

**PHILOSOPHY 234: RACE, GENDER, & JUSTICE**  
**Spring 2024; TR, 2-3:20pm; Porter Hall A22**

**Professor:**

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**Grader:**

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**Office Hours:**

In person, Baker 145L, **Tuesdays 3:30-4:30pm** or by appointment  
[Virtual](#), **Wednesdays 3-4pm** or by appointment

***Course Description & Learning Objectives***

Race and gender, along with their interfaces and interactions with such other social identities as sexuality, (dis)ability, and class, structure our experience of almost every aspect of our social and political reality. Philosophers approach these kinds of social identities from a variety of perspectives. They ask what these kinds of social categories really are, what they mean for the ways we live our lives and the ways we perceive and understand the world, how they have (mis)informed our theoretical and practical understanding of the nature of justice and political power, and what is owed to those affected by racial and gendered injustice. This course explores these topics, drawing on tools and perspectives from metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and especially social and political philosophy.

Students are expected to come away from the course with a strong understanding of some of the major philosophical debates about the nature of race and gender; how race and gender intersect with other aspects of identity; and how these aspects of (social) identity impact how we experience and navigate our world, how and what we know, how others treat us, and what kinds of life paths are open to us. Students will gain the theoretical frameworks to analyze ongoing debates about the nature of racial and gender justice, how identities intersect with dimensions of power and privilege, and the implications for individual and social obligations to redress those injustices. Students will also gain the analytical reading and writing skills to apply these tools to pressing social and political issues in persuasive verbal and written arguments and to recognize the limitations of various theoretical frameworks for understanding these forms of injustice. This course is primarily conducted as a seminar and is discussion- rather than lecture-based.

***Masking Request: Please wear a mask during this class, particularly during surges***

While masking is not required in CMU classrooms, I politely request that you wear a mask during this class, particularly when COVID cases are high (as they are at this term's beginning). COVID-19 is an airborne virus that has disproportionately harmful impacts on disabled, chronically ill, and immunocompromised persons. COVID infection itself is extremely unpleasant and will cause you to miss class and fall behind. The risks of long COVID are significant, and the chances of experiencing long-term symptoms increase with each new infection. One-way masking (where only one person wears a mask while others do not) is significantly less effective at preventing the transmission of airborne viruses than when everyone is masked. This means that we cannot provide an equitable and inclusive atmosphere for all members of our campus community unless we protect one another by masking while indoors. **DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE FEELING UNWELL. IF YOU ARE VISIBLY SICK WHILE IN CLASS, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE.**

***Course Requirements***

*The learning curve for reading and writing philosophy is steep, and early feedback will be important to you in improving your work. Class assignments are structured to improve students' reading habits, analytical skills, and writing. If you are struggling with reading or writing, please make use of office hours. During regularly scheduled office hours, no appointment is needed.*

Homework and Short Writing Assignments - 40%

*Over the course of the semester, there will be several homework, short writing, and other assignments. Assignment specifics will be posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for knowing about class assignments and their due dates.*

Three short essays – 15% each, 45% total

*Each student will write three longer-form essays over the course of the semester on topics that will be assigned. Further details about the essay assignments will be provided in class and on Canvas. These essays are due on **February 16, March 29, and May 3.***

Attendance & Class Participation – 15%

*There is no attendance policy in this class. However, 15% of your grade consists in participation in in-class discussions of the readings, group activities, and regular class attendance. You should attend each class having read the assigned material for the day and ready to engage in discussion and critical assessment of those materials. You will be asked regularly to assess your own attendance and participation. Frequent absenteeism, inability to participate in class discussions and activities due to not having completed the readings, and failure to contribute to class discussions will each negatively impact your participation grade. **Do not attend class if you are feeling unwell. If you are visibly sick while in class, you will be asked to leave.***

### ***Important Dates***

Feb. 16: First short paper due  
Feb. 26: Final drop deadline  
March 4-8: No class; Spring Break  
March 11: Mid-semester grades turned in  
March 29: Second short paper due  
April 11: No class; Spring Carnival  
April 25: Last class  
May 3: Final short paper due

## **CLASS POLICIES**

### **ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

**Do not attend class if you are feeling unwell.** If you appear sick in class, you will be asked to leave.

There is no official attendance policy in this class and attendance is not taken. However, you will be asked regularly to assess your own attendance and participation, and a pattern of missed classes will be noticed and will impact your grade. Missing a significant number of class meetings is also likely to impact your grade through your performance on class assignments. If you miss a class, for any reason, it is your responsibility to determine what you missed. It is strongly recommended that you exchange contact information with a few of your peers so that you can easily obtain class notes on missed discussions. **By default, I do not respond to emails asking “what did I miss in class?”**

