

PH 2270: Philosophy and Race

Syllabus for Fall 2019

Instructor: Joseph Frigault (*joseph.frigault@colorado.edu*)
Office / Hours: Hellems 276 / Fridays, 3:00 - 5:00 PM, and by appointment.

To accept one's past - one's history - is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.

James Baldwin (1962)

Course Description

This course will explore the historical relationship between western philosophy and race and investigate some of the ways in which philosophy can be used to help address contemporary racial issues. Focusing primarily on the categories of “black” and “white” as deployed in the context of the United States, we’ll consider such questions as:

What, if anything, does philosophy have to do with race? How might race matter for the discipline of philosophy? How does personal experience inform/constrain our attitudes on matters of race? How is personal identity entangled with national identity? How, if at all, does national history bear on contemporary racial issues? What might it mean to think clearly about race? What is the role of “rational argument” in this context?

In wrestling with these and related questions, we’ll draw on a variety of materials, both from within philosophy and beyond, including: sociology, history, political theory, empirical and moral psychology, literature, film, journalism, dialogue, and autobiography.

Required Texts

Baldwin, James 1962, *The Fire Next Time*. (Vintage International) **[FNT]**

Coates, Ta-Nehisi 2015, *Between The World and Me*. (Spiegel & Grau) **[BWM]**

Rorty, Richard 1997, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. (Harvard University Press) **[AOC]**

Wolff, Robert P. 2005, *The Autobiography of an Ex-White Man: Learning A New Master Narrative for America*. (University of Rochester Press) **[AEW]**

Class Details & Policies

Class Format:

This is primarily a *discussion-based* course. Throughout the course I'll introduce new material with a short lecture, but the goal will always be more of a back-and-forth among the group. In my experience, this is almost always more fruitful and enjoyable for students. Most days we'll break up into randomized groups of three or four to discuss the readings for 15 or 20 minutes before coming together to talk things over for the rest of the period. On these days, I'll provide some questions for discussion, but you should feel free to bring up any aspect of the material that you found confusing or worthy of further discussion.

This course will cover some topics that can be difficult to engage with in the classroom. If any reading or topic we are planning to discuss elicits trauma or panic in you, I encourage you to discuss the issue with me and/or excuse yourself from class at any time. While discomfort can sometimes be an important aspect of learning, no one should have to endure needless anxiety in order to make it through our meetings.

Electronics Policy:

All cell phones, tablets and laptop computers must be put away for the duration of class. Useful as they are, they are ultimately too distracting. If I see you using your phone, I may ask you to stow it, or even leave the room for the day. If you feel you have a good reason for using your laptop in class, please come and discuss it with me at the start of term.

Plagiarism Policy:

If you cheat or plagiarize on an exam or essay *you will fail the course*. After that, you'll have to go before the Honor Council. This is an unpleasant experience for everyone. As a college student, you are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, so ignorance is not an excuse. However, if ever you are unsure about whether something counts as plagiarism, please feel free to ask me about it. Note that for the purposes of this class, you are *not expected or required* to consult sources beyond those assigned, but if you do so, and find something you think is worth repeating, just cite it. It's that easy.

Evaluation:

<i>Attendance</i>	-----	8%
<i>Participation</i>	-----	10%
<i>Reading Responses</i>	-----	24% (16 at 1.5% each)
<i>Midterm Exam</i>	-----	15%
<i>Short Essay</i>	-----	15%
<i>Final Exam</i>	-----	28%
TOTAL		100%

Assignments:

Attendance (8%) Attendance is essential to success in this course. I will circulate a sign-up sheet at the start of each class meeting, and it is *your responsibility* to make sure you sign it. If you miss a meeting, it's *your responsibility* to keep up to date on any missed material and/or announcements made in class, by asking a fellow student or coming to office hours.

You may miss up to *two* class periods without explanation or penalty. Every *unexcused* absence beyond that will result in a 2% deduction, first from your attendance grade, and beyond that from your final grade. I will make judgments on the *excusability* of absences on a case by case basis, but it's worth noting that missing class to spend time with family or friends, or to complete work for other classes, will *not* qualify.

