

PHIL-UA 3: Ethics & Society

Instructor: Annette Martín

Email: annette.martin@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:10-2pm, or by appt

Office: 5 Washington Pl. #313

Meeting: MTWR 11:30am-1:05pm

Location: 5 Washington Pl. #302

Class Numbers: 4788, 4789

Class Dates: July 8- Aug 15

Course Description:

Welcome to Ethics and Society!

This course will offer a philosophical exploration of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. We will consider various views on how to understand different kinds of social inequality, beginning with individualist views and then moving to more structuralist accounts. In early weeks we will be asking: What's the point of giving an account of racism? Is racism a matter of individuals' deeply held beliefs and feelings? Is implicit bias the key to explaining social inequality? We will then delve more deeply into views that take these phenomena to be primarily structural, and consider such questions as: What are social structures? What does it mean to say that racism is "structural"? And if social inequality is largely a matter of social structures, then who or what is responsible for these injustices? At the same time, this course will focus on developing philosophical skills of writing, dialogue, and argumentation.

Learning Objectives:

- Following each weekly unit, students will be able to accurately state and describe the major positions discussed that week
- By midterm, students will be able to characterize the major pros and cons of individualist and structuralist accounts of oppression
- By the end of the course, students will be able to effectively evaluate each other's work for comprehension, persuasiveness, and clear argumentation
- By the end of the course, students will be able to formulate and persuasively defend a clear and concise thesis statement that effectively engages with the topic of oppression

Prerequisites: None

Required Text: There is no required text that must be purchased for this course. Instead, I will make the readings for each session available via the NYU Box for the course.

(Link to NYU Box: <https://nyu.box.com/v/EthicsSocietySu19>)

Assignments and Grading:

- Daily Reading Assignments – 15%
- Attendance and Active Participation – 10%
- Weekly Writing Assignments (10% each) – 40%
- Peer Review (1% each) – 5%
- Term Paper (5-7 pgs; 5% outline, 5% blurb, 20% final) – 30%

Weekly Writing Assignments: In addition to a final paper and outline at the end of the term, there will be weekly writing assignments: three traditional papers, one full-length blog post, and one short blog blurb. Each of these will be due by 1pm on the Sunday of the relevant week. I will hand out a rubric that will give you a sense of what is expected and how your papers will be evaluated.

Late and Missing Assignments: Because we only have six weeks, this course is necessarily fast-paced. Because of the compressed timeline and the scaffolded structure of the weekly writing assignments, it will be important to keep up with the writing assignments as much as possible. Timely completion of the weekly writing, final outline, and final paper are all required for passing the course. Grades for writing assignments will go down $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade for each day late (e.g. an A will become an A-, and an A- will become a B+), and late writing assignments will not be accepted more than 5 days past the original due date, or after 11:59pm on August 17th (whichever comes first). However, special extensions may occasionally be granted under extreme circumstances, so if you are experiencing personal difficulties that will affect your ability to complete these assignments on time, come and talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan of action!

Peer Review: In addition to submitting your own weekly writing, you will be asked to use a rubric to provide constructive feedback on your peers' writing on a weekly basis. Your feedback will be due by the start of class on Tuesdays.

Daily Reading Assignments: For each reading, students will be asked to complete a short assignment intended to check for comprehension and encourage engagement with the material. Students may select between: answering selected reading questions; designing "Taboo" card(s) that characterize an important term, concept, or author and offer a list of intimately related "taboo" words; drawing a picture or diagram (with an explanatory caption) that illustrates a central concept or argument in the reading; or writing a short (~300 word) blog blurb that engages with the reading in a significant way. These daily assignments will be due one hour before the start of each class (at 10:30am), and they cannot be made up except under extreme extenuating circumstances.

Grade Changes: To be fair to all students, at the end of the semester I will not be awarding extra credit, allowing students to rewrite old papers, or otherwise raising students' grades because they are unhappy with the grade they have earned. If you are struggling (personally, academically, etc.) please come and talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to put you in the best position for success in the course.

Blind Grading: In an effort to reduce the effects of implicit and explicit biases, I will be grading blindly for the course. This means that *you should not put your name or initials on any assignment you submit*; instead, use your NYU N-number to identify yourself.

Plagiarism: The penalty for plagiarism will be automatic failure of the course. If you have questions about plagiarism or how to avoid it, or if you have any doubts about whether what you are doing will count as plagiarism, *come talk to me (before submitting the assignment)!* (Additionally, you can refer to [NYU's Policy on Academic Integrity](#).)

Course Policies

Attendance: Because of the brisk pace of the course, attendance will be mandatory and will count as a portion of the participation grade. Students will be allowed up to 3 absences, barring special extenuating circumstances (including religious holidays). Consistent lateness and/or leaving class early will also be penalized. I do recognize, however, that we will sometimes be

dealing with difficult material, and I will understand if you need to step out of class to compose yourself at any time.

Reading: Reading the material *before* class will be crucial for good class discussions and success in the course. There will not be many pages of reading assigned, but you will quickly realize that philosophy is dense and can be hard to get through. It may take multiple passes to understand what's going on. For additional motivation, there will be daily reading assignments designed to check for comprehension and keep you honest (see above). You should bring the readings to class with you each day.

Participation: Learning philosophy requires doing philosophy. We will be tackling tough questions and concepts, and part of the process is being confused and working through the material with your peers. This means that you are expected to come to class and be active – ask questions, answer questions, etc. *Expect to be called on even if you are not raising your hand* – if this happens, you can ask a question, admit that you are confused, or offer a response. You can also take an occasional, no-questions-asked pass. Participation will be assessed on a weekly basis in accordance with the “Participation Rubric” that I will hand out in class.

