

Philosophy of Race and Gender

PHIL 230:01
Skidmore College
Spring 2012

Instructor:	Catherine McKeen	Office:	Ladd 214
Class times:	Tu. & Th. 9:40-11:00 am	Office hrs:	M 10-11am and Tues. and Thurs. 1-2pm and by appointment
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Course description:

Someone's gender and race are often the first things we notice about a person. Race and gender are salient to us in a way that other aspects of a person's identity are usually not (e.g. a person's religion or cultural background). Moreover, race and gender are central organizing features of our social life. But what are race and gender, really? Are races biological kinds? Are races social kinds? And if races are social kinds, does that mean that races aren't real? And for gender – do aspects of biology determine what gender one is? Or, as some thinkers have claimed, are men and women made and not born? Is gender real or merely artificial?

No matter how we answer the preceding questions, we can't deny that race and gender make a difference. So, for instance, in the U.S. there are significant racial differences in education, rates of imprisonment, rates of violence, employment, health care delivery, and life expectancy. There are significant gender differences in these areas as well, and these differences can be observed worldwide. But what should we make of these differences? Do they show that people of different races are not treated equally? Do they show that men and women are not treated equally? Do these differences indicate that there is injustice? Or not?

In this course, we will explore what philosophers have thought (and think) about race and gender. We will focus on three main areas of philosophical inquiry: (a) the reality of race and gender; (b) the question of discrimination; and (c) the social ideal of equal opportunity.

What can you expect to get out of this class?

This course will acquaint you with philosophical issues around race and gender. In doing so, we will be investigating the kinds of questions philosophers have long been interested in – what is real? and, what is fair? So, this course will explore questions both in metaphysics and in ethics and political philosophy. This course will provide you with a good introduction to philosophical thinking in both of these areas.

This course will also allow you to practice and improve your skills of careful reading, clear thinking, and effective writing.

Materials.

The following texts are required for this course:

How to Make Opportunity Equal, Paul Gomberg, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, ISBN: 978-1405160827

Race: A Philosophical Introduction, Paul Taylor, Polity Press 2004; ISBN: 0-7456-2883-4.

Analyzing Oppression, Ann E. Cudd, Oxford University Press, 2006; ISBN: 9-780195-187441.

Delusions of Gender, Cordelia Fine, W. W. Norton, 2010; ISBN: 978-0-393-34024-2.

There will also be reading materials for the course that I will make available by xeroxed copy and through Blackboard.

optional text: *Against Equality of Opportunity*, Matt Cavanaugh, Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN: 978-0199265480

Contact and availability.

I don't believe that philosophy stops at the classroom walls. As Socrates noted, to spend one's days talking philosophy is one of the great joys of life. So, I welcome the chance to talk outside of class about philosophy, ideas, the course, your education, your progress, your plans, or just about life in general. My office hours are listed above. I hope you'll come by sometime during the semester to chat.

If you have a short question about any aspect of the class and need a quick response, then email is the best way to reach me (cmckeen@skidmore.edu). Usually, I'll get back to you within 12 hours.

Life is not perfect, and we can expect there will be difficulties. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me about any issues or problems you run up against. I can't promise to have a panacea, but I can promise to help you work through it. Earlier is better than later.

Course work and expectations.

Preparation – You should expect to regularly attend class and to come prepared. Being prepared means that you have read the material for class, and that you've read in a thorough and thoughtful way. You should give yourself enough time to think carefully about what you have read, and you should come to class with questions and thoughts about the readings. You

can expect that the readings will often make strong demands on you. If you are reading well, they should. So, give yourself plenty of time to read, re-read, and reflect on the readings.

Papers – There will be three papers of 5-7 pages for this course. The papers are designed to allow you to take on a philosophical issue or question in a more sustained and in-depth way. In these papers you will work on developing a philosophical analysis of an issue or view. You should aim to present the texts discussed in a clear and thoughtful way. You should focus on an argument that is being developed, by particular attention to the reasons which support the view. You should aim to go beyond exposition. You should show intellectual engagement with the views under discussion. Finally, you should work towards formulating a well-defined thesis to be advanced and supported. We'll be emphasizing the virtues of: (a) clarity; (b) accuracy; (c) cogency, and (d) analytical depth in your written work.

We will spend some time working on writing during class time. For those times, I will ask you to turn in drafts of your papers.

Class participation – Philosophy works through discussion, so discussion is a key part of this course. You should expect to participate in class discussions. Participation can happen in a number of ways: raising questions about the material, or issues; active listening to what others are saying; trying out your own ideas in class; responding to what others say. In all cases, your presence (mentally and physically) is required.

