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejic,; Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanovic”  
4/15: Jacques Rancière, “On Ignorant Schoolmasters”  
4/17: *No new readings*  
4/22: *Group Presentation:* Affirmative Action  
4/24: *Group Presentation:* Reparations for Slavery  
4/29: *Group Presentation:* Rights of Indigenous Peoples (U.S.)  
5/1: *Group Presentation:* Race and the ‘War on Crime’  
5/6: *Group Presentation:* Race and the ‘War on Drugs’  
5/8: *Group Presentation:* Race and the ‘War on Terror’  
5/13: *No new readings*  
5/15: *No new readings*  
**5/20, 3:30-5:30pm: Final Exam (open notes, closed book)**  
**Final Term Paper due (.pdf via email)**

**Syllabus Change Policy:** This syllabus is a guide for the course. *If* there are any changes to the calendar, they will be announced in class, and a revised syllabus will be posted on Blackboard. There will be no changes to grading and other course policies.