

Phil 433: Topics in Social and Political Philosophy Oppression, Resistance, and Social Change

Instructor: Dr. Annette Martín (she/her)
Meeting Times: TR 2:00-3:15pm
Location: Behavioral Sciences Building, #119
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Drop-In Hours: R 3:30-4:30pm, or by appt
Office: University Hall, #1402
Class Dates: Aug 22-Dec 2, 2022

Course Welcome

Welcome to Phil 433!

This semester we will undertake a philosophical analysis of oppression, resistance, and social change. We will begin by discussing general theories of oppression and different dimensions along which oppression manifests, before moving onto questions regarding who is responsible for structural injustice and what kinds of reforms are needed to address oppression. Specifically, we will consider and evaluate the roles of housing integration, protest, art, language, and coalition-building in resistance, and we will take up questions like: can hip-hop be a form of protest? Should we speak up about injustice even if it won't cause change? Do victims have a duty to resist their own oppression?

These questions are important ones, and I hope we will make good progress on them this semester. But I also want to acknowledge that times are especially difficult right now. If unexpected challenges arise, or you are struggling to keep up with coursework, or you are having trouble accessing resources, please come talk to me. Likewise, if there are aspects of the course that result in barriers to your achievement, please let me know as soon as possible. This way we can make a plan to get you what you need.

Below you will find an overview of the major components of the course, and you will find more detailed information about policies on the Blackboard site. Depending on how the semester progresses, I may decide that I need to make changes to the syllabus. When that happens, I will post the new syllabus on Blackboard. The Weekly Contents section of Blackboard will always reflect the latest updates to help you stay on top of everything you need to be successful in this course.

My hope is that, working together, we can make this a meaningful, enriching experience for all of us.

Materials

Pre-Requisites

One 200-level philosophy course or permission from the instructor is required.

Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, readings will be made available online through the [Course Box](#), and posted in the Weekly Contents section of the Blackboard site.

Technology

Review the “Getting Started” section of our Blackboard course site for specific information about technological requirements for the course.

What You Will Learn In This Course

Skills

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Produce and identify different kinds of contributions to philosophical discussions
- Write a 1750-2000 word (~7-8 page) paper that could, with guidance and revision, form the basis of an honors thesis or writing sample
- More accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of your philosophical writing

Contents

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Clearly explain the concepts of oppression and structural injustice
- Clearly articulate, in speech and writing, thoughtful and theoretically-informed responses to the following questions:
 - What is our/my role in ameliorating oppression?
 - Should we emphasize individualistic or structural interventions when it comes to ameliorating oppression?
 - What is resistance? What is its relationship to social change?
 - What role is there, if any, for philosophy in social movements?
 - What is the value of solidarity in contexts of oppression?

How You Will Acquire These Skills

Daily Reading: This is where the philosophizing begins. You should do the reading* before class, and give yourself enough time to be able to complete the daily journal assignment (see below). You should read with an eye to understanding what the author is arguing for and how, but you should also read with a critical lens – for example, is the author’s position plausible? Can you think of any counterexamples? Are there possibilities that the author overlooks? Aside from doing the reading before we meet, *you are also expected to bring the readings with you to class* in case we need to reference a particular portion of the reading in class.

*On some days it might be a listening or watching assignment instead of a reading assignment, but I will use “reading” as shorthand to cover all of these.

Daily Journal: *For every daily reading assignment there will be a corresponding daily journal assignment that is due by 11am before class.* This is designed to get you started engaging actively with the material, as well as to prepare you for class discussion.

Unless otherwise specified, these journal entries will require you to –

- State the main idea you got from the reading (in 1-3 sentences)
- Formulate a question or comment in response to the reading
- Note the section or page number(s) that inspired the question, and
- Identify the kind of contribution your question or comment makes by referring to the list of “Ways of Contributing” that we will put together on Day 1 (and which will be posted on the course Blackboard site.)

You are welcome to write more in your journal than is required for the assignment. If you struggle to participate in in-class discussion, this can be a good way to demonstrate thoughtful and active engagement with the material (and thereby improve your participation grade).

Note that each student will have three journal sick passes that can be used at their discretion to receive full credit for a journal they did not complete, no questions asked. *To use a sick pass, simply submit the Journal Pass Form that can be found on Blackboard under “Course Links.”*

In-Class Participation: During class you will be asked to critically engage with the material alongside your peers in a variety of ways. These activities and discussions are an opportunity to seek clarification, solidify your understanding of the material, and begin testing and refining your critical responses to the reading. You should refer to the “Participation Rubric” on Blackboard for more information about how participation grades will be determined.

