

# Philosophy 285

## Seminar on Special Topics

### The Philosophy of Race

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Monday 4:00-6:50  
Office Hours T, TH 1:00-2:00

#### The Course

The *philosophy of race* is a new, burgeoning subfield in philosophy. At its center is *the race debate*, about whether race is biological or socially constructed. The course will attempt to answer a single basic question, *What is race?* The guiding idea is that *race is not one thing*. There is no one concept that is *the* concept of race, no single thing (or kind) that “is race”. To answer the question concerning what race is a survey of a succession of different race concepts is needed.

We will start by investigating the *racialist concept of race*, the traditional, pernicious essentialist and hierarchical race concept commonly misidentified as *the* concept of race. We will see why it is that there are no racialist races and why it is widely thought that there are no races, period.

From there, we will turn to the *minimalist concept of race*, the non-racialist logical core of the ordinary concept of race that represents the barest, most stripped-down possible characterization of the concept RACE. The exposition will make clear that the racialist concept of race ≠ the concept of race and that the concept of race is not essentially racist. It will show that it is possible to use the concept RACE *without thinking racist thoughts*. MINIMALIST RACE will reveal itself as a useable all-purpose biological race concept. Our subsequent task will be to consider whether minimalist races exist and whether minimalist race is biologically real. The position for which we will opt can be called “deflationary realism.”

We will turn next to an examination of the *populationist concept of race*, a candidate scientific concept of biological race that characterizes races as biological lines of descent, originating in geographically separated and reproductively isolated founding populations. Our subsequent task will be to determine whether populationist races exist and whether populationist race is biologically real.

At this point we will switch gears to consider the *concept of socialrace* (close compound). A socialrace is a social group that is taken to be a racialist race. Social race is an ideological social phenomenon masquerading as a biological phenomenon. The account of socialrace supplements our deflationarily realist account of biological race with a constructionist account of the social phenomenon of race.

Our penultimate topic is *race and medicine*. In this section we see how the conceptual framework articulated in the preceding sections of the course can illuminate debates about race, health, and medicine.

In our final class we will take up the general question whether we should retain *race* — the word, the concept, and the kind.

The seminar presupposes no prior work in the philosophy of race and can serve as an introduction to the field. It will address issues in metaphysics, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of biology, and social and political philosophy.

## Class Schedule

### 6 October Introduction

American Anthropological Association (AAA)	“Statement on Race”
K. Anthony Appiah	“Race, Culture, Identity”
Ashley Montagu	“The Concept of Race”

### 13 October The Racialist Concept of Race

K. Anthony Appiah	“Race, Culture, Identity”
Richard Lewontin	“The Apportionment of Human Diversity”
Noah Rosenberg <i>et al</i>	“Genetic Structure of Human Populations”

### 20 October The Minimalist Concept of Race

Jared Diamond	“Race Without Color”
Joshua Glasgow	<i>A Theory of Race</i> (2009)

### 27 October Do Minimalist Races Exist?

K. Anthony Appiah	“Race, Culture, Identity”
Richard Lewontin	“The Apportionment of Human Diversity” and “Confusion about Human Races”
Noah Rosenberg <i>et al</i>	“Genetic Structure of Human Populations”

### 3 November Is Minimalist Race Biologically Real?

Adam Hochman	“Against the New Racial Naturalism”
J.S. Mill	<i>A System of Logic</i> (1843)

### 10 November The Populationist Concept of Race

Robin Andreasen	“Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct”
Theodosius Dobzhansky	“Human Races in the Light of Genetics”
Phillip Kitcher	“Race, Ethnicity, Biology, Culture” and “Does Race Have a Future?”
Massimo Pigliucci & Jonathan Kaplan	“On the Concept of Race and its Applicability to Humans”

### 17 November On the Existence and Reality of Populationist Race

Robin Andreasen	“Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?”
Henry Louis Gates Jr.	“Writing “Race” and the Difference it Makes”
Richard Lewontin	“The Apportionment of Human Diversity”
Noah Rosenberg <i>et al</i>	“Genetic Structure of Human Populations”

### 24 November The Concept of Socialrace

Michael Root	“How We Divide the World”
Sally Haslanger	“Gender and Race” and

Michael Omi &  
Howard Winant

“A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race”  
*Racial Formation in the United States* (1994)

## 1 December Race and Medicine

Robin Andreasen	“Race in Medicine”
Lundy Braun	“Race, Ethnicity, Health”
Richard Cooper <i>et al</i>	“Race and Genomics”
Michael Fine <i>et al</i>	“The Role of Race and Genetics in Health Disparities Research”
Mindy Fullilove	“Abandoning “Race” as a Variable in Health Care”
Jonathan Kaplan	“When Socially Determined Categories Make Biological Realities”
Nancy Krieger	“A Glossary For Social Epidemiology” and “Embodying Inequality”

## 8 December Should We Retain Race?

### Requirements

- Attendance and participation at all seminar meetings
- Seminar presentation
- Term paper (about 12-15 pages in length) on some topic, approved by the instructor, central to course themes

### Required Texts

Most readings will be made available electronically. The following 3 books should be purchased at Groundwork Books:

A. Appiah and A. Gutmann	<i>Color Consciousness</i>	Princeton (1996)
J. Glasgow	<i>A Theory of Race</i>	Routledge (2009)
M. Omi & H. Winant	<i>Racial Formation in the United States</i>	Routledge (1994)

### Recommended Texts

Raymond Geuss	<i>The Idea of a Critical Theory</i>	Cambridge (1981)
Chimamanda Adiche	<i>Americanah</i>	Anchor (2013)
Jess Row	<i>Your Face in Mine</i>	Riverhead (2014)

### Relevant Texts

Naomi Zack	<i>Philosophy of Science and Race</i>	Routledge (2002)
Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott	<i>The Idea of Race</i>	Hackett (2000)
Jared Diamond	<i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i>	Norton (1997)
Nicholas Wade	<i>A Troublesome Inheritance</i>	Penguin (2014)
Michael Yudell	<i>Race Unmasked</i>	Columbia (2014)
Robert Sussman	<i>The Myth of Race</i>	Harvard (2014)
Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele	<i>(Race)</i>	Westview (2004)