Civility: A major part of doing and learning philosophy is engaging in dialogue. It is important that we engage with each other in respectful and constructive ways, especially when dealing with subjects that are of great practical and political import. That doesn't mean that we can't disagree – disagreement is also essential to philosophy! – but that we must engage thoughtfully and respectfully. Uncivil and disrespectful behavior will be grounds for removal from the classroom for the remainder of the day, and, if necessary, dismissal from the course. (See the [NYU Honor Code and CAS Standards of Academic Integrity](#).)

Slurs: Occasionally, our authors may use, mention, or refer to slurs. We will have a policy in class of not uttering slurs (even if only mentioning them, and not using them).

Electronic Devices: Laptops, phones, and other electronic devices will not be allowed in the classroom.* (A map of printing stations around NYU is available [here](#).)

[*Exceptions will be made for anyone who needs to use electronic devices as part of disability or other special accommodations, or who can come to me with (1) a persuasive argument for why they would benefit from the use of electronics and (2) a plan for how they will avoid distracting their peers.]

University Resources

Disability Accommodations: If you require special accommodations in the classroom or on assignments, contact the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#).

Health and Wellness: It's hard to get much done when you are unwell. Please be conscious of your well-being and turn to [NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) for physical and mental health resources. They also have a 24/7 Hotline that you can call anonymously with any concern: (212) 443-9999 (it's also on the back of your NYU ID card.)

Writing Assistance: General help with writing is available through [NYU's Writing Center](#). Also check out the [University Learning Centers](#).

Diversity and Inclusion: As human beings, we all carry complex identities. For resources and support, check out the [Center for Multicultural Education and Programs](#) (CMEP), as well as the [NYU LGBTQ Student Center](#).

General Philosophy Resources:

- [Pryor's Guidelines for Reading Philosophy](#)
- [Pryor's Guidelines for Writing Philosophy](#)
- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (SEP)
- [PhilPapers](#)

Reading Schedule:

Week 1: Individualist Account of Racism

- M- Jul 8 Introduction and 3 Kinds of Analysis
T- Jul 9 JLA García, "The Heart of Racism"
W- Jul 10 Anthony Appiah, "Racisms"
R- Jul 11 Videos on Implicit Bias:
["Explicit and Implicit Bias" \(2:49\)](#)
["The IAT" \(5:14\)](#)
["Implicit Bias, Lifelong Impact" \(5:40\)](#)
Jim Pryor's "Guidelines for Writing a Philosophy Paper"
- Deadlines:** *Paper 1 due by 1pm on Sun. July 14th*

Week 2: Critiques of Individualist Accounts

- M- Jul 15 Ralph Banks and Richard Ford, "Implicit Bias: A Forum"
Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," pp. 1-2
T- Jul 16 Sally Haslanger, "Social Structure, Narrative, and Explanation"
W- Jul 17 IASP, "The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide"
[Interview with Richard Rothstein](#) about *The Color Of Law: A Forgotten History Of How Our Government Segregated America*
R- Jul 18 Kate Manne, "Threatening Women" (CW: disturbing violence)
- Deadlines:** *Peer Review 1 due by start of class on Tues. July 16th*
Paper 2 due by 1pm on Sun. July 21st

Week 3: Structuralist Accounts of Oppression

- M- Jul 22 Sally Haslanger, "What is a (social) structural explanation?"
Optional: Intro and Sect. 1 of the [SEP Entry on "Social Institutions"](#)
T- Jul 23 Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"
W- Jul 24 Sally Haslanger, "Oppressions Racial and Other"
R- Jul 25 Tommie Shelby, Ch. 1 of *Dark Ghettos* (up to "Poverty, Class, and Equal Opportunity")
- Deadlines:** *Peer Review 2 due by start of class on Tues. July 23rd*
Paper 3 due by 1pm on Sun. July 28th

Week 4: Complications for Structuralist Accounts

- M- Jul 29 Alex Madva, "A Plea for Anti-Anti-Individualism"
[Video: Systemic Racism Explained \(4:23\)](#)
- T- Jul 30 Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection"
- W- Jul 31 Karen Jones, "Intersectionality and Ameliorative Accounts of Race and Racism"
- R- Aug 1 **[No Class - Museum Day]**
Deadlines: *Peer Review 3 due by start of class on Tues. July 30th*
Blog Post 1 + Museum Blurb due by 1pm on Sun. Aug. 4th

Week 5: Responsibility for Social Injustice

- M- Aug 5 Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model"
- T- Aug 6 Robin Zheng, "Bias, Structure, and Injustice: A Reply to Haslanger," Sect. III
Robin Zheng, "What is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice"
- W- Aug 7 Linda Alcoff, "What Should White People Do?"
- R- Aug 8 Ashwini Vasanthakumar, "Epistemic Privilege and Victims' Duties to Resist their Oppression"
- Deadlines:** *Blog Post Comments due by 9pm on Tues. Aug. 6th*
Blog Post 2 and Outline of Final Paper due by 1pm on Sun. Aug. 11th

Week 6: Create-Your-Own-Adventure

- M- Aug 12 TBD by vote
- T- Aug 13 TBD by vote
- W- Aug 14 TBD by vote
- R- Aug 15 TBD by vote
- Deadlines:** *Final Peer Review due by start of class on Tues. Aug. 13th*
Final Paper due by 5pm on Saturday August 17th. Late papers will only be accepted until 11:59pm on Saturday August 17th.