

## SYLLABUS

*Assessment:* There will be a gift to you point-wise *if* you participate in an assessment exercise. Just for participating you get 1.5 points out of a hundred added to your final score (the average of the whole semester), enough in some cases to take you from a B- to a B or a C- to a C, etc. for the class.

Okay the specifics: in the first few weeks you will be given a ten to fifteen minute set of questions: true/false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions. Near the end of the course you will be given that same set of questions. You have to take *both* of them (in class) to get the 1.5 points out of a hundred. Both the first and the second times will be announced at least a week ahead of time. If you don't take one or the other, you don't get the points added to your overall final grade. You are not graded on the questions – you just get points if you take both.

### *Course Objectives:*

In re-applying to the Senate Curriculum Committee for (ES) Ethnic Studies credit for this course, I had to list course objectives. It might help you to know what those are! I have re-written them extensively for this syllabus (I would like to go back and change what I have in the application, but I will let that go for now).

- 1) *Help students become aware of the fact that people of color and white people in this country inevitably talk past each other on issues of race. To accomplish this my tasks are:*
  - A) *Introduce the various concepts – racism as an attitude/racism as a structure and hot racism/cold racism – that make people of color and white people talk past each other.*
  - B) *Introduce the idea the experience of racism in this country is very different for white people than it is for people of color.*
- 2) *Help students become aware of the significance of 'privilege' (in this case, white privilege) and what goes with that (cluelessness on one side and a certain authority on the other). To accomplish that my tasks are to:*
  - A) *Make people aware of white privilege; it is something white people are (by the very nature of privilege) completely unaware of.*
  - B) *Discuss the inevitable cluelessness that goes with privilege (any kind of privilege).*
  - C) *Give reasons for thinking that a person of color and a white person are subject to different set of life experiences.*

- D) *As a result of (B) and (C) argue that people of color are authorities (not irrefutable authorities however) on issues of racism in a way that white people cannot be (whites cannot look to their experience to tell them whether a place is racist (in the structure sense) or not.*
- 3) *Enable students to see the different demands and needs of different racially subjugated groups in the US (in this course it is American Indians and African Americans). In terms of the tasks for the instructor:*
- A) *Examine at length the different structure of the racism toward blacks from American Indians in the US.*
  - B) *Examine the different demands or needs of blacks and Indians.*
- 4) *Give students a racial-cultural map of the US and to explore some of its differences.*
- A) *Introduce the variety of racial categories in the US and how they operate internally (American Indians, Asian Americans each belong to very distinct ethnic groups with those categories, European Americans (whites), African Americans (blacks), and Latinos do not seem to have very distinct ethnic groups (of any great importance) within the larger category.*
  - B) *Explore the idea of cultures forming in the US*
- 5) *Help students understand some elements of the cultural integrity of another culture (and correspondingly of their own). (Philosophic debate is premised on treating the opponent with respect.)*
- A) *Show that the idea of 'progress' is inimical to respecting non-white cultures. Give a critique of the idea that US white world is 'ahead, advanced, or more developed.'*
  - B) *Show how the idea of 'our ancestors were not beautiful, they were crude, primitive, simple' is imbedded in white culture.*
- 6) *Enable students to see the paradox in the notion of 'race.'*
- A) *Discuss the overwhelming evidence that racial notions are historically constructed and that biology gives no support to the idea of human races.*
  - B) *Discuss the fact that in spite of this certain groups are racially identified in the US – that certainly for black people a unique culture exists that came about in a large part of being put in a racial category.*
  - C) *Discuss 'black-white centrism' in the racial discussion in the US (both groups identify themselves primarily against the other and those in both tend to think that racial notions primarily apply to the black/white difference).*

- 7) *Help students see the difference between multiculturalism and anti-racism.*
- A) *Examine contrasting ideals for a ‘non-racist’ society (all the way from ‘we are the same’ on one end to ‘we need to respect and celebrate our differences’ on the other)*
  - B) *Examine the difference between creating a good thing and fighting against a bad thing.*
- 8) *Explore the relevance of Western moral theory to understanding the issues surrounding the racial structure.*
- A) *Use the racial structure of the US and the issues surrounding it as a test of moral theory.*
  - B) *Raise questions about the place of academic philosophy*

Course requirements. There are two examinations – a 50-minute one on February 15<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) and a two-hour final TBA. There are also two papers of three-to-four pages in length (one due on March 16<sup>th</sup> and one due on April 20<sup>th</sup> – both are Fridays, note). In place of the final examination you may write a four-to-five page paper. So you either will have two exams and two papers or you will have one exam and three papers. For all examinations, you are given study questions in advance. The examination is based on the questions. If you know the answers to the study questions, if you can answer them well, you will be able to do well on the examination – even though I almost never put a study question as an examination question. *All examinations are open-book and open-handouts, by the way.*

All assignments are given the same weight. Class participation is used to give you move you up a grade if you are between two grades (most people are). “Class participation” means that you have attended regularly and have participated frequently in class discussions, I remember that. If you are between two grades, I give you the higher grade because of your participation. If you feel at the end of the term that you qualify for this, I encourage you to tell me that.

For each paper you are given a number of topics to choose from. The topics are drawn from the issues that we are discussing at the time the paper is assigned.

Before any paper is due, you are invited to submit a draft of the paper to me for review. After the first examination you will be inclined to do that, since you will probably write brilliantly but lose all sorts of points for not answering the question. It is fairly typical in philosophy to lose all sorts of points for not answering the question asked. I encourage people to come in with drafts of their papers to avoid “getting zapped.” I also like this process because I like to help people with the shaping the ideas that they have into a strong paper. One way to

get comments on a paper is to e-mail it to me in time for me to read it, comment on it, and send it back. For some students this works very well; you don't have to worry about finding me in my office.

