

COURSE INFORMATION

Texas A&M University: Fall 2017
Department of Philosophy
Course: PHIL353/AFST352: Africana Philosophy
Time: T/Th 12:45pm - 2pm
Location: YMCA 113

CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor: Amir R Jaima
Office Location: YMCA 415
Office Hours: by appointment:
<http://professorjaima.youcanbook.me/>
Email: ajaima@tamu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course we will examine the relatively new subfield of philosophical inquiry called Africana Philosophy. On the surface, the term “Africana” refers to the African diaspora, that is, those who have ancestors from the African continent, though they may live elsewhere in the world; this includes primarily, though not exclusively, those identified as African, Afro-Caribbean, and African-American. Considered in this way, Africana Philosophy refers simply to the thoughts and ideas produced by members of these groups. Considered more critically, however, (as we will do in this course), the term “Africana” – and its attendant ideas: “Africa”, “race”, “Black”, etc. – is a modern orientation and set of questions characterized by the historical and socio-political situation of colonization and anti-black/anti-African racism. In other words, in the last 500 years or so, philosophy produced the Enlightenment and the European moment of Modernity, birthing the ideals of Reason, Freedom and Equality, and a universal Humanism. Yet, concurrent and consistent with this moment, there also occurred the violent subjugation and institutional enslavement and dehumanization of numerous members of the African diaspora. Moreover, and most importantly for our purposes, the logic and language of Modernity provide justifications and rationalizations for these occurrences and institutions. Africana Philosophy, thus, emerges from the “underside of Modernity,” (Dussel 1996) and as a “philosophy born of struggle,” (Harris 2000) that is, a response to this philosophically paradoxical, historical situation and its legacy. This *philosophy born of struggle* subdivides into three penumbral questions that will structure this course:

- 1) A commitment to liberation: What *are* the ideas of “freedom” and “equality” such that they are consistent with institutional slavery and/or domination?
- 2) A philosophical anthropology: What does it mean to be “human” such that the modern ideal of “*universal humanism*” does not automatically extend to all? In short, what does it mean to be “black”?
- 3) A meta-critique of Reason: What *is* “reason” such that it can function as a tool to “justify” 1 & 2, and subjugate and silence large portions of the world’s population?

REQUIRED TEXTS¹:

- All texts will be made available electronically.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- gain familiarity with the prominent figures and texts that comprise the Africana philosophical “canon.”
- gain familiarity with the main arguments and terms that pertain to Africana philosophical concerns and questions. Students will be able to:
- formulate thoughtful philosophical questions that generate discussion and serve as the basis for arguments.
- follow the arguments presented in scholarly texts and concisely re-articulate the main points.
- develop an original, persuasive argument in support of a philosophical position.

EVALUATION & COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Reading Responses: 15%

Once a week, each student will be expected to pose two thoughtful questions that critically engage the reading, and attempt to answer one of those questions in approximately ~400 words. Your reflection should obviously indicate familiarity with the particular text. Reflections should be typed and printed. They are due at the beginning of class on *either* Tuesday or Thursday, depending on which text you decide to write. Over the course

¹ See the course bibliography for the full list of citation information for course readings.

of the term, students will be expected to 10 reflections. This gives you three passes, but missed reflections cannot be made up.

Class Presentation: 10%

Each of you will be responsible for leading the class in a discussion on an aspect of the assigned reading for a given day.

Take-Home Exam: 15%

A take-home, essay exam.

Essay #1: 20%

~1500 words on an assigned topic.

Essay #2: 20%

~1500 critically engaging a work of secondary literature by a living Africana scholar/writer/thinker.

Essay #3: 20%

1500-2000 words on a topic of your choosing, relevant to the course (subject to professor approval).

A FEW PHILOSOPHY RESOURCES:

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.iep.utm.edu/

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

The University is clear and thorough on what constitutes an “excused absences” (see: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>). You are responsible for acquiring appropriate documentation substantiating any “excused absence.” Beyond that you are permitted two absences, for whatever reason. Additional absences will be negatively affect your grade, 5% points per class off of your final grade.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY:

Please silence cell phones during class time. Please do not use social media during class time.