Blog Posts: Each week (except for week 1 and weeks when outlines are due), you will have the option of submitting a blog post of 400-500 words (~1.5-2 pages) that is relevant to the week’s material. *The blog post for each week is due by 5pm on Friday.* You can choose which weeks you submit a post, but *you must write 4 blog posts in total over the course of the semester, with 2 posts submitted by Sept 23, 3 posts by Oct 28, and 4 posts by Nov 18.* These posts may expand on ideas that started in a daily journal or that emerged from discussion with your peers, and they are an opportunity to begin working out your ideas informally in writing. You should refer to the “Blog Rubric” that will be posted on Blackboard for more detailed information about the expectations for these posts.

Blog Post Comments: *You are required to check the course blog on a weekly basis and to leave at least one comment on a post by 11am on Tuesday each week* (unless there are no new posts since the previous week). Your comment should engage with the philosophical contents of the post (refer to the list of “Ways of Contributing” for

guidance). These comments are another opportunity to learn how to engage in philosophical exchanges with your peers.

Paper Outlines: In preparation for the final paper project, you will need to produce two paper outlines, using the outlines in the “Possible Paper Structures” document as models. These outlines should include a full thesis statement, full topic sentences, and enough detail to make the argument clear to a reader. Additionally, you will also need to include one full expository paragraph with your outline that clearly and accurately explains the view(s) you are engaging with. It is recommended that the outlines build on the ideas in one of your blog posts, but you may also take up new ideas. You should refer to the “Possible Paper Structures” and “Outline Rubric” documents that will be posted on Blackboard for more information about the expectations for these outlines.

Final Paper Project: You will write a final paper of 1750-2000 words (~7-8 pages) that puts forward a novel position or argument. Your final paper should expand on one of the outlines you have written. You must also submit a final paper outline that (i) uses the feedback you received to revise the outline your final paper will be based on, and (ii) includes an argumentative body paragraph. The final paper outline will be due by midnight on Nov. 23rd, and the final paper will be due by midnight on Dec. 7th.

Self-Assessments: There will be three kinds of self-assessment in this course.

- **Pre- and Post- Course Assessments:** These assessments will ask you to evaluate your mastery of course skills and contents as a way of measuring your growth at the end of the course.
- **Check-In Assessment:** Partway through the course, you will be asked to assess your participation in the course, to report on whether you have met the benchmarks for blog posting, and to check-in about how the course is going for you overall.
- **Writing Assessments:** For each outline and paper you write you will complete an assessment that asks you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your writing. These assessments are intended to help you get a better sense of what needs work in your writing, which will ultimately allow you to become a stronger writer. I will address your assessment in my comments on your writing.

How Your Learning Will Be Evaluated

For detailed information about the expectations for each kind of assignment, the criteria by which your work will be evaluated, and how your assignments will be assigned a letter grade, refer to the Rubrics section on Blackboard. *The grading system is set up so that (i) it should be easy to get a B if you are able to put effort into improving your work, and (ii) so long as you submit something for an assignment by 5pm on Dec. 9 (and you adhere to standards of academic integrity), the worst grade you will receive for that assignment is a D.*

Grade Breakdown

- **Participation** – 15%
- **Self-Assessment** – 11%
 - Writing Assessments – 8% (2% each)
 - Other Assessments – 3% (1% each)
- **Daily Journals** – 14%
- **Blog Posts** – 20% (5% each)
- **Outlines** – 15% (7.5% each)
- **Final Paper** – 25%
 - Revised Outline – 10%
 - Final Draft – 15%

To make this easier to calculate, I will make the course worth a total of 1000 points, and assign points to each component of the course according to this breakdown. For instance, to illustrate, each blog post will be worth 50 points. There will be 4 blog posts total, for a total of 200 points in this category (hence, 20% of the overall grade).

You must earn at least 900 points to receive an A in the course, 800 to receive a B, 700 to receive a C, and 600 to receive a D.

Anonymous Grading: In an effort to reduce the effects of implicit and explicit biases, I will, whenever possible, grade assignments anonymously (that is, without knowing whose assignment I am grading).