Leading discussion – You will be responsible for leading discussion for **two** class meetings. This will involve preparing questions for discussion on the reading for that meeting, planning any activities for that meeting, and moderating some of the in-class discussion. You will need to submit your questions to me at least one class before your section, and meet with me to discuss your plan for the class meeting.

Other work – There will be some short assignments and in-class work for this course. This will be as often as weekly, or less frequently, as course needs dictate.

Evaluation.

I will evaluate your work for this course based on how well you (a) demonstrate strong positive involvement with and understanding of the course material; (b) demonstrate progress towards rigorous, coherent and in-depth philosophical thinking in your written work; (c) demonstrate active and honest engagement in class meetings.

Class work will be weighted as follows in your course grade:

Papers:	60%
Discussion leader:	20%
Other work:	10%
Participation:	10%

Nota bene: The following will result in failure of the course: (a) failure to turn in one or more essay exam; (b) absence from 6 or more class meetings; (c) demonstrated Honor Code violation.

Due dates.

Course policies.

Attendance. Much of our class time will be devoted to working through the course material in discussion. You can't do the work for the class, then, if you are not present. You should plan to attend every class meeting. Aside from the intrinsic benefits, good attendance will be reflected in your participation grade, and can count for up to 1/3 a grade (so the difference between a C+ and B-, or B- and B, e.g.). Absences over 4 will be subject to penalty. If you miss six or more classes, you will be asked to withdraw from the course (subject to failure).

If you do miss a class meeting, you are responsible for the work for that class, including any notes or material discussed in class. You cannot make up short assignments that were done in class. If you will miss class, and know it in advance, you should let me know in advance. If you miss class due to a late-breaking emergency, you should let me know as soon as is feasible.

Lateness, leaving during class. You are expected to be on time to class, to stay for the entire class. Frequent latenesses or entrances and exits are distracting and negatively affect class discussions. So please keep these to a minimum.

Electronic devices. Using electronic devices in class hinders your full participation in class discussion and distracts others. All electronic devices (I-pods, laptops, cell phones, etc.) should be turned off and safely stowed during class meetings. If you have a learning issue that requires an electronic device, get in touch with me so that we can work out some guidelines for classroom use.

Format of written work. Written work should be word-processed in a readable 11 or 12 pt. font. Essays should be double-spaced and with margins of 1 inch around. You should number your pages and staple. No title page is needed, but you should include your name, the course, and the date on the first page.

Make-up assignments. In-class work cannot be made up. Short assignments missed because of illness, family emergencies, or other legitimate reasons are eligible to be made up, but this is not automatic and you must contact me close to the assignment deadline (within 24-48 hours). Short assignments missed for other reasons cannot be made up.

Submission of work – Hard-copies of the first two papers must be submitted at the beginning of the class meeting in which they are due. You will also need to submit a digital copy of your

paper to our Blackboard site. The 3rd paper will be due in my mailbox in the Philosophy Department, Ladd Hall. Other written work will either be submitted in class meetings or submitted on Blackboard.

Extensions – You are allowed to make use of **one** automatic, no-questions-asked three-day extension on any of the three main papers. I would suggest you save this option for your final paper. You should let me know if you are using this option. You can only use this option once. Other than this extension, I will not normally allow extensions except for extreme emergency cases.

Academic integrity.

All of your work for this course is subject to the College's Honor Code. In this course, as in all college courses, your written work should represent your own ideas, interpretations, and research. If your written work consists mostly of the thoughts of others, this is a problem. You can make some *limited* use of others' work, but this must always be done with appropriate citation. (In philosophy, either MLA or APA format is appropriate.) It is *never* acceptable to borrow someone else's words, ideas, interpretations or research without noting that you are doing so -- this includes any and all material that is posted on the internet, appears in a blog or a social networking site, is from an online encyclopedia or other reference work, is heard on the radio or t.v., is given in conversation, or appears in print. After all, borrowing without permission goes by the somewhat less nice name of "stealing".

Here are some specific guidelines for our class:

Allowed – discussing the material and ideas of the class outside of class; studying together; group work in class; citing any sources you consult in your written work; using notes and texts in writing papers or assignments; using secondary sources.

Not allowed – cutting and pasting from internet sources; relying on the work of others without citation; using work from another class as a submission for this class.

I take violations of academic integrity seriously. I will thoroughly investigate any suspected cases. And I will pursue the severest penalties for proven cases of academic dishonesty.

