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# Philosophy of Race: Identity, Racism, and Justice

## PHL 220 (COLL 200)

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W&M Fall 2020  
Tuesday/Thursday: 12:30pm – 1:50pm  
James Blair 201

Instructor: Aaron Griffith  
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Office: 138 James Blair Hall  
Office Hours: W: 1pm – 3pm or by apt.

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### Overview

The purpose of this course is to explore issues of race and racism from a philosophical perspective. The course will begin with the question, what is race? We'll look at various answers about the nature of race, e.g., race as social/cultural, biological, or merely morphological. Next, we'll focus on questions surrounding racial identity and its intersections with our other identities, especially class and gender. Then, we'll turn to the question of the nature of racism. Individualistic conceptions of racism will be contrasted with systemic conceptions. We'll focus on three case studies of systemic racism: police brutality, mass incarceration, and immigration policy. Our final topic is where we go from here in the pursuit of racial justice, with a focus on sources of hope and despair and our individual and collective responsibility.

### Requirements

1. Regular attendance and participation (10%)
2. Racial Identity Interview (10%)
3. 5 Reading Responses (15%)
4. Diagnosing Racism Exercise (15%)
5. What is Race? Response Essay (20%)
6. Long Essay (30%)

### Schedule

The following schedule is tentative and may be amended during the course of the semester. All readings come from required course material. Optional readings can be found on the course Black Board page.

#### Week 1: Introduction

##### Readings:

Syllabus, Introduction, Course Overview  
Cornel West, [“The Spirit of Truth-Seeking”](#) (from 37:30 to 57:30)

##### Class:

8/20: Full Class Online

### Materials

#### Required Texts:

- *What is Race?* Glasgow, Haslanger, Jeffers, and Spencer, Oxford University Press 2019
- All other readings are PDFs that can be found on the course Black Board page.

### Grading Scale

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- A: 90-100 (90-93: A-, 93.5-100: A)
- B: 80-89 (80-83: B-, 83.5-86: B, 86.5-89: B+)
- C: 70-79 (70-73: C-, 73.5-76: C, 76.5-79: C+)
- D: 60-69 (60-63: D-, 63.5-66: D, 66.5-69: D+)
- F: 0-59

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**Week 2: What is Race?****Readings:**

Sally Haslanger, "Tracing the Sociopolitical Reality of Race"  
Chike Jeffers, "Cultural Constructionism"  
*Seeing White* Podcast: "Turning the Lens"; "How Race Was Made"; "Made in America"

**Class:**

8/25: Full Class Online  
8/27: Full Class Online

**Friday 8/28 Last Day to Add/Drop**

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**Week 3: What is Race?****Readings:**

Quayshawn Spencer, "How to be a Biological Racial Realist"  
Joshua Glasgow, "Is Race an Illusion or a (Very) Basic Reality?"  
*Seeing White* Podcast: "On Crazy Nation We Built"; "Little War on the Prairie"; "That's No Us, So We're Clean"

**Class:**

9/1: Full Class Online  
9/3: Full Class Online

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**Week 4: What is Race?****Readings:**

Haslanger's Reply to Glasgow, Jeffers, and Spencer  
Jeffers' Reply to Glasgow, Haslanger, and Spencer  
Spencer's Reply to Glasgow, Haslanger, and Jeffers  
Glasgow's Reply to Haslanger, Jeffers, and Spencer  
*Seeing White* Podcast: "Chenjerai's Challenge"; "Skulls and Skins"; "A Racial Cleansing in America"

**Class:**

9/8: Professor Joe Jones Zoom Visit  
9/10: Full Class Online

**Friday 9/11: *What is Race?*  
Response Essay due @ 11:59pm on  
Bb**

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**Week 5: Racial Identities****Readings:**

Yancy and hooks, Interview  
Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black"  
Alcoff, "Is Latina/o a Racial Identity?"  
Okihiro, "Is Yellow White or Black?"  
Yancy and Kim, "The Invisible Asian"  
Curry, "Toward a Genre Study of Black Male Death and Dying" (pp. 1-19)  
*Seeing White* Podcast: "Citizen Thind"; "Danger"; "My White Friends"

**Class:**

9/15: Tuesday section in person  
9/17: Thursday section in person  
Online Section: TBD

**Extra Class**

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## Week 6: Racial Identities

### Readings:

Hill Collins, "Defining Black Feminist Thought"  
Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex"  
Bailey "Despising an Identity They Taught me to Claim"  
*Seeing White* Podcast: "White Affirmative Action"; "Transformation"

### Class:

9/22: Professor Monika Gosin Zoom visit  
9/24: Full Class Online  
Online Section: TBD

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## Week 7: Racial Identities

### Readings:

Tuvell, "Transracialism"  
Oluo, "The Heart of Whiteness"

### Class:

9/29: Tuesday section in person  
10/1: Thursday section in person  
Online Section: TBD

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## Week 8: Racism

### Readings:

Garcia, "The Heart of Racism"  
Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?"  
Glasgow, "Racism as Disrespect"  
Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other"  
Griffith, "What is *Systemic* Racism?"

