

Course Syllabus

Philosophy and Race Philosophy 451 Spring Semester 2003

Instructor: Bill E. Lawson Office: 511 S. Kedzie Hall
Phone: 353-2319 **Office Hours:** 3-4:30pm Tuesday and
Thursday
E-mail belowson@msu.edu

TEXT:

Linda Bell, *Overcoming Racism and Sexism* (R)
David Carroll Cochran, *The Color of Freedom: Race and contemporary American Liberalism* (R)
George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (R)
Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress* (R)

DESCRIPTION:

What is race? Is it a biological or a social reality, or both? Does race exist in some kind of necessary relation to other social phenomena, or does it have an independent dynamic? Does it evolve in history, and, if so, how? Does race presuppose racism? What is racial identity? Can racial solidarity be a legitimate political ideal? How does our understanding of race bear on our ability to challenge racism and racial injustice generally? What tactics are justifiable, which strategies can be effective? What is the significance of such debates as those over affirmative action and the underclass to the evolution of race in the US?

We will examine these and related questions while discussing the work of a number of contemporary thinkers as well as the most influential theorist on these themes, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois. We will consider how these issues relate to debates in the history of philosophy and how central they may be to outstanding issues in philosophy today.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students must attend all classes and be prepared to discuss assigned readings. A term paper will develop an extended treatment (8 to 10 pages) of a problem or controversy regarding race. The term paper will be due no later than 10 am., Friday April 25 in the Philosophy Department office, 503 S. Kedzie Hall. There will be two short answer exams, TBA

Philosophy & Black Experience Reading Assignments

Race and Racism

January

7 Course introductions

7 George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History*

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14 **Ruth** Benedict “Racism: The ism of the Modern world” (Racism Harris)
James M. Jones: *Racism: What is it and How does it work?* (Prejudice Jones)

16 Howard Winant: *The Historical Sociology of Race*” (Ghetto Winant)
David Theo Goldberg “Racism and Rationality: The Need for new critique” (Racism Harris)

21 J.L.A. Garcia: *The heart of Racism* (Racism Harris)

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K Anthony Appiah “Why There are no Races” (Racism Harris)

Philosophy and Race

28 Lou Outlaw “Introduction: On Race and Philosophy” (Philosophy Outlaw)

30 Zack, Naomi “Race and Philosophic Meaning” (R&R Boxill)

February

4 K Anthony Appiah “Why There are no Races” (Racism Harris)

Tommy Lott “Dubois and the Invention of Race” (Invention Lott)

6 Boxill, Bernard “The Underclass and the Race/Class Issue” (Underclass Lawson)

11 Howard McGary “Alienation and the African-American Experience” (R&SJ McGary)
Marilyn Frye “Oppression” (RCG Anderson)
Bill E. Lawson “Social Disappointment and the Black Sense of Self” (Existence Gordon)

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Liberal Theory and Race

18 David Carroll Cochran, The Color of Freedom: Race and contemporary American Liberalism

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Martha Nussbaum: The Feminist Critique of Liberalism (S&SJ Nussbaum)

March

11 Derrick Bell “The Space Traders” (Faces Bell)

Derrick Bell “After we’re gone: prudent Speculation on America in a Post-Racial Epoch” (Critical Delgado)

Michael A. Olivas “The Chronicles, My Grandfather’s stories and Immigration Law: The Slaver Trader Chronicles as Racial History” (Critical Delgado)

13 Robert Gooding William “Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy” (Race Bernasconi)

Judith Butler “Conversational Break: A reply to Robert Gooding William” (Race Bernasconi)

Racism Applied

18 Albert Mosley “Music, Modernity, and Pragmatism” (abstract)

20 Bill E. Lawson “JAZZ AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: THE EXPRESSIVENESS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC” (on web)

25 Walter Mosley, Devil in a Blue Dress

Cornel West “Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning” (RM West)

27 Charles Mills “Do black men have an obligation to marry black women?” (Blackness Mills)

Haki Madhubuti “Should Blacks take whites as friends, lover, etc” (Enemies Madhubuti)

Lawrence Graham “I never Dated a White women” (Member Graham)

April

1 Lott “prime time blackness” (Invention Lott)
dancing in September

3 Lott “prime time blackness”
Dancing in September

8 Linda Bell, *Overcoming Racism and Sexism:*

Racism and Sexism: Twenty-First-Century Challenges for Feminists

Blanche Radford Curry

The Allure and Hold of Privilege: A Response to Curry Linda A. Bell

10 “I Just See People”: Exercises in Learning the Effects of Racism and Sexism

Bernita C. Berry

Appendix: Why the Dialogues Are Difficult or 15 Ways a Black Woman Knows When a White Woman’s Not
Listening *Marsha Houston*

15 Richard A. Wasserstrom “Racism and Sexism” (R&R Boxill)

Laurence *Mordekhai Thomas* “Sexism and Racism: Some Conceptual Differences” (R&R
Boxill)

Elizabeth Spelman “The Erasure of Black Women” (Handout)

17 Power, Trust, and Evil Laurence *Mordekhai Thomas*

Sexism and Male Gender Identity: A Reply to Thomas, David Blumenfeld

22 The Problem of Speaking for Others *Linda Martin Alcoff*

The Peculiar Position of a Woman of Color When World Fame Isn’t Enough

La Verne Shelton

24 Harris: “What then, Is Racism? (Racism Harris)

Bill E. Lawson “Does Race Matter at the Bottom of the Well?”(Douglas Lawson)

Texts:

Author	Title	Publisher
Anderson, Margaret	Race, Class, And Gender	Wadsworth
Bell, Derrick	Faces at the Bottom of the Well	Basic Books
Bernasconi, Robert	Race	Blackwell
Boxill, Bernard	Race and Racism	Oxford
Delgado, Richard	Critical Race Theory	Temple University Press
Gordon, Lewis	Existence in Black	Routledge
Graham, Lawrence Otis	Member of the Club: Reflections on Life in a Racially Polarized World	Harper Perennial

Harris, Leonard	Racism	Humanity Books
Jones, James M.	Prejudice and Racism	McGraw Hill
Lawson, Bill	Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader	Blackwell
Lawson, Bill	The Underclass Question	Temple University Press
Lott, Tommy	The Invention of Race	Blackwell
Madhubuti, Haki	Enemies: The Clash of Races	Third World Press
McGary, Howard	Race and Social Justice	Blackwell
Mills, Charles	Blackness Visible	University of Chicago
Nussbaum, Martha	Sex and Social Justice	Oxford
Outlaw, Lucius	On Race and Philosophy	Routledge
West, Cornel	Race Matters	Beacon Press
Winant, Howard	The World is a Ghetto	Basic Books