Sometimes people are confused about what exactly constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty involves. Such confusion can have disastrous consequences if it results in a violation. So, if you have any questions at all, please ask me.

Accommodation.

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please let me know early in the semester so that we can determine a viable plan for your work. You should also contact the Office of Student Academic Services (518-580-8150).

Class plan.

The readings are listed under the dates that will be discussing those texts in class. So, you should read and prepare those texts *before* the date listed. Page numbers refer to the bookstore editions of the texts.

HMO = How to Make Opportunity Equal
AEO = Against Equal Opportunity
AO = Analyzing Oppression

RPI = Race: A Philosophical Introduction
DG = Delusions of Gender

Week 1: Introduction

Tu 1/24 first class

Th 1/26 Race-thinking in America

readings: W. E. B. DuBois, "The Conservation of the Races" xeroxed copy

Week 2: Are races real?

Tu 1/31 Anti-realism about race

readings: Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument:
DuBois and the Illusion of Race" xeroxed copy

Th 2/2 Conservationism about race

readings: Taylor, "Appiah's Uncompleted Argument:
W. E. B. DuBois and the Reality of Race" xeroxed copy

Week 3: Biology and race

Tu 2/7 Does race have a future?

readings: Kitcher, "The Future of Race" xeroxed copy

Th 2/9 Biology and gender

readings: Sigmund Freud, "On the Psychology of Women" xeroxed copy

Week 4: Biology and gender

Tu 2/14 "One is not born a woman"

readings: Simone DeBeauvoir, excerpts from *The Second Sex* xeroxed copy

Th 2/16 no class meeting

M 2/20 draft of 1st paper due

Week 5: Structural gender and race

Tu 2/21 Gender and race as social positions

readings: Haslanger, "Gender and race: (What) are they?" xeroxed copy

(What) do we want them to be?

****Th 2/23 -- first paper due****

Th 2/23 **Theorizing oppression**
readings: Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* AO, pp. 3-55

Week 6: **Theorizing oppression**
Tu 2/28 Psychological oppression
readings: Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* AO, pp. 55-81

Th 3/1 Violence and oppression
readings: Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* AO, pp. 85-118

Week 7: **Theorizing oppression**
Tu 3/6 Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* AO, pp. 118-154

Th 3/8 **Mechanisms**
readings: Fine, *Delusions of Gender* DG, pp. 3-54

Week 8: **spring break – from 3/12-3/16**
****finish reading *Delusions of Gender* over break****

Mon 3/19 draft of 2nd paper due

Week 9: **Oppression and opportunity**
Tu 3/20 discussion of *Delusions of Gender*
readings: Hacking, "Making Up People" xeroxed copy

****Th 3/22 -- second paper due****

Th 3/22 Equal opportunity
readings: Gomberg, *How to Make Opportunity Equal* HMOE, pp. 1-17

Week 10: **Equal opportunity**
Tu 3/27 Limits on opportunity
readings: Gomberg, *How to Make Opportunity Equal* HMOE, pp. 18-43
Cavanaugh, *Against Equality of Opportunity* AEO, pp. 1-19

Th 3/29 Egalitarianism
readings: Gomberg, *How to Make Opportunity Equal* HMOE, pp. 44-74
Cavanaugh, *Against Equality of Opportunity* AEO, pp. 83-184

Week 11:	Equal opportunity	
Tu 4/3	A proposal for making opportunity equal	
readings:	Gomberg, <i>How to Make Opportunity Equal</i>	HMOE, pp. 75-104
Th 4/5	Addressing racism and other -isms	
readings:	Gomberg, <i>How to Make Opportunity Equal</i>	HMOE, pp. 127-167
Week 12:	The ethics of difference	
Tu 4/10	Races as social constructs	
readings:	Taylor, <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>	RPI, pp. 70-115
Th 4/12	Race and identity	
readings:	Taylor, <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>	RPI, pp. 121-155
Week 13:	The ethics of difference	
Tu 4/17	Color-blindness?	
readings:	Taylor, <i>Race: A Philosophical Introduction</i>	RPI, pp. 156-183
Wed 4/18 -- draft of third paper due		
Th 4/19	Divided by race?	
readings:	Boxill, "Why we shouldn't think of ourselves as divided by race"	xeroxed copy
Week 14:	The ethics of difference	
Tu 4/24	The morality of racial thinking	
readings:	Garcia, "The Heart of Racism"	xeroxed copy
Th 4/26	Towards greater inclusion?	
readings:	Gooding Williams, "Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy"	xeroxed copy
Tu 5/1 – third paper due		
Tu 5/1	last day – wrapping up	