### Class:

10/6: Tuesday section in person  
10/8: Thursday section in person  
Online Section: TBD

**Friday 10/9: Racial Identity  
Interview due @ 11:59pm on Bb  
Extra Class**

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## Week 9: Racist Systems

### Readings:

Davis, "Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition"  
Alexander, "The Lockdown" from *The New Jim Crow*  
Shrage, "Race, Health Disparities, Incarceration, and Structural Inequality"  
Optional: Stevenson on the [Criminal Justice System](#)

### Class (online):

10/13: Visit from Professor Cheryl Dickter via Zoom  
10/15: Zoom

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**Week 10: Racist Systems**

**Readings:**

Yancy and Butler, Interview  
Zack, “Black Injustice and Police Homicide”  
Cherry, “The Color and Content of Their Fears”  
Vanessa Wills, “Bad Guys and Dirty Hands: ‘Ethical Policing’ in the Presence of Racial Injustice”

**Class:**

10/20: Zoom  
10/22: Zoom

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**Week 11 Racist Systems**

**Readings:**

Papazoglou, “The Philosophical Roots of Today’s Immigration Debate”:  
<https://newrepublic.com/article/152883/philosophical-roots-todays-immigration-debate>  
Mendoza, “Philosophy of Race and the Ethics of Immigration”  
Optional: Wills, “Border Policing and the War on Terror Fuel Trump’s Authoritarian Agenda”

**Class (online):**

10/27: Sharon Powell Zoom Visit  
10/29: **NO CLASS: Griffith Baby Arrives!**

**Friday 10/30: Diagnosing Racism**  
**Exercise due @ 11:59pm on Bb**

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**Week 12: Responsibility, Despair, and Hope**

**Readings:**

Coates, “The Case for Reparations”  
Lyons, “Reparations for Slavery and Jim Crow: Its Assumptions and Implications”  
Coates and Hughes on [Reparations](#)

**Class (in person):**

11/3: **Optional Class: GO VOTE!**  
11/5: Zoom

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**Week 13: Responsibility, Despair, and Hope**

**Readings:**

Bell, “Introduction” and “Epilogue” from *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*  
Shelby, “Conclusion” from *We Who are Dark*  
Hill-Collins, “U.S. Black Feminism in Transnational Context” from *Black Feminist Thought*  
Wise, “The Audacity of Truth: A Call for White Responsibility” from *Between Barack and a Hard Place*  
West, “[Hope is Spiritual Armor Against Modern Society’s Spiritual Warfare](#)”

**Class (in person):**

11/10: Zoom  
11/12: Zoom

**Extra Class**

## Week 14: Finals Week

Friday 11/20: Long Essay Due @ 11:59pm on Bb

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### Of Special Note

#### COVID-19

This course is designated as a MIX course, involving both in-person and online elements. (It also has a separate RSOF section that is entirely remote, though synchronous.) This has been done in an effort to minimize the number of people in the classroom (for details see below). In the interest of keeping you, me, and your peers safe, **a mask or appropriate face covering is required at all times while in the classroom**. If you do not have appropriate a face covering you cannot enter the classroom; if you won't wear your face covering in class, you'll be asked to leave.

It is also required that you observe social distancing—6ft away from people—in the classroom. Do not move desks in the classroom.

It is also crucial to stay home from class if you are feeling at all ill, especially if you have any COVID-19 symptoms. If you need to stay home or quarantine during the semester, you'll be able to keep up with the course remotely.

#### Course Content and Class Time

All of the course content, e.g., lectures, handouts, etc. will be delivered online. Each Friday I will post the lecture material for the following week online. Our Tuesday and Thursday in person meetings will be devoted to discussion of the material covered in the lecture videos. In order to reduce the number of people in a room at a time, students will either attend the Tuesday meetings or the Thursday meetings, but not both. This will have the effect that the total classroom time each week will only be 75 minutes. However, there are a number of weeks that we will have a class wide Zoom meeting in lieu of in person meetings—see schedule above. The designation 'Full Class Zoom' includes both the in person section as well as the online section.

**Note that we will be meeting online until week 5.** This is due to College policy that is restricting in person learning until after Labor Day.

If you are enrolled in the online only version of the course, then you will meet via Zoom once a week at a time TBD.

Because the semester has been shorted by a week, professors are required to integrate another week of instruction into the semester. Periodically, you'll see scheduled "Extra Class" on certain Fridays during the semester. Students are not required to be in the classroom for the extra session. It will simply be an extra video on assigned course material and will be available with the other videos assigned for the week.

