

Teaching Statement

Rachel Cristy

One of the most central principles I've learned while teaching is that it is important to remember what it was like to be a student first learning the subject matter of the course. Once material has become familiar, it can be difficult to get back into the mindset of someone for whom it is completely new. So I think back to the various ways of conceptualizing that helped me understand the material when I first encountered it; and I make sure to try several tacks, knowing that what works for one person may not work for another. I use my own experience of learning to provide not only strategies, but a model. I recount my own struggles both to assure the students that the material really is challenging, so their struggles do not reflect poorly on them, and to demonstrate that the understanding I have achieved *is* possible, even starting from a point of confusion and frustration. I make a point of exhibiting my passion and enthusiasm for the very same material that I struggled over, and that made me doubt my philosophical abilities (which my first encounter with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* absolutely did), to show that the successful overcoming of intellectual obstacles can produce *love* as well as the satisfaction of understanding.

Although I use my own experience as a model, I'm well aware that every student's needs, interests, and ways of understanding are different, and I take account of that in my teaching. I prefer to allow the students to direct the discussion toward the aspects of the reading that interest them most. As an Assistant in Instruction for a class on Nietzsche, I asked the students to send me questions before section each week, about issues that they were having trouble with or were especially interested in exploring, and I used these to launch and guide discussion. I tried to select the open-ended discussion questions submitted by students who tended to speak less in section, and to publicly give them credit for fruitful questions, in order to subtly encourage them to participate more in the conversation.

I know from my experience as both a teacher and a student that the first and one of the highest hurdles for new philosophy students is learning to approach reading and writing in a distinctively philosophical way. My favorite tried-and-true method for teaching this skill is the argument reconstruction assignment: translating an argument in prose into a numbered list of premises, explicit and implicit, leading to a conclusion. As a second-year undergraduate taking my first philosophy class, I hated this assignment—mostly because it was unlike anything I'd done before, and I found it difficult and frustrating. But I've realized since then how valuable this skill is for a philosopher—the ability to boil a text down to its basic argument structure and determine whether it holds up under pressure—and how much I benefited from being taught early on to approach a text with this aim in mind.

For that reason, I plan to model the method of extracting an argument from a text in early lectures of my introductory undergraduate courses, and make an argument reconstruction the first assignment. It is likewise helpful and productive to review this skill in intermediate-level courses, particularly with complicated arguments in historical texts. For example, in a course on British Empiricism, I guided my students in a collaborative reconstruction of one of Berkeley's arguments against the existence of matter. Having seen the structure of the argument, despite the apparent outlandishness of the conclusion, several students left at the end of class saying (jokingly) that they no longer believed in matter. I plan to conduct a similar collaborative reconstruction in an early lecture of intermediate courses, as well, and to have the first short essay assignment include an argument reconstruction.

Because this activity is so foundational, and so alien to students just being introduced to philosophy, I do not weight it too heavily in the final grade for an introductory course. My policy for such courses is to give the students a chance to redo the assignment and throw out their grade on the first version, but only if they come to my office hours (or their TA's office hours, as appropriate) to talk about what they should do differently, and show substantial improvement in the rewrite—but I will not disclose this policy in advance of the first deadline, so that the students will still take it seriously. This allows the students to realize how difficult thinking and reading like a philosopher can be, and how different it may be from anything they've ever attempted, while also assuring them that they're not expected to know how to do it perfectly from the start. When teaching this assignment in the past, I have made sure to impress this upon my students: that the assignment was hard for me too, when I first did it, and they should not be discouraged if they didn't do well at first. (One of my students in Introduction to Moral Philosophy even recalled this in the course evaluation: "She helped us regroup after we were down about the first paper.")