LATE WORK POLICY:

Assignments must be turned in on time in order to be candidates for full credit. Late Papers will be penalized 5% points per 24-hr period. That said, if you *anticipate* needing more time in order to do your best work, for a compelling reason, I will consider granting an extension.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information visit: <http://disability.tamu.edu/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It's *your* education. Do your own work.

http://library.tamu.edu/services/library_tutorials/academic_integrity/index.html

AGGIE HONOR CODE

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.” <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>

WRITING CENTER

<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/>

COURSE SCHEDULE: (subject to amendment)

wk	date	day	TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
What is "Africana Philosophy"?					
1	8/29	T	Introduction: The Questions of Africana Philosophy	Lewis Gordon, <i>Introduction to Africana Philosophy</i> (IAP), pp. 1-32	
	8/31	Th	Questions, cont'd	Lucius Outlaw, "African, African American, Africana Philosophy" Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism"	
2	9/5	T	The Context of Emergence	Sylvia Wynter, "1492"	
	9/7	Th	The Context, cont'd	1492" cont'd	
3	9/12	T	The Context, cont'd	LaRose Parris, <i>Being Apart</i> , "Intro."	
	9/14	Th		Parris, <i>Being Apart</i> , "Ch.1: The Enlightenment, Scientific Racism, and Chattel Slavery"	
Freedom and Equality					
4	9/19	T		David Walker, <i>Appeal</i> (entirety) Suggested: Leonard Harris, "The Insurrectionist Ethics"	
	9/21	Th		Frederick Douglass, <i>My Bondage and My Freedom</i> , (chs.3, 10, 17) ---, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Suggested: W.E.B. DuBois, <i>Souls of Black Folk</i> , "Of The Dawn of Freedom" (pp. 16-34) Ida B. Wells, <i>A Red Record</i> , (Chs.1&10)	
5	9/26	T		Robert F. Williams, <i>Negroes With Guns</i> , (entirety) Suggested: Tommy Curry & Max Kelleher, "Robert F. Williams and Militant Civil Rights"	
	9/28	Th		George Jackson, <i>Blood in my Eye</i> (selections) Huey P. Newton, <i>The HP Newton Reader</i> : "In Defense of Self-defense" (1&2) Suggested: MLK, "Letter From Birmingham Jail" Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"	
6	10/3	T		Frantz Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> , "On Violence"	
	10/5	Th		Tommy Curry, "Please Don't Make Me Touch 'Em"	

Philosophical Anthropology					
7	10/10	T	Racism and Racialism	W.E.B. DuBois, "Conservation of the Races" Appiah, IMFH, "The Illusion of Race" Lucius Outlaw, "'Conserve' Races?"	
	10/12	Th	NO CLASS		
8	10/17	T	The Illusion of Race in light of Mixed-Race?	Naomi Zack, "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy" ---, "The Fluid Symbol of Mixed Race" Linda Alcoff, "On Being Mixed" Lewis Gordon, <i>Existential Africana</i> , "Mixed Race in Light of Whiteness and Shadows of Blackness"	
	10/19	Th	NO CLASS – Library Visit		
9	10/24	T	NO CLASS		
	10/26	Th	NO CLASS		
10	10/31	T	De-valued Humans	Derrick Bell, "The Space Traders" Anna J. Cooper, <i>A Voice From the South</i> , "What Are We Worth?" (228-285)	
	11/2	Th	Invisible Humans	George Yancy, "The Elevator Effect" W.E.B. DuBois, <i>Souls of Black Folk</i> , "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (pp. 7-15) Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> , "Prologue" (pp. 5-11)	
11	11/7	T	#BlackLives[DON'T]Matter	Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved" Tommy Curry, "Eschatological Dilemmas"	
The Meta-Critique of Reason					
	11/9	Th	Black Thoughts?	Paul Taylor, "Three Challenges to Race-Thinking" Kristie Dotson, "How is this Paper Philosophy?"	
12	11/14	T	Black Ideas?	Nahum Chandler, X, (ch.1) Suggested: DuBois, "The Study of Negro Problems"	
	11/16	Th	Black Learning?	Paulo Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> (ch1) Carter G Woodson, <i>The Miseducation of the Negro</i> (chs. 1-4) Suggested: Tommy Curry, "On Derelict and Method"	
	11/21	T	NO CLASS		
	11/23	Th	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break		

13	11/28	T	Unreason	Frantz Fanon, <i>Black Skin White Masks</i> , "The Lived Experience of the Black Man"	
				Suggested: Frantz Fanon, BSWM, "The Negro and Psychopathology"	
	11/30	Th		McKittrick & Wynter, <i>Sylvia Wynter</i> (ch2)	
Contemporary Imperatives and Concerns					
14	12/5	T	Racial Battle Fatigue & Racial Realism	Smith et al. "Racial Battle Fatigue" Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism" Smith et al. "You Make Me Wanna Holla"	
	5/2	Th	Whiteness	Linda Alcoff, <i>The Future of Whiteness</i> , (Intro & Conc) Suggested: Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections on Three Popular Tropes in the Study of Whiteness" Du Bois, <i>Darkwater</i> , "The Souls of [w]hite Folk"	
15	5/4	T	Conclusion	Amir Jaima, "Don't Talk to white People"	
			Wednesday, 12/13 @ 10am		
					Final Essay Due

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Chandler, Nahum Dimitri. 2013. *X-The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*. Oxford University Press.

Cooper, Anna Julia. 1988. *A Voice From the South*. 1892. Oxford University Press, USA.

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