**YOU MUST DO THE READINGS FOR THIS CLASS.** Philosophical inquiry is a joint endeavor, and the quality of this course will depend crucially on your thoughtful, considerate engagement with the readings and with each other. In general, I do not devote class meetings to lectures that explain the materials. Rather, class discussion is focused on assessment of core arguments, discussions of the implications of authors’ views, and consideration of potential objections. Students should come to class having closely read and thought about all assigned materials. This requires, *at a minimum*:

- Determining the key point(s) the author is trying to establish or criticize;
- Understanding why the author considers it/them to be important;
- Identifying the reason(s) the author gives in support of their conclusion(s); and
- Considering whether those reasons are both (a) true or correct, and (b) actually in support of the author’s conclusion(s).

**Students often assume that there is some settled Knowledge within a discipline.** On this model, the role of a faculty member is to impart that Knowledge to students, so that students can commit the Knowledge to memory and regurgitate it back to the faculty member to demonstrate competence. **This is not an accurate model of scholarly reality.** Particularly in philosophy, but also across disciplines, there are typically multiple, competing views of the world. Experts can and do disagree, and mapping, understanding, and assessing the bases for those disagreements is a core part of scholarly work. This is the work we will do in this class.

We will be discussing controversial topics about which many of you will have strong feelings. However, our purpose in this class is to **move past feelings and opinions**, and to evaluate and provide **reasoned arguments** for and against various positions on these issues. **Disrespectful comments towards other students or about racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexuality, or ability groups will not be tolerated.**

### GRADING

Grades are assigned on the following scale:

High A	97.5	B+	87.5	C+	77.5	D+	67.5
A	95	B	85	C	75	D	65
A-	92.5	B-	82.5	C-	72.5	D-	62.5
A-/B+	90	B-/C+	80	C-/D+	70	R	60 or below

**You are not defined by your grades.** While I recognize that students are under intense pressure (both self-imposed and external) to achieve high grades, there is nothing inherently wrong with getting a B or a C. They are letters on a page, and their primary function is to **indicate where your work can improve.** Students also have widely varying reasons for taking a particular class, and some of those reasons are served perfectly well by doing satisfactory (C-level) work. An “A” on any assignment in this class indicates outstanding or truly exemplary work. A “B” is work that demonstrates a high level of competence. A “C” is satisfactory.

There is a steep learning curve to reading and writing philosophy effectively, which should provide you with strong incentives to work hard at the beginning of the semester and receive the kind of feedback you will need to improve and excel in your written assignments.

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Requests for reasonable extensions on assignments are **always granted**, provided requests are made in advance of the deadline. **You do not need to provide a reason for asking for an extension.** However, please note that I do not check email outside of regular business hours, so extensions must be requested before 5pm on Friday for assignments with weekend due dates.

### COMMUNICATION

**Please note that I do not read or respond to student emails outside of normal business hours (i.e. if you email me in the evening or on the weekend, you will not receive a response until the next weekday.)** I endeavor to always respond to student emails within one business day, and ask that you read and (where appropriate) respond to my emails in a similarly timely fashion.

Students are not always familiar with the norms governing professional correspondence. Please use [this resource](#) to inform your understanding of what is expected from communications in a professional environment.

## OFFICE HOURS

I hold regularly scheduled office hours (in person) on Tuesday and ([virtually](#)) on Wednesday afternoons. Office hours are times that I set aside specifically to be available to meet with students. You do not need an appointment to meet with me in office hours – simply show up. If you need to meet with me and you cannot make it to regularly scheduled office hours, you may email me to set up a time. I encourage you to watch [this video](#) to learn more about office hours.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, GENERATIVE AI, & PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism refers to the use of any ideas or words from another person or source without appropriate citation. All sources used for course assignments should be appropriately cited, including information found on the internet, in course readings, or from class discussions. If you are unsure about whether or not to cite something, err on the side of caution.

Large Language Models (LLMs, also often called “generative AI” or “AI”) like ChatGPT are trained on text stolen from the internet without authors’ permission, and as a result create plagiarized content. Submitting work produced by an LLM **with or without attribution** is a form of intellectual theft.

Practicing every step of writing, including brainstorming, research, outlining, drafting, and revision helps you to develop your understanding of course material, yourself, and how you relate to the topics you will write about. Practicing writing also helps you to develop your creativity and your original voice as a writer. For these reasons, among others, you may not outsource any step of your written assignments for this class to an AI tool. To do so will be considered plagiarism.

I have a zero-tolerance policy for cheating: **Any student found to have plagiarized on any assignment will receive a failing grade for the assignment, and at my discretion, for the entire course.** Additionally, all available institutional penalties will be sought.

## TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

I and your classmates put a great deal of time and effort into preparing for an interesting class discussion, and you are expected to do the same. When entering the classroom, please place your phone on “silent” and put it away for the duration of our meeting. The use of laptops during class discussions is **discouraged but not forbidden**. In most cases, using a computer during discussion significantly distracts from what is going on and leads to disengagement from those around you. While some individuals can successfully use a computer without multitasking, most cannot – it is hard not to take a down moment to check your email or look at your calendar. And studies have shown that this kind of multitasking during class not only causes the computer user’s learning to suffer, but also that of the students sitting nearby who can see their screen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sana, F., T. Weston and N. J. Cepeda (2013). "Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." [Computers & Education](#) 62: 24-31.

## VIDEOTAPING, AUDIO RECORDING, AND COURSE MATERIALS

All course materials, including lectures, syllabi, handouts, and presentations are the intellectual property of your professor. Students are prohibited from sharing any course materials with third parties, including on social media, without the express written permission of your professor. **Videotaping and audio recording are both prohibited without the express written permission of your professor.**

## Disability Accommodations

**Students with disabilities are legally entitled to reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education.** If you have a disability and have an accommodation letter from the Disability Resources office, please discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate.

The ADA defines a disability as a medical condition that substantially limits one or more life activities – including things like walking, sleeping, taking care of yourself, learning, and regulating your emotions – or major bodily functions. If you have a medical condition, *including mental health conditions*, that significantly interferes with your schoolwork, you probably qualify. **You do not need to disclose your medical condition to your instructors to receive accommodations.**

Some students will need accommodations in college who did not need them before. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at [access@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:access@andrew.cmu.edu). It is important to reach out sooner than later, as most accommodations only function as forward-looking modifications to class expectations, rather than mitigating low grades you may have already received.

More generally: take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding excess substance use, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. Also: make use of the resources available to you to manage the stresses and anxieties that we all experience sometimes. An important part of maturing is learning how and when to ask for help. Asking for help sooner rather than later can in many cases help to avert more serious crises. If you or anyone you know is experiencing anxiety or depression, I encourage you to seek support. You can contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) at [412-268-2922](tel:412-268-2922) or visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that you need.

I am committed to providing students with equal access to this class. If you are struggling – whether because of a medical condition or **for any other reason** – please come talk to me. It is an expectation in my classroom that both students and professor see everyone as whole people. Self-care is valid and important work, and should take priority over this class. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritize caring for your health, both physical and mental.

## Outline of Topics & Tentative Schedule of Readings

(All dates and readings are subject to change. I will always confirm what to read for the next class at the end of the previous meeting. **All required readings will be provided on Canvas.**)

<b>Jan.16</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>
<b>Jan. 18</b>	<p><b>On Speaking Up</b></p> <p>Audre Lorde. (1980). "The Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action." <i>Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches</i>. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 40-44.</p> <p>Sara Ahmed. (2010). "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)." <i>The Scholar and Feminist Online</i> 8(3).</p>

### **Part I: The Metaphysics of Identity, Race, and Gender**

What is identity? What are identity categories? How do we define ourselves and how does society define us? What is gender? What is race?

<b>Jan. 23</b>	<p><b>What is Identity?</b></p> <p>Selections from Kwame Anthony Appiah. (2005). "The Demands of Identity." <i>The Ethics of Identity</i>. Princeton, Princeton University Press, ch. 3, <b>pp. 65-71.</b></p>
<b>Jan. 25</b>	<p><b>The Dilemma of Identity: Oppression or Freedom?</b></p> <p>Selections from Allison Weir. (2013). "Who Are We? Modern Identities Between Taylor and Foucault." <i>Identities and Freedom: Feminist Theory Between Power and Connection</i>. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1.</p> <p><b>Required: pp. 21-33; optional: pp. 33-42.</b></p>
<b>Jan. 30</b>	<p><b>Self-Definition</b></p> <p>bell hooks. (1989). "on self-recovery." <i>Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black</i>. Boston, South End Press: 28-34.</p>
<b>Feb. 1</b>	<p><b>What Are We Asking When We Ask "What is Race?" or "What is Gender?"?</b></p> <p>Sally Haslanger. (2012). "Gender and Race. (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" <i>Resisting Reality: Social Constructivism and Social Critique</i>. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 7. <b>Read pp. 221-235.</b></p>
<b>Feb. 6</b>	<p><b>The Social Construction of Gender &amp; Race</b></p> <p>Sally Haslanger. (2012). "Gender and Race. (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" <i>Resisting Reality: Social Constructivism and Social Critique</i>. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 7. <b>Read pp. 235-247.</b></p>
<b>Feb. 8</b>	<p><b>The Metaphysics of Gender &amp; Trans Phenomenology</b></p> <p>Talia Mae Bettcher. (2014). "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance." <i>Signs</i> 39(2):383-406.</p>
<b>Feb. 13</b>	<b>Catch up, Catch our breath, Short Paper #1</b> (no readings)
<b>Feb. 15</b>	<b>Catch up, Catch our breath, Short Paper #1</b> (no readings)