In addition to the incentive to come to my office hours to discuss a re-write of the first assignment, which I described above, I will continue to encourage my students to meet with me to discuss early drafts of their papers. Some of my best teaching takes place in one-on-one meetings with students—including my greatest instance of success as a teacher, which also came in part from drawing on my own experience as a student. A second-year undergraduate who had received a lower grade than she was accustomed to on the first assignment came to my office hours to discuss her ideas for the second paper. At the end of the meeting, she said that she was developing a serious interest in philosophy and considering majoring in it, but she wasn't sure she was good enough at it. Hearing her say that made me feel a pang of sadness for two reasons: first, because she was one of the most active, engaged participants in discussion sections, who consistently made some of the most incisive and insightful comments; and second, because I vividly remembered asking the same question of myself as one of only three women in my first upper-level philosophy class, beating my head (as it felt to me then) against Kant's First Critique and wondering whether I was smart enough for graduate school in philosophy. I told her both of these things; assured her that writing philosophy papers is strange and difficult and no one does it well the first time; and warned her that it is all too common for women in philosophy to doubt their abilities, especially as they start seeing themselves outnumbered in all their classes, but that she should not, because she clearly showed the kind of keen inquisitiveness that lends itself to philosophy. She did end up majoring in philosophy, and is now a second-year graduate student at one of the top philosophy programs in the United States.

This is an especially dramatic example of the efficacy of one-on-one mentoring, but I have seen it succeed in smaller ways as well. In Introduction to Moral Philosophy, several students who received C grades on the first assignment met with me to work through their ideas for the next paper, and then earned A grades on the rest of the papers for the class. These have been my proudest and most enjoyable teaching experiences: seeing students who were discouraged by an unexpectedly low grade take the initiative to ask for help; watching them have that "aha!" moment when we converge on the way of talking about the issues that breaks through their confusion; and seeing them regain confidence as they realize that they did not lack the *ability* to read, write, and think like a philosopher, but only the training and experience.

Summary of Teaching Evaluations

Rachel Cristy

As reported on my CV, I have served as an Assistant in Instruction (AI, known to Princeton students as a “preceptor”) for four courses: Introduction to Moral Philosophy (PHI 202), taught by Michael Smith, during Fall Semester 2012; Nietzsche (PHI 306), taught by Alexander Nehamas, in Spring 2013; British Empiricism (PHI 302), taught by Daniel Garber, in Fall 2013; and Introduction to Linguistics (LIN 201), taught by Christiane Fellbaum in Fall 2014 and Laura Kalin in Spring 2017. My responsibilities consisted of leading 50-minute discussion sections (called “precepts”), holding office hours to answer student questions about course material and assist them with their assignments, and grading student papers and exams.

The complete set of my student evaluation files is available upon request.

Quantitative Scores

	Average rating	Total scorers	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
PHI 202: Introduction to Moral Philosophy (2 sections, Fall 2012)	3.5	16	4	3	7	1	1
PHI 306: Nietzsche (3 sections, Spring 2013)	3.1	18	1	6	6	3	2
PHI 302: British Empiricism (1 section, Fall 2013)	4.3	3	1	2	0	0	0
LIN 201: Introduction to Linguistics (3 sections, Fall 2014)	3.3	28	5	10	5	4	4
LIN 201: Intro to Linguistics (4 sections, Spring 2017)	3.1	27	6	6	6	2	7

Comments from Evaluations

My strengths as a teacher

The comments I have received on student evaluations point to four major areas of strength as a teacher: (1) ability to effectively clarify difficult material presented in readings and lectures; (2) ability to encourage and lead interesting discussions; (3) friendliness and approachability, including outside of class; and (4) knowledgeability and enthusiasm about the material.

PHI 202: Introduction to Moral Philosophy (Fall 2012)

- Rachel was a great preceptor and helped clarify some of the confusion we had with some lecture topics. She also led great discussions about the readings.
- Rachel was a very good preceptor, she talked about things that weren’t even in the course just to supplement what we were learning, and her office hours were useful in writing papers better.
- Rachel was extremely helpful, and very willing to meet with us to discuss major ideas even outside of precept. I appreciated all the work she put into class. Rachel was always very helpful and approachable.

