

Social & Political Philosophy II:

Black political thought on race and justice (in the era of #BlackLivesMatter)

revised January 24/22

Code and section: PHIL 6610 (01)

Term: Winter 2022

Instructor: Professor Monique Deveaux

Method of Delivery:

This is a seminar/discussion-based course. ***We will meet online (zoom) until in-person meetings are allowed. The exact time of the online meetings will be determined collectively over email in the first week of the semester.*** Some of us have schedules significantly disrupted by the shift to online schooling, pandemic-related restrictions, etc. (The scheduled in-person meeting time is Thursdays 2:30-5:20 in the MacDonald Institute Room 101 (MINS 101), but once we can meet in person, this may change to a time that suits everyone better.)

Course Synopsis:

This course centers on contemporary political philosophy on race and justice, mainly in connection with the #BlackLivesMatter movement/the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). We will read recent work that addresses the structures and practices of racial injustice, and activist/social movement responses to these injustices. Some of the course readings speak to the thinking and organizing associated with the M4BL and adjacent Black political struggles against racist oppression (like the prison abolition movement). It is not a complete overview of the building of the M4BL but rather situates current philosophical writing on racial justice against the background of political struggles against anti-Black racism.

Assignments & Means of Evaluation

Course Assessment

- Oral expression (in-class/video class discussion): 15%
- 10 short written reflections pieces (due before class): 15%
- Oral presentation + written version of presentation (2000 words/5-6 pages): 25%
- Final research paper (7000-8000 words, or 17-20 pp.): 45% (due mid-April)

*This component is not just attendance; it is about how well you convey your ideas verbally and engage in discussion with others as a constructive interlocutor. Includes the roundtable at the beginning of class.

**1-pg (300 words max) response pieces should engage with one (or more) of the readings for that day. They will be graded together as a dossier at the end of the course; I will give you written feedback only on your first one, but if you would benefit from comments on subsequent ones, please ask me. You can submit these for any of our classes, even the day of your oral presentation.

***this is an extended critical analysis (*not* summary) of the course readings for that day. Please give this to me no later than two days after your oral presentation.

Course Requirements

You are expected to attend our online and in-person class meetings and to participate actively in class discussion. Prior to most classes, you should submit a short, written reflection (200-300 words), in which you reflect critically on some aspect of that day's reading. You will do 10 of these over the course of the semester, and they must be submitted before class, as the point of them is to help you to prepare for class discussion. There are two essays/papers: a 2000-word critical essay focused on the course readings that you are doing your oral presentation on; and a final research paper of 7000-8000 words. If you miss any readings due to absence, please make sure to catch up. In our seminar discussions, we will often refer back to material covered in prior classes.

Course objectives

This course will introduce you to recent political philosophy/theory on racial injustice, and the dilemmas/challenges faced by social movements organizing against racial oppression. More generally, the course aims to develop your analytical and critical reasoning skills; your ability to insights and arguments; and your ability to write cogently and concisely.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, you should have a sound overview of how human migration is discussed in contemporary social and political thought; improved skills in critical reasoning; and greater capacity to read and analyze texts in normative political philosophy and ethics.

Readings:

This course uses books, book chapters, and journal articles available through ARES (or are otherwise available online). The exception to this is the book by Desmond Cole (*The Skin We're In*), which the library only has a single hard copy of (on reserve for our course). Cole's book can be purchased (Indigo, etc.) as a hard copy or Kobo e-book. In a few cases I will supply a PDF of the reading in advance. *Approximately 100-125 pages per week of reading.*

Schedule of Readings and Topics *(subject to change)*

I have not yet assigned class dates to the readings listed below, but we will go roughly in the order listed. If we remain online for more than a few weeks, I may decide to split up our sessions (so as to avoid nearly 3 hr-long zoom classes). "1 week" indicates we will cover those readings in one week, and "2 weeks" indicates that we'll spread them over two weeks (whether that's 2 long classes or 3 shorter classes).

Introduction: Overview of the M4BL/BLM movement (Jan 10-14)

Alicia Garza on why there is a Black Lives Matter Movement:

<https://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>

Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twentieth Century* (2018), ch's 1 & 3 (pp. 11-28 and 47-80)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2021/2nd edition): short foreword by Angela Y. Davis, and Ch.'s 4 & 6 (pp. 107-133 and 153-190).

Deva Woodyly, Ch. 1 ("Emergence: A Contemporary History") in *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 20-46.

Desmond Cole, "Justice for Abdirahman" and "Direct Action," in *The Skin We're In* (2020) - pp. 39-60 and 61-78.

When our political activism isn't rooted in a theory about transforming the world, it becomes narrow; when it is focused only on individual actors instead of larger systemic problems, it becomes shortsighted. We do have to deal with the current crisis in the short term. That's important. We have to have solutions for people's real-life problems, and we have to allow people to decide what those solutions are. We also have to create a vision that's much bigger than the one we have right now.

