

PHIL 352: Africana Philosophy | Mid-Term Essay Prompts

Due October 18 11:59 pm on Canvas

On the next page are five essay prompts.
Read through them carefully, and choose one.
Respond to it in **at least 1000 words**, and no more than 2000 words.

Please read the following instructions closely:

Prompts are accompanied by guiding questions which are meant to help you think through the topic. **Feel free to answer/address some or all these questions in your essay, but it is not mandatory that you provide answers to the guiding questions attached to the prompt you choose.** They are provided solely to assist you in thinking about the prompt. Ultimately, **your essay should reflect a thoughtful engagement with your chosen prompt through a comparative approach.**

Each prompt asks you to engage with more than one author. It is your choice *which* authors to compare for your chosen prompt, but **it is mandatory that you engage at least two authors, if not more. At least one of these authors should be from our class readings between August 20 and October 17.** You may choose to draw from authors *only* from our class, or to engage an Africana text/s we haven't read together. If you choose to introduce an external reading, make sure it is a reliable and scholarly source (peer-reviewed journal article, book, or speech). If you are unclear on whether it meets this standard, check with me first.

The purpose of this exercise is to orient your thinking more thematically and trace topical threads through our readings and discussions. Therefore, in your writing, this should be the priority. **It is up to you whether to have an original argument put forth in this essay which is aided by a comparative analysis, or an argument in support of an account you find more persuasive (where this may apply), or your own commentary on what your chosen authors add (or not) to the theme you choose to focus on or to an ongoing debate.** Thus, you have more creative avenues in this regard. What is essential is that **your essay prioritizes a comparative analysis.**

Reminder:

You are responsible for your education and learning. Plagiarising, using text generators like ChatGPT/others with similar functions, or having someone else write your paper are strongly discouraged and violate student academic integrity rules as well as those I have explicitly outlined in our class syllabus and shared with you on day one. If you are having difficulties with writing your paper, feel free to visit the Writing Center for assistance, or contact me regarding any such concerns.

Prompts

1. Analyze different authors' engagement with the concept of time and temporality as it relates to colonialism and slavery.
 - What is the significance of temporal frameworks like the "colonial present" or the "afterlife of slavery" or "legacies" of slavery and colonialism?
 - How do these temporalities challenge conventional understandings of history and progress?
 - How does a non-linear understanding of time reframe resistance and liberation?
2. Analyze different authors' accounts of the role of memory in the construction of racial identities and histories.
 - How do different authors understand the politics of remembering and forgetting?
 - What are the stakes in controlling historical narratives about race, colonization, and slavery?
 - How does historical memory shape present identities and political realities?
 - What is the role of memory in creating collective identities and solidarities?
3. Compare Africana thinkers' accounts of, and responses to humanism.
 - What is at stake in rethinking the category of the human?
 - How do different authors in Africana philosophy grapple with the limitations of traditional humanism?
 - How do concepts like race and colonization shape who is considered human?
 - What might a new conception of the human look like?
 - Should we retain the category of 'human'? Why? Why not?
4. Compare how various authors understand the nature of power and the possibilities of resisting it.
 - How is power maintained through social, political, and economic structures?
 - What role does the control of knowledge, time, or space play in the exercise of power?
 - How can we characterize the relationship between power and violence?
5. Consider different Africana accounts of the significance of naming and identity.
 - How do different authors address the power, politics, and paradoxes of naming?
 - Why do names matter for identity, resistance, and subjectivity?
 - How can names be a source of liberation and/or oppression?
 - How do naming practices shape the social and political existence of individuals and groups?