- Precepts helped to clear up some of the readings. The preceptor also encouraged some participation and followed some of the other students' ideas to show other viewpoints and arguments.
- The precepts helped me to think about the topics discussed in class in an easier way. It helped to clarify things.
- Rachel was a great preceptor. She created a comfortable classroom environment where I was not afraid to ask questions about the material. She helped us regroup after we were down about the first paper, and she taught us how to reconstruct an argument. She was available to meet outside of class, and she always responded thoughtfully to my emails and questions. She helped clarify some of the more difficult material, such as Kant. I really appreciated her approachability and enthusiasm. My only wish is that the precepts had been a little more organized.

PHI 306: Nietzsche (Spring 2013)

Some of the comments from this course make reference to a method I experimented with that term: I had students submit questions the day before the discussion section, and I would prepare answers for the ones that were a matter of textual understanding, and use the more open-ended ones to launch discussion among the students.

- Rachel clearly has an invested interest in Nietzsche and her expertise does not go unnoticed. Every week we submitted discussion questions for precept and in general she was good about addressing all of them to the satisfaction of the askers. Precept and office hours were a great recourse for getting the text straight.
- precepts were quite helpful. I liked how we asked questions before and addressed them in precept...
- Rachel did a great job of leading discussion and answering people's questions about the reading

PHI 302: British Empiricism (Fall 2013)

- Rachel does an excellent job of encouraging natural discussion and explaining difficult concepts.
- Rachel was a very good preceptor and we always had extremely interesting discussions. Sometimes she would digress to other subject material, but as a relative novice in philosophy I really enjoyed getting an even bigger picture of the subject matter.
- Precept was great for delving deeper into the different questions and controversies contained within the readings.

LIN 201: Introduction to Linguistics (Fall 2014 and Spring 2017)

A note on the format of the class: precepts served mainly as practicum sessions, intended to show the students how to complete the type of problems they would be assigned for homework and on exams. Students were sharply divided on their view of this format, as reflected in some of the comments sampled below and in the polarization of the numerical scores. However, as the class moved from problem-based areas like phonology to more theoretical topics like sociolinguistics, I was able to foster more quasi-philosophical discussion.

- Rachel's awesome! In addition to clearly explaining the material covered in lecture, Rachel often brought in extra information that was absolutely fascinating. I was comfortable speaking up in this precept unlike others.
- The preceptor was excellent. She introduced a philosophical perspective that I found intellectually enriching.
- Rachel was a great preceptor. She is passionate about the material and has this adorable geekiness that keeps precept interesting.
- Ms. Cristy was incredibly knowledgeable and friendly. She was able to help us with pretty much anything that we were having trouble with.
- The precepts were my favorite part about the class. Rachel was funny and helpful, and it was fun to work in groups during the exercises.
- It was helpful to go through some of the types of problems that would appear on the problem set in precept. In general, precepts were a lot of fun and light-hearted. I enjoyed some of the tangents we went on.
- Rachel was laid-back but well versed in the material and I enjoyed precept a lot.
- Rachel did a good job of clarifying material and answering our questions, as well as introducing us to other interesting topics of linguistics. However, what we did in precepts we probably could have done on our own, though it was useful to go over the answers together.
- Precepts provided opportunities to do extra problems to reinforce material, which I found to be extremely helpful. My preceptor was also responsive to students' questions.
- Precepts activities could have been more interesting for student engagement, but overall Rachel was good at explaining concepts and answering questions.
- Rachel was knowledgeable and always well-prepared.
- Rachel was very clear when explaining the practice problems we did in precept, and because of that I feel she contributed significantly to my understanding of the material. She generally encouraged participation, though I think the class was a bit shy to participate (perhaps because it was such a small class). But regardless she was very approachable and open to our questions.
- The preceptor clearly is passionate about linguistics and helped us make sure we were understanding the material we were learning.
- Rachel was really helpful when it came to explaining the topic of that week's lecture and wrote helpful advice and tips when it came to the problem sets. She also did a great job of giving us multiple examples for whatever we were covering.
- I think Rachel was an awesome preceptor. She was super fun and engaging and always had great commentary on everything. I think that made the precept more helpful and made student participation stronger. She was very knowledgeable and was very helpful in explaining things.
- Rachel helps me a lot in understanding the new concepts taught in lectures.

