

PHIL 31.09: METAPHYSICS OF RACE
Dartmouth College
Spring 2022
TR 10A 10.10 am – 12 pm

Professor Esther M. Rosario (pronouns: she/her, they/them)
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Office: Thornton Hall 209
Office Hours: W 2-3 in-person & 3.15-4.15 on Zoom
X-Hours: F 3.30-4.20
Classroom: Thornton Hall 202



A. Course Description

Are human races social or biological? Do races have essences? Why does race have such a grip on our identities and on who holds power in society? This course examines the social construction of race as well as how racial categories interact with human biology and psychology. Racial categories, undoubtedly, impact people's lives. We shall investigate *what* these racial categories *really* are and whether we can (or *should*) eliminate them for a more just society.

B. Readings

All readings for the course are available through **Canvas** or **hyperlinked in Section E** of the syllabus. Give yourself enough time to access the readings, print the texts if necessary, and to read the texts carefully before each class meeting. I encourage you to go over the readings twice: initially to become familiar with the core issues being discussed in the text, and on the second reading, to identify key areas for analysis and evaluation.

As you read course material, consider the following questions:

- 1) What is the main point the author is making?
- 2) Do I understand *how* the author is making their point—why or why not?
- 3) What questions do I have about the text or what do I need clarification on?
- 4) Do I agree with the author's claims? How do they support their argument?

C. Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Critical Response Papers (two) *or*

Midterm Paper *or*

Viva Voce: 40%

Bread Crumb Project *or* Final Paper: 40%

Attendance: Much of the value to be gained from this course will come from your interactions with your classmates and myself. To be engaged during class time means that you are attentive, contributing to a productive and respectful class dynamic, asking or responding to questions, sharing your insights, and participating in large or small group discussion. There is empirical evidence that using social media, texting, or surfing the internet during class not only takes away from your learning but also affects the learning of those seated around you. Please be mindful of other members of the class. You are expected to attend class in person unless you have made alternative arrangements due to illness, medical reasons, or the need to isolate due to COVID-19. For the health and safety of our class community, please: **do not attend class when you are sick**, nor when you have been instructed by Student Health Services to stay home. You are always welcome to post your questions and comments on the discussion board. If you are unable to attend class, let me know in advance and we can also record the session to make available on Canvas.

Safety: In accordance with [current College policy](#), all members of the Dartmouth community are required to wear a suitable face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status. This includes our classroom and office hours. If you need to take a quick drink during class, please dip your mask briefly for each sip. Eating is never permitted in the classroom. (The only exception to the mask requirement is for students with an approved disability-related accommodation; see below.) If you do not have an accommodation and refuse to comply with masking or other safety protocols, I am obligated to assure that the Covid health and safety standards are followed, and you will be asked to leave the classroom. You remain subject to course attendance policies, and dismissal from class will result in an unexcused absence. If you refuse to comply with masking or other safety protocols, and to ensure the health and safety of our community, I am obligated to report you to the Dean's office for disciplinary action under Dartmouth's [Standards of Conduct](#). Additional COVID-19 protocols may emerge. Pay attention to emails from the senior administrators at the College. I shall communicate any changes and their resulting implications for our class community.

Participation: You are encouraged to actively participate in class discussion by contributing thoughtful comments and questions during general discussion and during small group work. Posting to discussion forums on Canvas, attending office hours, or sending me a substantive question or comment via email is an additional way to participate in the course. ***One or two substantive questions or comments per week, whether in class, on Canvas, or sent via email, counts as satisfactory participation. Volunteering to write the summary of class discussion for students who are absent will count towards your participation mark.***

Please note that some of the issues that we shall discuss in this course may be triggering. I shall do my best to provide content warnings in advance, but given the organic nature of class discussion this may not always be possible. If you need to take a break from a discussion please do so or if you have a concern please raise it with me. I am here to support your learning. Remember to respect the view points and feelings of others. Be critical of arguments, not of each other. My goal is to make our class a positive learning environment for all students—and part of realizing that goal depends on the openness and generosity of all members of the class.

Student Participation is graded in the following way in large and small group discussions:

A-range = actively supports, engages, and listens to peers; arrives fully prepared to the session; plays an active role in discussions; comments advance the level and depth of the discussion and move the dialogue forward; group dynamic and level of discussion are distinctively better because of the student's presence

B-range = makes a sincere effort to interact with peers; arrives mostly, if not fully, prepared; participates constructively in discussions; makes relevant comments based on the assigned material; group dynamic and level of discussion are better if not unaffected because of the student's presence

C-range = limited interaction with peers; not prepared but still makes an effort to constructively participate in discussions; group dynamic and level of discussion are not affected by the student's presence

D-range = has no interaction with peers; is not prepared; either does not participate or if participates their comments are generally vague or drawn from outside of the assigned material; demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material; group dynamic and level of discussion are significantly frustrated by the student's presence

0 = absent

“Midterm” Assignments

I aim to make our course accessible and flexible. You have three options for completing “midterm” assignments.