Late and Missing Assignments: *If you are experiencing challenges that will affect your ability to complete work on time, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan. Unless we work out an alternative arrangement, you will have up to three weeks (or until Dec. 9, whichever comes first) to submit late assignments for grading.* Where applicable, late assignments submitted within one week of the deadline will receive a 5% point deduction, late assignments submitted within the second week after the deadline will receive a 10% point deduction, and late assignments submitted within the third week after the deadline will receive a 15% point deduction. After that point, the late assignment will automatically receive 60% of the possible points (or the equivalent of a D grade), unless it is determined that the submission violates standards of academic integrity. Note that, in general, as long as *something* is handed in for an assignment, and you adhere to standards of academic integrity, the worst grade any assignment will receive is the equivalent of a D grade. The last chance to submit late assignments for partial credit is midnight on December 9. Missing assignments will receive zero points.

Grade Changes: I will be using rubrics to streamline feedback and assessment. If you think that an assignment has been graded unfairly, you have one week after it is graded and returned to request a re-evaluation of your work. Note that your work will be

freshly evaluated, and your grade could increase, decrease, or stay the same. To be fair to all students, changes will not be made to your overall grade unless there is an arithmetic error. If you think an arithmetic error has been made in calculating your grade, you must notify me by 5pm on the last day of classes (December 1st).

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: In order for UIC to be a place where research and learning can thrive, we all share a responsibility to uphold the highest academic standards. Accordingly, you are expected to adhere to the [Community Standards](#) of integrity, accountability, and respect.

If you are struggling to keep up with course work, have doubts about how to properly cite sources, or are uncertain about how to meet academic standards, please come and talk to me so that we can come up with a plan. If I do have evidence that you have plagiarized or otherwise violated Community Standards in my course, I will submit an incident report to the Office of the Dean of Students. They will investigate and determine an appropriate outcome. Please review the [UIC Student Disciplinary Policy](#) for additional information about the process by which instances of academic misconduct are handled.

Creating An Inclusive, Accessible Learning Environment

My goal, and the goal of this institution, is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. This will require all of us to do our part to be thoughtful, listen to one another, and engage respectfully with each other.

If there are aspects of the instruction or design of the course that result in barriers to your inclusion or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible.

Disability Accommodation Procedures

UIC is committed to the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of university life. If you face or anticipate disability-related barriers while at UIC, please connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc.uic.edu, via email at drc@uic.edu, or call (312) 413-2183 to create a plan for reasonable accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to disclose the disability to the DRC, complete an interactive registration process with the DRC, and provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Upon receipt of a LOA, I will gladly work with you and the DRC to implement approved accommodations.

Content Warnings

The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression every week. At times this may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will do my best to flag especially graphic or intense content in the Weekly Contents section of Blackboard. If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class.

If you ever feel the need to step outside (“unplug from your Zoom”) during a class discussion you may always do so. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to review the recording for the parts you missed, get notes from another student, or come see me individually to discuss the situation.

Other Course Policies and Campus Resources

The course Blackboard site has additional information about course policies, technological requirements, philosophical resources, and campus resources. Please review the site for access to this information. If you have any questions or need help accessing other resources, please come talk to me.

Course Schedule

Note that you should complete the reading/ listening/ viewing before class, and that there will be a corresponding daily journal assignment due by 11am each class day (unless otherwise specified; see above for guidelines). The course schedule lists every opportunity for submitting a blog post, but you only need to submit five total blog posts. I have indicated the benchmarks that you need to meet for these blog posts in the schedule.

| Topic | Week | Date | Assignment Due |
|---|------------------------------|--------|---|
| Intro / Dimensions of Oppression | 1 | Aug 23 | Skim over the syllabus and Blackboard site Listen to “Why The Coronavirus Is Hitting Black Communities Hardest” (24 mins) Look over updated data on COVID-19 |
| | | Aug 25 | Watch “Explicit and Implicit Bias” (2:49), “The IAT” (5:14), and “Implicit Bias, Lifelong Impact” (5:40) Listen to “Briefly: Epistemic Injustice” (to 18:24) |
| | Pre-Course Assessment | Aug 26 | Due by 5pm: Pre-Course Self-Assessment (w/ Syllabus Quiz) |
| | 2 | Aug 30 | Read IASP, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap” Listen to “A ‘Forgotten History’ Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America” (35 mins) |
| Oppression | | Sept 1 | Read Frye, “Oppression” |
| | | Sept 2 | Week 2 Blog Post due by 5pm* |
| | 3 | Sept 6 | Read Collins, “Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection” |
| Responsibility for Structural Injustice | | Sept 8 | Read Young, “Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model” |
| | | Sept 9 | Week 3 Blog Post due by 5pm* |