Comments that have helped me improve as a teacher

In the first two courses for which I was an AI, PHI 202 and PHI 306, I sometimes had trouble striking a balance between keeping the discussions focused on the most important themes from the reading and allowing students to take the discussions where their own interests and concerns led them. I also sometimes had trouble determining when I should answer students' questions directly with my own explanations of the material and when I should throw the issue open for students to try out their interpretations. In both classes, comments reflect that I found my feet and was able to achieve better balance over the course of the semester. A few of the comments from the Nietzsche course in particular

point to a lack of confidence on my part that hindered me in effectively steering the discussions. I suspect that this had something to do not only with my inexperience as a teacher, but also with the relatively large size of the precepts and the fact that more of the students were upper-level undergraduates than in PHI 202, and were therefore more vocal and confident in their opinions, which sometimes made it more difficult to keep discussions on the desired topic.

As should be indicated by the preponderance of positive comments about my performance in the later courses, British Empiricism and Introduction to Linguistics, I took into account the criticisms of my teaching style from the earlier courses. I put more time into structuring a lesson plan for the discussion sections, and I was better able to gently guide discussions back onto an intended track without seeming to artificially restrict the free flow of students' thoughts. It probably helped that, due to vagaries of scheduling, the section I led for British Empiricism was relatively small. The fact that I was also able to effectively guide both activities and discussions in my larger precepts for Introduction to Linguistics, however, is another indication that I learned from my earlier difficulties and the critical feedback I received.

PHI 202: Introduction to Moral Philosophy (Fall 2012)

- Precepts occasionally lacked structure but improved as the semester progressed.
- Rachel was a great preceptor. ... *My only wish is that the precepts had been a little more organized.* [same comment quoted above; last sentence emphasized here]

PHI 306: Nietzsche (Spring 2013)

- At first, Rachel was not that good. She seemed to be a little too nervous and unable to start conversation. As the semester progressed, however, and especially after the 8-week point her precepts became much livelier and more educative. I am sure that now that she got a hang of it, she will be excellent in all future precepts she holds.
- Precept was very engaging, and it covered some of the most important material from lecture. I do wish, however, that there had been a bit more discussion between students.
- Precepts were hit or miss. Sometimes they were aimless, but every now and then we'd enter into a really good and illuminating conversation.
- Precepts could get awkward at times. There wasn't a lot of direction on Rachel's part. However, the precept would be better with better student participation (myself included). I thought that student questions would have been better addressed in a more structured format. Rachel was helpful with regards to papers. I would've liked to have seen MANY more comments on the papers, there was little to no feedback.
- Not great. A little too meek.
- Not as much candid discussion in precept as I might have hoped.
- Rachel is not the most energized, animated or outgoing preceptor, but she is incredibly smart and understands Nietzsche quite well. Discussion was often meandering, but I felt that I was learning something most of the time.
- Rachel was helpful in answering any questions or clarifying any passages in the reading. I liked that she offered alternative interpretations of the text. I do wish that the precepts had been more structured though, perhaps with questions to think about before precept that would stimulate discussion. It is a little hard to know where to begin with Nietzsche.

Introduction to Philosophy

Course description

“The unexamined life is not worth living”: this famous line from Plato’s *Apology* could be considered the mission statement of the discipline of philosophy. Of course, philosophy provides a method of inquiry and a set of tools for building and critiquing arguments; but more fundamentally, philosophy is about seriously examining the assumptions we tend to take for granted—about the reality of the world around us, what’s right and wrong, how we should go about living our lives.