I also allow a number of students to re-write a paper that they did poorly on. Generally, re-writes are not for students that simply "BS-ed" their way through a paper (had not attended class, did not do the reading) but rather for students who honestly answered the question but in a misdirected way. If your returned paper does say, "May re-write" or "May re-write the second part," you can re-write the paper or part of it.

Class attendance. In my courses there is no *direct* penalty for cutting class. I treat you as an adult – whether you are ready for that or not. I am not sure that I was really ready for that when I went to college. College was very different from high school, in part because no one cared whether I turned in something or not, whether I attended class or not. No one pestered me. If I did not do the work, or I did not put into it very much, there was a result, but the result wasn't right away. The result was after the semester was over. That is a hard adjustment for a lot of us to make. However, my professors kept treating me as an adult, and eventually I started to behave more like one. What my professors did for me I do for you. I may warn you now and then about not attending, about not turning in work, etc. But that will be it. You will find that class attendance helps you in a lot of ways – to understand the material, to get the hang of doing philosophy, and to prime you on discussions that are important for good performance on tests and papers. Remember, the tests and papers assume you have been present for class discussion and that you understand it.

If you have a legitimate reason for missing class, I will go over the material of the class you missed with you. If you don't have a legitimate reason, and you get someone else's notes and bring those to me, I will go over those with you. That is a good way to go over missed material. I hold you responsible for the discussion in the class whether you are there or not. In many cases a discussion we had would improve your paper or a test a great deal. If you do not include it or make reference to it, your paper or test suffers.

So I encourage you very strongly to attend class and not miss any and thus short yourself. But I do not take points off for simply missing class. Other teachers have different policies on this; you need to check with each instructor about that instructor's policy.

Office Hours: My office is room 329. It is upstairs in the northeast end of the building.

Monday 1:00 pm – 1:50pm  
 Tuesday 1:30 pm – 2:30pm  
 Wednesday 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm  
 Thursday 1:30pm – 2:30 pm

These are my walk-in times. I plan to be in my office then or not far away with a note where I am. Remember, it is easy for me to see you at other times.

The books for the course:

“Fredrickson”: George M. Fredrickson. *Racism: a short history*. This is a short history that treats white supremacy together with anti-Semitism. The author is a white guy.

“Degler”: Carl Degler: *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*. A fascinating study of the different structure of black/white racism in Brazil and in the US. Degler connects it to the differences in the types of slavery in the two countries. Another white guy.

“Deloria”: Vine Deloria, Jr. *Custer Died for your sins*. An outspoken classic work by an American Indian who died recently and was a professor of law and a kind of rabble-rouser with interesting things to say. It works to alter conceptions that people have of American Indians and of the situation of American Indians (he hates the word “plight”). Important is that he explicitly (in Chapter 8) distinguishes American Indian goals and aims from black American goals and aims.

“Patterson”: Orlando Patterson. *The ordeal of integration: progress and resentment in America’s “racial” crisis*. This work is by someone originally from Jamaica. He counts as black but he comes from outside of the US. Patterson sees genuine progress having been made on the racial issue in the US.

One video will be used for certain. It is the rather well known “The Color of Fear.”

We are likely to have at least one speaker, but I have not arranged that yet. I am planning on one; he is someone who has both observed and is African American. I am happy to consider suggestions for speakers from you.

Syllabus proper:

1. January 23-25: Introduction to the course, the nature of philosophy, and discussion of some key questions.

*Handout: Discussion of approaches to racism.*

*Reading: Fredrickson: pages 1-47.*

2. January 30-February 1: Discussion of questions you pose and examination of Fredrickson.

*Reading: Fredrickson, pages 51 to 138.*

3. February 6-8: Finish up Fredrickson. View “Color of Fear” and discuss

*Reading: Fredrickson, pages 139 to 170.*

*Classroom screening of “Color of Fear”*

*Study questions for in-class examination handed out*

4. February 13-15: Discuss “Color of Fear.” Start Carl Degler. Discussion of study questions

*Reading: Degler, page xi (Preface) to page 92*

*In-class examination, February 15<sup>th</sup>*

5. February 20-22: Degler, continued

*Reading: Degler, pages 95 to 204*

*Paper topics for paper #1 handed out*

6. February 27- March 1: Finish Degler

*Reading: Degler, page 207 to end*

7. March 6-8: Start Deloria

*Reading: Deloria, vii (Preface) to page 78.*

8. March 13-15: Deloria, continued

*Reading: Deloria, pages 79 to 168*

*Paper # 1 due March 16<sup>th</sup> (a Friday)*

## SPRING BREAK

9. March 27-29: Finish Deloria

*Reading: Deloria, page 169 to end*

*Paper topics for Paper #2 handed out*

10. April 3-5: Start Orlando Patterson.

*Reading: Patterson, page ix (Preface) to page 82*

11. April 10-12: Patterson, continued.

*Reading: Patterson, page 83 to page 123*

12. April 17-19: Patterson, finish.

*Reading: Patterson, page 125 to end*

*Paper #2 due April 20<sup>th</sup> (a Friday)*

13. April 24-26: What does multiculturalism really mean?  
*Final paper topics and study questions handed out*
  14. May 1-3: In what way is the racial issue in the US a moral one?  
*Hand out of discussion on morality and the racial issue*
  15. May 8: Finish up discussions and review.
- Final examination TBA. Final papers due by the end of the exam.*