### INTERLUDE 1: ON ANGER

<b>Feb. 20</b>	Selections from Myisha Cherry. (2021). "Painting in Broad Strokes" and "Fitting Fury, Rightful Rage." <i>The Case for Rage: Why Anger is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle</i> . Oxford, Oxford University Press, chs. 1-2. <b>Read only to page 38 (page 29 of the .pdf)</b>
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### Part II: Standpoint Epistemology & the Epistemology of Race and Gender

Does our identity impact how and what we can know or understand? In what ways does our identity impact how we are understood as knowers by others?

<b>Feb. 22</b>	<b>Standpoint Epistemology</b> Alison M. Jaggar. (2004). "Feminist Politics and Epistemology: The Standpoint of Women." <i>The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies</i> . Sandra G. Harding, ed. New York, Routledge: 55-66.
<b>Feb. 27</b>	<b>Black Feminist Epistemology</b> Patricia Hill Collins. (1990). "Toward an Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology." <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</i> . New York, Routledge, ch. 10.
<b>Feb. 29</b>	<b>Epistemic Injustice</b> Veronica Ivy. (2016). "Epistemic Injustice." <i>Philosophy Compass</i> <b>11</b> (8): 437-446.
<b>-- Spring Break --</b>	
<b>Mar. 12</b>	<b>Hermeneutical Liberation &amp; Hermeneutical Backlash</b> B.R. George & Stacey Goguen. (2021). "Hermeneutical Injustice: Trans Youth Panics as Epistemic Injustice." <i>Feminist Philosophy Quarterly</i> <b>7</b> (4): Article 1.
<b>Mar. 14</b>	<b>Identity &amp; Epistemic Vice</b> José Medina. (2013). "Active Ignorance, Epistemic Others, and Epistemic Friction." <i>The Epistemology of Resistance</i> . Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1. <b>Read pp. 27-40.</b>
<b>Mar. 19</b>	<b>White Ignorance</b> Elizabeth V. Spelman. (2007). "Managing Ignorance." <i>Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance</i> . S. Sullivan and N. Tuana, eds. Albany, State University of New York Press: 119-131.

### INTERLUDE 2: ON SOLIDARITY & CARE

<b>Mar. 21</b>	Myisha Cherry. (2020). "Solidarity Care: How to Take Care of Each Other in Times of Struggle." <i>Public Philosophy Journal</i> <b>3</b> (1): 1-12 .
<b>Mar. 26</b>	<b>Catch up, Catch our breath, Short Paper #2</b> (no readings)
<b>Mar. 28</b>	<b>Catch up, Catch our breath, Short Paper #2</b> (no readings)



### Part III: The Social and Political Philosophy of Race and Gender

What is oppression and how does it interact with race and gender? How do intersecting and overlapping identities impact oppression? How has white supremacy impacted feminist and political theory? How has colonialism impacted feminist and political theory?

<b>Apr. 2</b>	<b>What is Oppression? Part 1</b> Marilyn Frye. (1983). "Oppression." <i>The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory</i> . New York, Crown, ch. 1.
<b>Apr. 4</b>	<b>What is oppression? Part 2</b> Iris Marion Young. (1990). "Five Faces of Oppression." <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> . Princeton, Princeton University Press, ch. 2. <b>(skip the section titled "The Concept of a Social Group")</b>
<b>Apr. 9</b>	<b>What is Misogyny?</b> Kate Manne. (2018). "Threatening Women." <i>Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny</i> . Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1.
<b>-- Spring Carnival --</b>	
<b>Apr. 16</b>	<b>Liberalism &amp; The Racial Contract</b> Charles Mills. (2008). "Racial Liberalism." <i>PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association</i> <b>123</b> (5):1380-1397.
<b>Apr. 18</b>	<b>Decolonial Feminism, Part 1</b> María Lugones & Elizabeth Spelman. (1983) "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice.'" <i>Women's Studies International Forum</i> <b>6</b> (6):573-581.
<b>Apr. 23</b>	<b>Decolonial Feminism, Part 2</b> Selections from Serene Khader. (2019). "Toward a Decolonial Feminist Universalism." <i>Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic</i> . Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1. <b>Read only to page 36.</b>

### CONCLUSION: ON CARE & HOPE

<b>Apr. 25</b>	Selections from Kelly Hayes & Mariame Kaba. (2023). "Care is Fundamental." <i>Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care</i> . Chicago, Haymarket Books, ch. 3.
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