The two primary aims of this class are (1) to provide students with the analytical tools to question the assumptions we make in our everyday lives, and (2) to put the fundamental questions of philosophy into historical perspective, showing how the foundations of philosophy as we know it today were laid by René Descartes 500 years ago, and how it carries on a project of critical inquiry started by Plato 2500 years ago.

Evaluation

The assignments and their contribution to the final grade are as follows:

- Numbered argument reconstruction: 15%
- Essay-form argument analysis and critique: 20%
- Short (4-page) essay with original argument: 25%
- Longer (5-page) original essay: 30%
- Class participation: 10%

Schedule

Week 1. Why do philosophy?

Plato, *Apology*

Week 2: Epistemology and philosophical methodology: radical doubt, for and against

René Descartes, *Meditations*: First Meditation

C.S. Peirce, “The Fixation of Belief”

Weeks 3–4. Epistemology and methodology, continued: rationalism vs. empiricism

Descartes, *Meditations*: Second Meditation

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. 2: “No innate Principles in the Mind”

Lecture on the (so-called) rationalist and empiricist traditions; recent challenges to the story as told by Immanuel Kant

Weeks 5–6. The existence of God

Descartes, *Meditations*: Third Meditation

Lecture on Kant’s objection to the ontological argument

David Hume, selections from *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* sections 125 and 343

Lecture on what is actually meant by “the death of God”

Week 7. The mind–body problem

Descartes, *Meditations*: Sixth Meditation

Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes, correspondence from May–June 1643

Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”

Weeks 8–9. Free will and moral responsibility

Four Views on Free Will (Fischer, Kane, Pereboom, and Vargas, edited by Sosa), selections

William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”

Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

Weeks 10–11. The basis of ethics

Plato, *Euthyphro*

Gilbert Harman and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*

Week 12. Self-made ethics

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (selections)

Early Modern Philosophy

Course description

The early modern period in philosophy, generally thought of as having begun with René Descartes and ended with the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, has to a great extent laid the foundations and set the agenda for philosophical inquiry to the present day. Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* introduced many of the philosophical questions we still wrestle with today, including the problems of radical skepticism, personal identity, and the relationship between mind and body. Leibniz shaped the conception of modality (possibility, actuality, and necessity) that still prevails today and furnished the helpful notion of a *possible world*. David Hume may or may not have espoused the current theories in the philosophy of action and the philosophy of science that are now called "Humean," but he did inspire them. Kant at once introduced the categories of *rationalism* and *empiricism* into which we continue to sort historical (and sometimes contemporary) philosophies, and claimed to have overcome the division.

The goal of this class is to give students a grounding in the classic texts of early modern philosophy, while at the same time questioning some of the conventional wisdom about the canon. How accurate, really, are the labels *rationalist* and *empiricist*? How indebted was Descartes to philosophers who came before him? Most importantly, why aren't the many women who were writing philosophical letters and treatises during the 17th and 18th centuries usually considered part of the canon? The readings in the class will interweave the writings of early modern women philosophers with those of the men who have traditionally formed the early modern canon, showing how women were not only responding to the ideas of male philosophers, but putting forward original proposals of their own, some of which were taken up by later writers.

Required texts

Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Texts, edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins
(texts from this anthology are labeled "MP" below)

Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period, edited by Margaret Atherton (texts labeled "WPEMP" below)

Evaluation

The assignments and their contribution to the final grade are as follows:

- Numbered argument reconstruction: 15%
- Essay-form argument analysis and critique: 20%
- Short essay (4–5 pages) with original argument: 25%
- Longer original essay (6–7 pages): 30%
- Class participation: 10%

Schedule

Week 1. Descartes and his precursors

Michel de Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, "The Senses are Inadequate" (MP)

Francis Bacon, selections from *New Organon* I (MP)

René Descartes, selections from *Discourse on the Method* (MP)

Week 2. Descartes on philosophical method

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditations One and Two (MP)