- Patrisse Khan-Cullors, cofounder #BlackLivesMatter

Jan. 20 - Movement Values, Visions, Framing – part 1

bell hooks, "Love as the Practice of Freedom" (various places – e.g.:

<https://geo.coop/content/bell-hooks-love-practice-freedom>)

Deva Woodyly, Ch. 2 ("Political Philosophy: Radical Black Feminist Pragmatism") of *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 49-88.

Tommy J. Curry, "He Never Mattered: Poor Black Males and the Dark Logic of Intersectional Invisibility," in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 59-89

Jan. 27 - Movement Values, Visions, Framing – part 2

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "How Do We Change America?" *New Yorker* (June 8, 2020): <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-do-we-change-america>

Chris Lebron, "Where is the Love? The Hope for America's Redemption" ch. 4, of *The Making of Black Lives Matter* (2017), pp. 97-125

Dana Francisco Miranda, "The Violence of Leadership in Black Lives Matter," in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 243-262.

Robin D.G. Kelley, "Why We Won't Wait" (2014): <https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/11/25/why-we-wont-wait/>

Feb. 3 - Power – part 1

Martin Luther King Jr., "Black Power Defined" (1967) – I will supply link or pdf

Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (1963), chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 – (on course reserves, but I will also supply a PDF)

Some news/commentary contextualizing MLK Jr's thought that you may find interesting:

Victoria Walcott, "The public has underestimated the radicalism of Martin Luther King Jr.'s early work", *Washington Post*, Jan 17/22:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/01/17/public-has-underestimated-radicalism-martin-luther-king-jrs-early-work/>

Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King", *Princetonian*, Jan. 17, 2022:

<https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2022/01/martin-luther-king-day-radical-thinker-keean-ga-yamahtta-taylor>

Dr. Meena Krishnamurthy, "What Martin Luther King Jr. Really Thought About the Riots", *Jacobin* (2020): <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/09/martin-luther-king-riots-looting-biden>

1967 NBC News interview with Dr. King: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xsbt3a7K-8>

Feb. 10 – Justice – part 1

Tommie Shelby, "Prisons of the Forgotten: Ghettos and Economic Injustice" – Ch. 9 of *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.*

Deva Woody, Ch. 3 ("The Politics of Care and the Idea of Healing Justice") of *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 89-126

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Ch. 7, *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

Feb. 17 - Anger

Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage* (2021), Ch's 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

Lorde, Audre. 1997. "The Uses of Anger." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25, nos. 1–2: 278–85.

If you have time, take a look at:

Interview with Myisha Cherry:

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/q-and-a/a-philosophers-defense-of-anger>

Winter break: Feb 21-25

If you have time, take a listen to:

Talking While Black – podcast episode, This American Life (Jan. 7, 2022) – by Emanuele Berry:
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/758/talking-while-black>

March 3 – Justice – part 2

Malcom X, *The Ballot or the Bullet* (speech, 1964), available in many places online (e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLQLUpNGsc>)

Charles Mills, Ch. 7 ("Racial Exploitation"), in *Black Rights/White Wrongs* (pp. 113-135)

Olúfémi O. Táíwò, "Reconsidering Reparations: The Movement for Black Lives and Self-Determination," in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021)

March 10 - Power – part 2

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (1997) – Introduction, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 (pp. 1-89)

Charles Mills, "White Supremacy" in the *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race* (2018), pp. 475-487

Vanessa Wills, "'And He Ate Jim Crow': Racist Ideology as False Consciousness," in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 35-58

March 17 – Organizing, Protest, Freedom – part 1

Rinaldo Walcott, *Moving toward Black Freedom* (2021), Ch. 1 ("Moving Toward Black Freedom"), 14 ("No Happy Story"), 15 ("I Really Want to Hope") and 22 ("The Long Emancipation Revisited"). *These are short chapters, and total about 20 pages.*

Dionne Brand, lecture: "Writing Against Tyranny and Toward Liberation" (2017):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ychlzoeelm0>

Chris Lebron, "Afterword: Nobody's Protest Essay," (pp. 153-65) in *The Making of Black Lives Matter* (2017)

Deva Woodyly, Ch. 4 ("The Art of Organizing") in *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 127-157

March 24 – Organizing, Protest, Freedom – part 2

essays by Angela Y. Davis (tbd)

Neil Roberts, "Angela Y. Davis: Abolitionism, Democracy, Freedom", in *African American Thought: A Collected History* (2021): pp. 660-684.

March 31 - Solidarity – part 1

Tommy Shelbie, *We Who Are Dark: the Philosophical Foundations of Black Political Solidarity* (2005), Introduction, ch. 2, ch. 6, & Conclusion

April 7 - Solidarity – part 2

Desmond Cole, "Honoured Group," in *The Skin We're In* (2020), pp. 83-106.

Sandy Hudson, "Indigenous and Black Solidarity in Practice: #BLMtoTentCity," and "Conclusion: the Palimpsest", in *Until we are free: reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada*, eds. Syrus Marcus Ware et al (2020) - pp. 295-307 and 315-17

Olúfemi O. Táíwò ,“ Being-in-the-Room Privilege: On Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference”: <https://www.thephilosopher1923.org/essay-taiwo>

Myisha Cherry, “State Racism, State Violence, and Vulnerable Solidarity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (2017)