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| | 4 | Sept 13 | Read Zheng, "What is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice" |
| | | Sept 15 | Read Vasanthakumar, "Epistemic Privilege and Victims' Duties to Resist Their Oppression" |
| | | Sept 16 | Week 4 Blog Post due by 5pm* |
| Individual vs. Structural Reform | 5 | Sept 20 | Read Haslanger, "Social Structure, Narrative, and Explanation" |
| | | Sept 22 | Read Saul, "(How) Should We Tell Implicit Bias Stories?" Writing Discussion |
| | 1st Third ends | Sept 23 | Due by 5pm: Check-In Assessment + Week 5 Blog Post* You must have two blogs posts by this point |
| | 6 | Sept 27 | Read Madva, "A Plea for Anti-Anti-Individualism" |
| Integration | | Sept 29 | Read Anderson, "Why Racial Integration Remains an Imperative" Read through Section VI of Shelby, "Integration, Inequality, and Imperatives of Justice: A Review Essay" (to bottom of 267) |
| | | Sept 30 | Week 6 Blog Post due by 5pm* |
| | 7 | Oct 4 | Read second half of Shelby |
| Protest | | Oct 6 | Read King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" |
| | Outline 1 | Oct 7 | Due by 5pm: Outline 1 + Outline 1 Self-Assessment |
| | 8 | Oct 11 | Read King, "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" |
| | | Oct 13 | Read Kling & Mitchel, "Bottles and Bricks: Rethinking the Prohibition against Violent Political Protest" |
| | | Oct 14 | Week 8 Blog Post due by 5pm* |
| | 9 | Oct 18 | Read Harvey, "Oppression, Moral Abandonment, and the Role of Protest" |
| Language and Thought | | Oct 20 | Watch/ listen to De Cruz, " Ameliorative genealogy and hunter-gatherer philosophies " |
| | | Oct 21 | Week 9 Blog Post due by 5pm* |
| | 10 | Oct 25 | Read Haslanger, "Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground" |
| Art and Resistance | | Oct 27 | Read Shelby, "Impure Dissent: Hip Hop and the Political Ethics of Marginalized Black Urban Youth" |
| | 2nd Third Ends | Oct 28 | Due by 5pm: Week 10 Blog Post* You must have 3 blog posts by this point |
| | 11 | Nov 1 | Read Taylor, <i>Black is Beautiful</i> , Ch. 1 (excerpt) Read Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance" |
| | | Nov 3 | Read Bacharach, "Finding Your Voice in the Streets: Street Art and Epistemic Injustice" |
| | | Nov 4 | Week 11 Blog Post due by 5pm* |

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| Solidarity and Coalition | 12 | Nov 8 | Voting Holiday - No Class |
| | | Nov 10 | Read Harvey, "Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship" |
| | Outline 2 | Nov 11 | Due by 5pm: Outline 2 + Outline 2 Self-Assessment |
| | 13 | Nov 15 | Read Matsuda, "Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory out of Coalition " Reread Collins, "Toward a New Vision," pp. 36-45 Bonus: Listen to "Is it time to say R.I.P. to 'POC'?" (38 minutes) |
| | | Nov 17 | Read Cherry, "Solidarity Care: How to Take Care of Each Other in Times of Struggle" |
| | Last Blog Post | Nov 18 | Due by 5pm: Week 13 Blog Post* You must have 4 blog posts by this point |
| TBD by Vote | 14 | Nov 22 | E.g. Boycotts, the role of anger, prison abolition |
| | Final Outline | Nov 23 | Due by midnight: Final Outline + Final Outline Self-Assessment |
| | | Nov 24 | Thanksgiving Break- No Classes |
| | 15 | Nov 29 | E.g. Reparations, callout culture, empathy |
| Last Class Day | | Dec 1 | Due by 5pm: Post-Course Self-Assessment (We'll start this in class) |
| | Finals Week | Dec 7 | Due by midnight: Final Paper + Final Paper Self-Assessment |
| | | Dec 9 | By 5pm: Last chance to submit missing assignments |