

# Proposed Syllabus

## Philosophy of Race and Gender

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### Required Text:

There is **no required text**. Readings will be posted on Blackboard.

### Course Description

This course will explore metaphysical, conceptual, political and ethical questions about sex, gender, and race. What exactly is a race? What is a gender? Are these natural kind terms, or are they socially constructed? If the latter, how might we shift our concepts to provide a more just society? Should we do away with the concepts of race and gender altogether? What are the implications for changing one's race or gender and how ought we to think about what it means to "pass" in a gender or race that may or may not align with one's societally dictated or even one's chosen identity? What is at the root of racism and sexism and how ought we to think about their abolishment? How ought we to respond to oppressive language? And in the face of Black Lives Matter and #metoo, how might we be better allies on the one hand, and ought we to be more inclusive in our movements on the other?

### Classroom Expectations and Attendance Policy

Everyone is expected to come to class. For each unexcused absence exceeding two prior to fall break and/or two following fall break students will receive a 5% deduction on their final grade. Students are required to have done the readings, and they should be prepared to discuss them. There will on occasion be passionate disagreement—it is vital that we remain courteous to each other and to each other's point of view. It is possible to criticize arguments without showing disrespect for the people who endorse them—that is what we will strive to do. Electronic devices are permitted for note-taking purposes only.

### Late and Make-Up Work

No make-ups or extensions will be granted for any assignment unless you provide either (1) written (and approved) notice of absence beforehand, or (2) written documentation of an emergency situation afterward.

### Academic Misconduct

This course will be governed by Oberlin's Honor Code. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Student Honor Committee. For further information about the Honor Code, see <http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/honor-system-charter>.

### Disabilities

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me as soon as possible. I rely on the Office of Disability Services to verify the need for accommodation based on documentation on file in that office.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Citizenship (15%)

Philosophy is an activity. Like many activities, you'll only get as much out of doing philosophy as you put into it. To encourage engagement, 10% of your grade will depend in part on your being an active, appropriate, and interesting contributor to the class. I understand that speaking up in class is difficult for some students. To that end, this grade encompasses more than hand-raising. I primarily ask that all students are good citizens of the course. Thus, students who are present, clearly attentive, and who show engagement in other ways will also be rewarded.

### Discussion Board Comments (15%)

Prior to each class beginning 2/15, students will be required to post a comment on our course discussion board. The first day of each new topic the comment will be a simple question or thought you have coming into the discussion prior to reading more about the topic. On the second and third days, students will take turns initiating and responding to a comment on the reading for the day.

### Take home essays (20%)

Students are to write a total of four short essays (1-2 pages typed, double-spaced) throughout the term. These essays will each take the form of summarizing and discussing an argument or point made in class or a reading. Students may only write one essay per topic. Essays written for a given topic are to be uploaded onto Blackboard by the beginning of the second class of the next topic.

### Papers (50%)

Students will write two papers over the course of the semester, a midterm paper of 4-5 pages and a final paper of 5-6 pages. I will provide possible paper topics at least three weeks prior to the due dates of the papers. Students are permitted to write a paper based on another topic provided they meet with me to discuss their topic.

## Schedule of Topics/Readings:

### Week 1-2: Syllabus and Introduction to the Course

- How is This Paper Philosophy?, *Kristie Dotson*
- Making People Up, *Ian Hacking*

### Weeks 3-5: Metaphysics of Race and Gender

- Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections, Part I, *K. Anthony Appiah*
- But What Are You Really?, *Charles W. Mills*
- The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender, *Sveinsdóttir, Ásta Kristjana*
- Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire, *Judith Butler*

### Weeks 6-8: Epistemology: Concepts and Oppression

- Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?, *Sally Haslanger*
- Philosophical Analysis and Social Kinds: Gender and Race, *Jennifer Saul*
- Future Genders, Future Races, *Sally Haslanger*
- Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections, Part II, *K. Anthony Appiah*
- Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege, *Miranda Fricker*
- Blackness Visible, Preface and Chapter 1, *Charles Mills*

### Weeks 9-10: Changing and Passing

- Transsexualism and Transracialism, *Christine Overall*
- Changing Race, Changing Sex: The Ethics of Transformation, *Cressida J. Heyes*
- Passing, Traveling, and Reality: Social Constructionism and the Metaphysics of Race, *Ron Mallon*
- “A New Hope”: The Psychic Life of Passing, *C. Riley Snorton*

### Weeks 11-13: Sexism, Racism, and Speech

- Sexism and Racism: Some Conceptual Differences, *Laurence M. Thomas*
- Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, *Kimberle Crenshaw*
- “Oppression” and “Sexism”, *Marilyn Frye*
- Three Sites for Racism: Social Structures, Valuing, and Vice, *J.L.A. Garcia*
- Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts, *Rae Langton*
- What Did You Call Me? Slurs as Prohibited Words, *Luvell Anderson and Ernie Lepore*

### Weeks 14-15: BLM, #MeToo, and Allyship

- Soul-Blindness, Police Orders and Black Lives Matter, *Jonathan Havercroft & David Owen*
- Reckoning with the Silences of #MeToo, *Ashwini Tambe*
- A User's Guide to White Privilege, *Cynthia Kaufman*
- Earning Your Ally Badge, *Michael A. Messner, Max A. Greenberg, and Tal Peretz*