- 1) **Two Critical Response Papers** worth 20% each.
- 2) **Midterm Paper (40%)**
- 3) **Viva Voce (40%)**

Critical Response Papers:

If you select the first option, you will choose to respond to a reading on **two** different course topics (on two different weeks). You will turn in an electronic copy of your assignment **the week that we discuss the reading in class**. However, you are welcome to submit your assignment early, or if needed, a bit later.

Email me your CRP and make sure that your document is attached and the file is readable. CRPs should be about 600-800 words double-spaced. Each paper should summarize the article(s) or relevant philosophical positions sufficiently for your purposes and raise and respond to a critical question with respect to the reading. I shall provide more guidance on how to do this throughout the term.

CRPs require that you explain an issue discussed in the readings and provide your own evaluation of it, and will be graded in the following way:

A = shows a good understanding of the reading materials, and connects the assigned readings in a reflective manner, and the evaluation shows insight;

B = provides a good answer to the question but there are signs of minor confusion, attempts to engage with the texts while providing an evaluation;

C = only provides a rough explanation of the issue, but there is no evaluation; or partially wrong answer but there is an attempt at an evaluation; either way it looks as though the student has read the material (or parts of the material) but there is lack of understanding;

D = provides a very confused answer, shows significant misunderstanding in such a way that it is unclear whether the student has read the material carefully

0 = no answer or answer does not show that the student has read the material

Some advice on CRPs:

- Write CRPs in your own words; do not simply quote some passage of the text.
- Your responses to CRPs should be concise and to the point. Don't waste words simply explaining every aspect of the readings.
- Write as clearly as possible. Avoid jargon, long words, and convoluted sentences. Don't try to sound sophisticated or 'philosophical': convey what you have to say as explicitly and unambiguously as you can. Keep sentences and paragraphs relatively short.
- Be sure to proofread your final draft: missing words, misspellings, and poor syntax all serve to undermine the reader's confidence.
- Give proper references. When you quote a sentence or a passage, or when you paraphrase an idea that you found in the text, provide the page number(s) in parenthesis (e.g., **(34)**). You only need our primary texts and your analytical and evaluative skills to complete this assignment. You are not required to use outside sources, but if you do (e.g., a relevant news article) you must provide appropriate references. Use parenthetical references (e.g., **(Singer 1994, 34)**) but also add a bibliographical note at the end of your paper if using outside sources (e.g., **Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.**)

You are welcome to use any citation style you are comfortable with, e.g., APA, MLA, or Chicago. Just be sure to use *one* style consistently. The **Purdue OWL** is a great resource for mastering citations in various styles: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

Midterm Paper:

If you choose the second option, you will develop your own research topic around an original thesis. Your paper will be evaluated on the strength of its thesis statement, your understanding of the texts, your creative ideas, the quality of your argument, and the clarity of your writing. I strongly suggest that you discuss your paper topic and thesis statement with me beforehand. Midterm papers should be around **6-7 pages long double-spaced**. Papers are due via email. You are expected to provide a bibliography with complete references for works cited and consulted. Midterm papers do not have a fixed due date but should be submitted by the end of **Week 6** so that you can receive feedback before your Bread Crumb Project is due. More details on how to write a philosophy paper are to follow.

Viva Voce:

If you choose the third option, you will schedule an appointment for a 20 minute viva exam in my office. A week prior to your exam, I shall send you a set of three questions via email. You should prepare an outline/notes for all three questions. On the day of the exam, I'll select two questions from the set of three for us to discuss (I'll email you or tell you in person at least 30 minutes in advance). You'll have at least 30 minutes to review your notes before the exam. Afterwards, you'll be asked to submit your notes, and if you like, a short summary/synthesis of your answers no later than **two days** after your exam. Viva exams will take place during **Week 5**.

You are required to let me know via email which option you prefer by the end of Week 2. If you change your mind about what you'd like to do, that's fine—just keep me posted.

Bread Crumb Project: You have two options for a final project in the course—the *bread crumb project* or the *final paper*. The former option will challenge you to collect “bread crumbs” (or cultural data) about norms and practices related to race, racialism, and racial identity in our contemporary society from one or more of the critical approaches we have examined in class (historical perspectives may also play a part in your analysis). You are encouraged to develop a **creative project** or an **annotated bibliography** based on books, magazines, films, advertisements, art works, legal cases, social media, store inventory, etc. You will be asked to make observations about and interpretations of the data you collect; you may work independently, in pairs, or in small groups.

Creative projects require a written critical reflection that explains and contextualizes the project—what were the bread crumbs you collected, what were your findings, and how is/are the meaning(s) that you drew from those findings expressed in the creative project? How does your project relate to particular theories, ideas, or texts we discussed in the course?