Selections from the *Objections and Replies* (MP)

Week 3. Descartes on knowledge of God

Descartes, *Meditations*: Meditations Three, Four, and Five (MP)
Selections from the *Objections & Replies*, with special focus on the issue of the “Cartesian circle” in *Objections & Replies II* (Mersenne) (MP)

Weeks 4–5. The mind–body problem: dualism, materialism, and idealism

Descartes, *Meditations*: Meditation Six (MP)
Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, selections from correspondence with Descartes (WPEMP)
Margaret Cavendish, selections from *Philosophical Letters* (WPEMP)
Anne Conway, selections from *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (WPEMP)

Week 6. Spinoza: geometric method, monism, necessitarianism

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpts (MP)
Benedict de Spinoza, selected correspondence (MP)
Spinoza, *Ethics* Parts I and II, selected sections (note: DO NOT try to understand how all the inferences work; this will take far too much time and drive you nuts)

Week 7. Leibniz: steering the mind–body problem between Malebranche and Spinoza

Nicolas Malebranche, selections from *The Search after Truth* (MP)
G.W. Leibniz: selections from *Discourse on Metaphysics*, *Primary Truths*, *A New System of Nature*, *Monadology* (MP)
Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham, selections from correspondence with Leibniz (WPEMP)

Week 8. Locke: the first (maybe) British empiricist (maybe)

Robert Boyle, *On the Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy* (MP)
John Locke, selections from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (MP)
Leibniz, Preface to *New Essays* (MP)
Catharine Trotter Cockburn, selections from *A Defense of Mr. Locke’s Essay of Human Understanding* (WPEMP)

Week 9. Berkeley’s empiricist idealism

Bishop George Berkeley: selections from *Principles of Human Knowledge*, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, and *On Motion* (MP)

Weeks 10. Hume’s empiricist skepticism

Pierre Bayle, *Dictionary*, “Pyrrho,” Note B (MP)
David Hume: selections from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and *Dialogues Concerning Human Understanding* (MP)

Week 11. Hume’s critics, commonsense and “critical”

Thomas Reid, selections from *Inquiry into the Human Mind* and *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (MP)
Lady Mary Shepherd, selections from *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe* (WPEMP)
Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*: begin reading (MP)

Week 12. Kant’s “Copernican turn”

Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, continued (MP)
Kant, selections from *Critique of Pure Reason* (MP)

Nietzsche

Course description

Nietzsche is at the same time one of the most widely known and widely misunderstood philosophical figures. Everyone knows that he said “God is dead,” but not many people know what he meant by saying it. (Hint: it was not simply a declaration of atheism.) His name still carries an unfortunate association with Nazism, which was encouraged after his death by his sister, but would have horrified Nietzsche himself. He is often accused of sharing the Nazis’ antisemitism, even though he had nothing but disgust and contempt for the antisemites of his day. He is often considered to be an angry and pessimistic philosopher, raging dyspeptically at the world (when I tell people I work on Nietzsche, often the first response I get is, “Isn’t that horribly depressing?”). While Nietzsche certainly can raise a blistering polemic, it is less well known how *funny* he is, and how gorgeous, exhilarating, even uplifting his prose can be.

Accordingly, one of the goals of this class is to clear up these misconceptions about Nietzsche. But the more important goal is to show how one of the common conceptions about Nietzsche is correct: that he was a radical, iconoclastic thinker who provocatively questioned the foundational assumptions of western philosophy and culture.

While the class will begin by talking about the elephant in the room—the notion of the death of God—I will subsequently take a developmental approach, revealing the ways Nietzsche’s thought evolved over the course of his lifetime. For students unfamiliar with the history of philosophy, this approach will help them to see historical philosophers not as monoliths with a single set of views, but as human beings who often changed their minds about things as they gained more experience or thought more deeply into their old ideas.