Your attendance grade will *not* take account of late arrivals, but frequent lateness will be noted and will likely figure into my calculation of your participation grade.

Participation (10%) Participation can take many forms. For example, it might involve making some kind of contribution to the classroom discussion, whether by way of asking a question, sharing a thought, or criticizing some aspect of the material. (Note that you certainly don't have to *like* or *agree with* what we're reading or discussing in order to participate adequately.) Alternatively, it might involve engaging in some follow up chat with me in connection with one of your reading responses, online (see below).

Throughout the term I'll inform the class about any thematically relevant talks or events happening on campus. Attendance at these events will also count toward your participation grade. Note that you may be asked to provide assessments of your own participation at some point.

Reading Responses (24%) These will be short written responses to one or more of the readings we cover each week. The idea is for you to show me that you are *engaging with the material*, and occasionally for me to deliver some individualized feedback to you throughout the term. Reading responses will consist of *three* distinct tasks:

1. *Answering a question about the relevant text(s), which I'll provide ahead of time.*
2. *Raising a (pertinent!) question, confusion, criticism or comment about the material.*
3. *Making some effort to address or respond to the point just raised by you in 2.*

Responses should consist of no more than 5-6 complete sentences in total, and must be submitted online through the *Canvas* website before 12:00 noon on the relevant class date. Late submissions will not be graded, but may receive feedback upon request. You may miss *one* response without penalty.

Midterm Exam (15%) This will be an in-class, closed-book exam made up of multiple choice and short answer questions on the material covered in PART 1 of the course. Make-up exams will only be scheduled if you can demonstrate a legitimate, excusable, absence.

Short Essay (15%) This will be a short (900-1000 word) expository essay discussing some of the material covered in PART 2 of the course. I'll provide a range of prompts of which you'll choose one. Further details will be provided later in the term. Late essays will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day late, where "one day" means 24 hrs from the due date.

Final Exam (28%) This will be an in-class, closed-book exam made up of short and long answer questions. It will be cumulative, but with an emphasis on the material covered in PART 3 of the course. Long answer questions may involve comparing and/or synthesizing materials from across the various parts of the course.

Explanation of Grades:

If ever you feel I have made a mistake in grading some aspect of your work, please feel free to set up an office visit with me to discuss it. However, this should be done as soon as possible; the longer you wait to bring it up, the less likely it is that anything can be done.

The table below illustrates how letter grades translate into percentage grades, along with their associated grade points and meaning according to CU's official explanation of grades. (<https://catalog.colorado.edu/about-cu-boulder/credits-grading/>).

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Points	Meaning
A	92.6 - 100	4.0	superior/excellent ^
A-	90 - 92.5	3.7	
B+	87.6 - 89.9	3.3	
B	82.6 - 87.5	3.0	good/better than average ^
B-	80 - 82.5	2.7	
C+	77.6 - 79.9	2.3	
C	72.6 - 77.5	2.0	competent/average ^
C-	70 - 72.5	1.7	
D+	67.6 - 69.9	1.3	
D	62.6 - 67.5	1.0	
D-	60 - 62.5	0.7	minimum passing
F	Below 60	0.0	failing

Official CU Policies

Accommodation for Disabilities:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior:

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Honor Code:

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays:

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you plan on requesting accommodation for religious holidays or obligations, see me as soon as possible. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Class Schedule