Annotated bibliographies should include references to the texts or media examined, an explanation of the bibliographical material, and a critical examination of that material in light of what we have learned in the course.

You are welcome to be as imaginative as you wish and I encourage you to use this assignment as an opportunity to engage with the ideas in the course in a tactile, interactive, and potentially very fun way! Because this project requires a fair amount of planning on your part, I encourage you to start working on your project as soon as possible. I am happy to talk about your ideas with you. Finalized bread crumb projects will be due on **June 7**. More details to follow on how to submit your project.

Final Paper: If you choose to write a final paper, you are expected to develop a paper topic in consultation with me. Should you need assistance with creating a topic—I can help! Your paper should be about **6-7 pages double spaced**. Your paper will be evaluated based on the strength of its thesis statement, its engagement and understanding of the text, its argument, and its clarity and quality of writing. You are expected to provide a bibliography with complete references for works cited and consulted. Your paper will be due via email on **June 7**.

D. Expectations, Resources, and Policies

Your success in this course is important to me. If there are aspects of the course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we can develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. If something goes seriously wrong in your life that impacts your coursework please talk to me as soon as possible—avoid cutting class or not completing assignments. The earlier you inform me of what is going on, the better I'll be able to help you.

I respond to email typically within **two days**. If you email me on Friday evening or at the weekend, however, I may not respond until Monday. If you have any concerns about your ability to meet the course requirements, please let me know immediately.

There are a range of resources on campus that can help you succeed in the course. Student Accessibility Services can help with determining accommodations to improve learning. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met.

Other resources on campus include Counseling and Human Development and the Student Wellness Center.

Accessibility and Accommodations: Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Getting Started with SAS webpage; student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900](#)) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Mental Health: These are difficult times. The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging even in normal times, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>, Counseling and Human Development <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>, and the Student Wellness Center <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>.

Religious Observances: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation

in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Dartmouth's Academic Honor Principle: I take plagiarism and other violations of the honor code very seriously. Please see the following link to Judicial Affairs that explains the Academic Honor Principle: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/judicialaffairs/honor/index.html>

For a guide to the proper citation of sources, please see:
<http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>

E. Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change. I try to build flexibility into the reading schedule.

Week 1 (March 29-31): What is Race?

March 29: Introduction to the course and classroom community discussion

March 31: Naomi Zack, "What is Race?" & "The Social Reality of Race" & "Mixed Race" *Thinking about Race*
Happy Cesar Chavez Day

Week 2 (April 5-7): What is Ethnicity? What is Racial and Ethnic Identity?

April 5: Zack, "Ethnicity" & "Racial and Ethnic Identity" *Thinking about Race* & excerpts from Charles Mills, "But What Are You Really?"

April 7: Jorge Garcia, "The Nature of Ethnicity with Special Reference to Hispanic/Latino Identity"

Attend the Race, Gender, and Justice Lecture series this week for extra credit.

Week 3 (Apr 12-14): Race as a Social Construction

April 12: Sally Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race"

April 14: Ron Mallon, "Passing, Travelling, and Reality: Social Constructionism and the Metaphysics of Race"

Optional: Linda Martín Alcoff, "Philosophy and Racial Identity"

Week 4 (Apr 19-21) Race, Ancestry, and (Anti-)Essentialism

April 19: Haslanger, "Family, Ancestry, and the Self: What's the Moral Significance of Biological Ties?"

Optional: Rasmus Winther, "Race and Biology"

April 21: Cressida Heyes, “Changing Race, Changing Sex”

Optional: Philip Kitcher, “Race, Ethnicity, Biology, and Culture”

Week 5 (April 26-28): Passing

April 26: *Passing*

April 28: *Passing* & Discussion

Viva Voce happening this week

Week 6 (May 3-5) Race and Indigeneity

May 3: Kim TallBear, “Race and Indigeneity in the Genographic Project”

May 5: TallBear, “Genomic Articulations of Indigeneity”

Midterm Papers due

Week 7 (May 10-12) Is Race a Social or Psychological Kind?

May 10: Daniel Kelly and Ron Mallon, “Race and Racial Cognition”

May 12: Jonathan Kaplan, “When Socially Determined Categories Make Biological Realities”

Week 8 (May 17-19) Racial Categories: Should We Keep Them?

May 17: Lucius Outlaw, “Towards a Critical Theory of ‘Race’”

May 19: Appiah, excerpts from “Race, Culture, and Identity: Misunderstood Connections”

Week 9 (May 24-May 26) Possibilities and Constraints for the Future of Race

May 24: Tina Fernandes Botts, “Race and Method: The Tuvel Affair”

May 26: Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?”

Week 10 (May 31) Wrapping-Up

May 31: Final Discussion and BCP Updates

Bread Crumb Projects Due June 7