Evaluation

For undergraduates, the assignments and their contribution to the final grade are as follows:

- Argument analysis and criticism, 3–4 pages: 15%
- Midterm paper, 5–6 pages: 30%
- Final paper, 7–8 pages: 45%
- Class participation: 10%

Graduate students taking the class for credit will turn in a 15- to 25-page paper at the end of term.

Required Texts

Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (The Modern Library)

The Portable Nietzsche, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann (Viking Penguin Inc.)

The Gay Science, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (Vintage Books)

Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*

Course reader with excerpts from *Untimely Meditations*, *Human, All Too Human*, and *Daybreak*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, and some required chapters from secondary texts

Required journal articles will be made available on the course website

Recommended Secondary Texts

Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*

Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*

Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*

Schedule

Week 1. The “death of God” as the collapse of objective values

The Gay Science, sections 108, 109, 125, 343

Week 2. Young Nietzsche's first attempt to replace Christian values?

The Birth of Tragedy, selections (in BWN)

Week 3. Early-middle Nietzsche on the value of science for culture

Untimely Meditations II: "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," selections

Human, All Too Human, selections (in course reader)

Week 4. Mid-late Nietzsche's individualist turn: art and self-fashioning

The Gay Science, sections 59, 76–107, 276–342

Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, Chapter 1: "The Most Multifarious Art of Style" (in course reader)

Week 5. Self-fashioning, continued: the Eternal Recurrence

The Gay Science, section 341 (re-read)

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Part III, "The Wanderer," "On the Vision and the Riddle," "The Convalescent," "The Seven Seals" (in TPN)

Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, Chapter 5: "This Life: Your Eternal Life" (in course reader)

R. Lanier Anderson, "Nietzsche on Truth, Illusion, and Redemption," sections 2–3

Week 6. Nietzsche's critique of morality, phase 1: 1881–1884

Daybreak, selections (in course reader)

The Gay Science, selections from Book III

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, selections (in TPN)

Week 7. Nietzsche's critique of morality, phase 2: 1886

Beyond Good and Evil: Part III, "What is Religious"; Part V, "Natural History of Morals"; Part IX, "What is Noble," focus esp. on section 260 (in BWN)

Week 8. Nietzsche's critique of morality goes nuclear, part 1

On the Genealogy of Morality, Preface and First Essay (in BWN)

Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, Chapter 3, "Naturalism and Genealogy" (selections) and Chapter 6, "Good and Evil: Affect, Artistry, and Revaluation"

Week 9. Nietzsche's critique of morality goes nuclear, part 2

On the Genealogy of Morality, Second Essay

Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, Chapter 7, "Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual," and Chapter 8, "Guilt, Bad Conscience, and Self-Punishment"

Week 10. Nietzsche's critique of morality goes nuclear, part 3

On the Genealogy of Morality, Third Essay

Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, Chapter 13, "The Ascetic Ideal, Meaning, and Truth"

Week 11. Later Nietzsche's epistemology and philosophy of science

The Gay Science, sections 7, 11, 12, 107, 109–113, 121; Book V

On the Genealogy of Morality, Third Essay, 12 and 23–28 (re-read)

Twilight of the Idols, "How the True World Became a Fable" (in TPN)

Anderson, "Nietzsche on Truth, Illusion, and Redemption," section 1

Week 12. Very late Nietzsche's retrospective self-assessment

Ecce Homo, selections (in BWN)

Philosophy of Race

Course description

What is “race,” anyway? Is it a biological category, like a species or subspecies? Or is it instead a cultural category, like an ethnic group, or a social category, like a socioeconomic class? What are we claiming about people when we assign them to one race or another? What do people ordinarily mean when they talk about races? Should we, as philosophers, stick to a “common sense” notion of race when we talk about it, or is it worthwhile to try to reform our own (and other people’s) use of the concept? What does it take for race to count as “real”? How do these issues extend beyond the concept of race to other social categories, such as gender and sexual orientation?