#### Office Hours

I will hold standing office hours on Wednesdays from 1pm to 3pm. I am also happy to meet outside of those times if they are not convenient for students. All office hours meetings will be held by Zoom unless the student requests to meet in person.

## Seeing White Podcast

During the first six weeks of class, students are required to listen to the series *Seeing White* from the podcast *Scene on Radio*. The episodes can be found here: <http://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/>. While I won't be lecturing on the podcast content, we will discuss the podcast during week 7. I recommend keeping notes as you listen in order to have some material to discuss for week 7.

## Attendance

Attendance is *mandatory*. Attendance will be taken at arbitrary points during the semester. You get 3 free documented absences during the semester. For each documented absence after your 3rd you will lose 1% off of your final grade. Please be on time to class. But if you are late to class, please enter the room quietly and unobtrusively. Absences may be excused for the following reasons only: (a) a serious medical issue (i.e., one requiring hospitalization or confinement in the infirmary), (b) a family emergency (i.e., death or emergency hospitalization of an immediate family member), (c) conflicting University-related events, (d) religious observances, or (e) jury duty.

## Missed Tests

Make up or alternative tests will not be granted without documented proof of either (a) a serious medical issue (i.e., one requiring hospitalization or confinement in the infirmary), (b) a family emergency (i.e., death or emergency hospitalization of an immediate family member), (c) conflicting University-related events, (d) religious observances, or (e) jury duty. If you miss a test and do not have documented proof of these cases, you will receive a 0 (zero) as your score. (Alternate tests should be scheduled ahead of time for reasons (c) through (e).)

## Papers

*Papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late.* I am happy to help you get an early start on your written assignments. You are responsible for backing up texts composed on a computer, and failures of software or hardware are not acceptable reasons for a late assignment. I highly recommend using Dropbox to back up your files: <http://www.dropbox.com/>

If you do not understand why you received the grade you did, please come see me. Under no conditions will your grade be lowered if you do come see me to discuss a grade you received. *However, if you do want clarification you must submit to me in writing your question or concern before we meet in person.*

I also encourage you to take advantage of the writing resources on campus. The *Writing Resources Center* in Swem Library offers free feedback on your written work, including help with drafting, organizing, and editing your assignments. Find the writing center online at <http://www.wm.edu/as/wrc/>.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious matter and will be handled by the appropriate authorities. According to official William & Mary policy, plagiarism is “the presentation, with intent to deceive, or with disregard for proper scholarly procedures of a significant scope, of any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were one’s own without giving appropriate credit to the original source” (Section IV, C: Honor Code Violations). Turning in any work which is not your own and not properly acknowledged as such will result in a recommendation for failure in the course and subject you to further action by the university. Please review the university policy on academic dishonesty and speak to me if you have questions. See:

[https://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor\\_system/section\\_VI/index.php](https://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor_system/section_VI/index.php)

## Writing Resources Center

The Writing Resources Center, located on the first floor of Swem Library, is a free service provided to W&M students. Trained consultants offer individual assistance with writing, presentation, and other communication assignments across disciplines and at any stage, from generating ideas to polishing a final product. To make an appointment, visit the WRC webpage [www.wm.edu/wrc](http://www.wm.edu/wrc).

## Class Behavior

You are responsible for being prepared for each class session, which means having carefully read the assignment for each day of class and thought of questions you would like to discuss. You are responsible for all material covered in both lecture and the required readings.

I ask that all members of the class conduct themselves in a respectful manner. Respect for others takes a number of forms in this class, and in academic life generally. In the first place, it means that we need to be sensitive to how our behavior in class affects others. For example, I ask that students be conscientious about how your use of technology affects others in class. Take conversations and phone calls outside. Please do not text, chat online, or surf the net in class. If your behavior becomes problematic or disruptive, I will ask you to leave. I ask that you have intellectual respect for others, as well. This means that if you disagree with a position that someone holds, you should assume that the person is at least as smart as you are, and that the person probably has good reasons for thinking as he or she does. Your job is to be a good listener and exchange ideas, not to attack and degrade others.

## Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of The College of William & Mary to accommodate students with disabilities and qualifying diagnosed conditions in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Students will also need to contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2509 or at [sas@wm.edu](mailto:sas@wm.edu) to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see [www.wm.edu/sas](http://www.wm.edu/sas).

## Additional Resources

Not all resources (especially those online) are created equal! You will not need to read or research any other material than the required readings to succeed in this course. However, you may be interested in pursuing our topics further. In addition to the optional readings I will provide on our course website, I recommend two websites in particular:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: [www.plato.stanford.edu/](http://www.plato.stanford.edu/)

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: [www.iep.utm.edu/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/)

Philosophy Compass: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1747-9991](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-9991)