**** Subject to revision. Any changes will be communicated in class or by email a.s.a.p. ****

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u> (for that day)
~~~~~ PART 1: WHAT DO YOU MEAN PHILOSOPHY “AND” RACE? ~~~~~		
M Aug 26	Introductions / Syllabus / Expectations	-----
W Aug 28	What does philosophy have to do with race?	Douglass 1852 ( <b>RR 1</b> )
M Sep 2	NO CLASS	-----

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u> (for that day)
W Sep 4	Western philosophy's origin story, Pt 1. ● <i>The Last Days of Socrates</i>	Plato, <i>Apology</i> (RR 2)
F Sep 6	EXTRA CREDIT EVENT (Details in class.)	-----
M Sep 9	<i>Los Seis de Boulder</i> and the matter of history.	Treuer 2019
W Sep 11	Western philosophy's origin story, Pt 2. ● <i>The Analogy of the Cave</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i> (RR 3)
M Sep 16	Two conceptions of philosophy, Pt 1. ● <i>The Transcendental Conception</i>	Russell 1912 (RR 4)
W Sep 18	Two conceptions of philosophy, Pt 2. ● <i>The Pragmatic Conception</i>	Dewey 1946 (RR 5)
M Sep 23	So... What does philosophy have to do with race?	King 1963 (RR 6)
W Sep 25	How might race matter for philosophy? Pt 1. ● <i>The Veil &amp; Double Consciousness</i>	Du Bois 1903 (RR 7)
M Sep 30	How might race matter for philosophy? Pt 2. ● <i>White Folk &amp; The Clairvoyance Thesis</i>	Du Bois 1920 (RR 8)
W Oct 2	<b>Midterm, In-Class</b>	-----
~~~~~ PART 2: DATA: EMPIRICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL ~~~~~		
M Oct 7	<u>Empirical</u> : Anti-black racism, Pt 1. ● <i>The Principle-Policy Gap</i>	Bobo et al. 2012 (RR 9) Tuch et al. 2011 Carmines et al. 2011
W Oct 9	<u>Empirical</u> : Anti-black racism, Pt 2. ● <i>Implicit Cognition & Racial Bias</i>	Banaji et al. 2013 Quilian et al. 2017
M Oct 14	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 1960s, Pt 1. ● <i>Family & Religion</i>	FNT, pp. 1-47. (RR 10) Sartre 1946, pp. 17-34.
W Oct 16	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 1960s, Pt 2. ● <i>Essentialism and Identity</i>	FNT, pp. 47-82. Sartre 1946, pp. 34-54.
M Oct 21	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 1960s, Pt 3. ● <i>Identity & The White Problem</i>	FNT, pp. 82-106. (RR 11) Ebony 1965

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u> (for that day)
W Oct 23	<u>Empirical</u> : White Psychology, Pt 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-Concern & Inequity Denial</i> 	Knowles et al. 2012 Unzueta & Lowery 2008
M Oct 28	<u>Empirical</u> : White Psychology, Pt 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>White Victimhood / Fragility / Fatigue</i> 	Norton et al. 2011 (RR 12) DiAngelo 2018 Flynn 2015
W Oct 30	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 21st century, Pt 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Family & Religion</i> 	BWM, pp. 1-39. Wright 1935
M Nov 4	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 21st century, Pt 2.	BWM, pp. 39-99. (RR 13)
W Nov 6	<u>Experiential</u> : Dispatch from the 21st century, Pt 3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Question of Absurdity</i> 	BWM, pp. 99-152. Camus 1942
~~~~~ <i>PART 3: HISTORY, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS</i> ~~~~~		
M Nov 11	Autobiography of an ex-white man.	AEW, Ch 1 <b>(RR 14)</b>
W Nov 13	Mr. Shapiro's wedding suit.	AEW, Ch 2 Cheeks 2019
M Nov 18	A new master narrative for America.	AEW, Ch 3 <b>(RR 15)</b>
W Nov 20	How and why does history matter? <b>Short Essay, Due Online</b>	Coates 2014
NOVEMBER BREAK		
M Dec 2	American national pride.	AOC, Ch 1 <b>(RR 16)</b> Sullivan 2014, Intro + Ch 2
W Dec 4	The eclipse of the reformist left.	AOC, Ch 2 Young 1990, Ch 6
M Dec 9	A cultural left. (... and beyond?)	AOC, Ch 3 <b>(RR 17)</b>
W Dec 11	Wrap-up.	Sullivan 2014, Conclusion
TBD	<b>Final Exam</b>	-----