The aim of this course is to explore different conceptions of race and compare their advantages and disadvantages with respect to capturing ordinary usage, describing the biological and social reality, and promoting racial justice. While the question will be framed using contemporary theoretical resources, we will take a historical and contextual approach to answering it, surveying the understandings of race that have been adopted by different theorists through history. A major guiding figure in our inquiry will be W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), a Black American philosopher, sociologist, historian, and civil rights leader, who thought deeply and systematically about race throughout his life.

Evaluation

The assignments and their contribution to the final grade are as follows:

- Argument analysis and criticism, 3–4 pages: 15%
- Midterm paper, 5–6 pages: 30%
- Final paper, 7–8 pages: 45%
- Class participation: 10%

Graduate students taking the class for credit will turn in a 15- to 25-page paper at the end of term.

Required texts

The Idea of Race, edited by Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott
Joshua Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* and *Dusk of Dawn* (or excerpts in a course reader)
Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*
bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman?*

A helpful resource: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article “Race”
(plato.stanford.edu/entries/race)

Recommended texts for further reading

Pragmatism and the Problem of Race, edited by Bill E. Lawson and Donald F. Koch
Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identities, edited by Jorge J.E. Gracia
Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*
Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*
Terrance MacMullan, *Habits of Whiteness: A Pragmatist Reconstruction*
Paul C. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*
Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race; Race and Mixed Race; and Thinking About Race*

Schedule

Week 1. What is a race? Framing the question, possible answers

Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, Chapter 1

(See also SEP "Race" article section 2, "Do Races Exist? Contemporary Philosophical Debates")

Week 2. The "folk" notion of race and its historical origins

Voltaire, "Of the Different Races of Men," in *The Idea of Race*

Blumenbach, excerpts from *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, in *The Idea of Race*

Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, Chapter 4 (selections)

(See also SEP "Race" article section 1, "History of the Concept of Race")

Week 3. Race as a biological category, for and against

Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, Chapter 5 (selections)

Darwin, "On the Races of Man" (from *The Descent of Man*), in *The Idea of Race*

Boas, "The Instability of Human Types," in *The Idea of Race*

Montagu, "The Concept of Race in the Human Species in Light of Genetics," in *The Idea of Race*

Robin O. Andreasen (2004), "The Cladistic Race Concept: A Defense"

Week 4. Race as a spiritual category

Herder, excerpt from *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humankind*, in *The Idea of Race*

Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in *The Idea of Race*

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, selections

Leopold Senghor, "What is 'Negritude'?", in *The Idea of Race*

Week 5. Race as a cultural category; race vs. ethnicity

Alain Locke, "The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture," in *The Idea of Race*

Jorge J.E. Gracia (1999), "The Nature of Ethnicity with Special Reference to Hispanic/Latino Identity"

(See also SEP "Race" article section 3, "Race versus Ethnicity")

Week 6. Race as an empty category: the case for eliminating the notion of race

K. Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," in *The Idea of Race*

Appiah (1990), "But Would That Still Be Me? Notes on Gender, 'Race,' Ethnicity, as Sources of 'Identity'"

Week 7. Race as a socially constructed category

Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, Chapter 6, section 6.1

Ian Hacking, "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds" (available on course website)

Sally Haslanger (2000), "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"

Week 8. Alternatives to constructivism: revisionism, anti-realism, reconstructionism

Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, Chapter 6, sections 6.2–6.3, and Chapter 7

Week 9. Pragmatism and pragmatic theories of race

William James, *Pragmatism*, Lecture II (available on course website)

Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (excerpts)

David McClean (2004), "Should We Conserve the Notion of Race?" (on course website)

Paul C. Taylor (2004), "Pragmatism and Race" (on course website)

Week 10. Case study: the continuous creation of whiteness

Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks* (selections)

Week 11. More challenges to Black-White dichotomy

Naomi Zack (1995), "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy"

Linda Martín Alcoff (2003), "Latino/as, Asian Americans, and the Black-White Binary"

Week 12. Intersectionality: how race interacts with other social categories

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics"

bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?* (selections)