

AAAS / Philosophy 469/497B
African American Philosophy
Sched. No. 949336

Spring Semester 2008
T R 4:15-5:30 in 109 Sackett

Instructors:

Christine Clark-Evans, Professor of French and Francophone Studies, Women's Studies, and African and African-American Studies

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Address: S. 333 / 324 S. Burrowes Bldg. – Office hours Monday and Wednesday
11:15am-12:15 pm

Emily Grosholz, Professor of Philosophy, African American Studies and English

Tel. 5 1676 Email erg2@psu.edu

Address: 201 Sparks Building – Office hours: Monday 11 am-12n, Wednesday 12n-1pm

Books:

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, Transaction Publishers, 1991

Martin Luther King, *Why We Can't Wait*, Mentor Books, Penguin, 1964

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2005

Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics*, Palgrave MacMillan (MPS), 2002

Ida B. Wells Barnett, *On Lynchings*, Humanity Books, 2002

Packet of Readings: (selected texts)

Purpose of the Course:

Reading works by African American philosophers (some of whom respond to other works by American, European and African thinkers), students will examine debates over the definition of race, ethnicity, and citizenship, and study how these philosophers assess the rule of law and the use of force in twentieth century America. Since all these works refer to the concrete and problematic situation of African Americans, they raise with special urgency the issue of how philosophical reflection can address social change. When a philosopher makes his or her lived experience (or 'situation' to use Beauvoir's term) as an African American a theme for philosophical reflection, it changes the conception of philosophical method in deep and interesting ways. It also marks out an intellectual and political space at the center of philosophical research for the thinker, who thereby rejects a marginalization that is widespread and unjust. Students will examine racial strife and reconciliation in the United States within a broader philosophical context, where America is heir to and transformative of European liberal democratic and socialist ideas about citizenship, freedom and the rule of law. Twentieth century political ideals of autonomy, social justice and democracy drive not only the American civil rights movement, but also globally a host of anti-colonialist movements. These cultural cross-currents are essential for understanding both the course of philosophy and the course of history. African American philosophers and social activists have produced important texts that both take their place in the philosophical canon and revise the canon and indeed how we understand the practice of philosophy.

Methods and Grades:

Students will be required to analyze critically, in discussion and short essays, each of the books we study. This process will culminate in a well-researched 12-15 page final paper on a topic

developed in consultation with the professors. Each written assignment will be posted in a drop box on ANGEL before the deadline and also brought to class in hard copy. During the final month of the semester, each student will give an oral presentation of a draft of their paper and will revise and expand it on the basis of class discussion. Grades will be determined by three short papers (30%), class participation and attendance (20%), and the final paper (50%).

Policies:

Non-Discrimination Statement: The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA. 16802; Tel. (814) 863-0471.

Academic Integrity: Definition and expectations: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at the Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. To protect the rights and maintain the trust of honest students and support appropriate behavior, faculty and administrators should regularly communicate high standards of integrity and reinforce them by taking reasonable steps to anticipate and deter acts of dishonesty in all assignments. At the beginning of each course, the instructor must provide students with a statement clarifying the application of University and College academic integrity policies to that course.

Calendar:

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| Jan. | 15 | Introduction - Birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| | 17 | Du Bois, <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> , Ch. 4 |
| | 22 | Guest Visit by Harvey Cormier. <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> . Ch. 5 |
| | 23 | Harvey Cormier Public Lecture: "Consciousness and Double Consciousness; or, How We Become What We Are" |
| | 24 | <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> , Ch. 7 |
| | 29 | <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> , Ch. 8 |
| | 31 | <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> , Ch. 9 – 1 st reaction paper on ANGEL and hard copy in class |
| Feb. | 5 | Ida B. Wells Barnett, <i>Southern Horrors</i> , Preface, Ch. 1-4 (pp. 3-39) |
| | 7 | Ch. 5-6 (pp. 39-50); <i>A Red Record</i> , Ch. 1 and 2 (pp. 51-78) |
| | 12 | Ch. 7 (pp. 152-165), Ch. 10 (pp. 192-199) |
| | 14 | <i>Mob Rule in New Orleans</i> , pp. 200-244 |
| | 19 | <i>Mob Rule in New Orleans</i> , pp. 245-292 |

- 21 *Mob Rule in New Orleans*, pp. 245-292
- 26 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Concerning Violence,” pp. 35-58
 28 *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Pitfalls” pp. 148-171 – 2nd reaction paper on ANGEL and hard copy in class
- Mar. 4 Guest Visit by James Stewart. *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 171-205
 6 “On National Culture,” Pp. 206-248
- SPRING BREAK**
- 18 *The Wretched of the Earth*, Conclusion, pp. 311-316.
 19 Koffi Maglo: Public Lecture: “Race in Genomic Science: Some Philosophical and Ethical Considerations”
 20 Guest Visit by Koffi Maglo. M. L. King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*, Ch. 1-4
 25 Ch. 5 “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
 27 Guest Visit by Thomas Poole. Ch. 5 “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” – 3rd reaction paper on ANGEL and hard copy in class
- Apr. 1 Joy James, *Shadowboxing*, Ch. 1-3
 3 *Shadowboxing*, Ch. 4-6
- 6 Guest Visit by Joy James (special class Sunday). *Shadowboxing*, Ch. 7-8
 7 Joy James Public Lecture: “Political Literacy and Voice: A Reflection on Transformation and Praxis”
 8 M. L. King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*, Ch. 6, “Black and White Together”
 Deadline for Final Paper Topic – Complete sentence posted on ANGEL on Friday, Apr. 9 by 11 p.m. and a hard copy in class Apr. 15 – Apr. 9 Class cancelled and replaced above.
- 15 Ch. 7 “Summer of Our Discontent,” Ch. 8 “Days to Come,” Afterword
 17 Deadline for Final Paper Abstract (5-6 sentence summary) and critical bibliography of primary and secondary sources posted on ANGEL Friday, Apr. 18 and a hard copy in class on Apr. 22 – Oral Presentation of Final Projects in class
- 22 Oral Presentation of Final Projects in class
 24 Oral Presentation of Final Projects in class
- 28 Lewis Gordon Public Lecture: “From Civil to Human Rights and Beyond: Thoughts on Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Frantz Fanon”
 29 Guest Visit by Lewis Gordon - *Disciplinary decadence*, Chapters on “Inventing Africa,” and “Prospero’s words, Caliban’s reason”
- May 1 Conclusion. Attendance required.

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE ON ANGEL AND IN HARD COPY ON MAY 6, before 5 p.m. IN PROF. GROSHOLZ’S MAIL BOX.