

PH 436/636
Gender, Race, and Science
Tues/Thurs: 2:00-3:15

Professor:

Dr. Victor Kumar - victor.c.kumar@gmail.com

Office hours: Tues/Thurs: 3:30 – 4:30 (STH 536a)

Course website: www.victorkumar.org/seminar

Course description:

The subject matter of this course is the **ethics and science of race and gender**. We will use philosophical analyses in combination with research in social science to understand social injustices. In the first half of the course, we will study racism and oppression. We'll cover topics like #blacklivesmatter, inequality in the criminal justice system, segregation, and implicit bias. In the second half of the course, we will explore sexism and misogyny. Topics include violence, objectification, silencing, and emotional labor.

Lab meetings:

We'll have three meetings of the **Mind and Morality Lab** over the semester, scheduled during class hours. A guest speaker will give a talk related to their research. Lab meetings are open to the BU philosophy department and others by invitation.

Assigned readings:

Articles, book chapters, podcasts, and videos posted online

Assessment:

- **Participation (20%):** You will be asked to provide thoughtful and civil contributions to class discussions. Explain what an author means; raise objections; draw connections; respond to other students' arguments.
- **Shorties (40%):** You will be asked to write **8 short critical or constructive responses** (max 500 words) to one or more of the assigned readings in weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11. Due via email by noon the day those readings are discussed in class (i.e., Tuesday or Thursday). Late shorties are not accepted.
- **Essays (40%):** You will be asked to write **2 essays** (min 1500 words) in October and December. Worth **40%** of your final grade. Late essays lose 1/20 points per day.
- **Creative project:** You will have an opportunity to do **a creative project** instead of one of the essays—short film, podcast, comic book, dialogue, play, poem, performance, song, activist project, etc. Anything that is creative and relevant to the course.
- There is **no midterm or final exam**.

Trigger Warning:

In this course we will cover subjects that can be difficult to engage with in the classroom, especially for people who have been victimized by racialized or gendered violence. If any subject elicits trauma or panic in you, I encourage you to discuss the issue with me and/or excuse yourself from class.

Class format:

I expect everyone to read the assigned material before it is discussed in class. The format of the class will be a mix of lecture and discussion. The aim of discussion is to analyze an author's view, evaluate his/her arguments, and explore their applications. **To do well in this course you must come to class prepared to critically discuss the material.** Active discussion is crucial for understanding the material and also for learning how to do the sort of critical analysis that is part of a good philosophy essay.

Expected classroom behavior:

Please be respectful. In discussion you may disagree with me or your classmates, but it is important to express your disagreements with civility. Do not distract others by talking, sleeping, reading the newspaper, texting, or using any electronic equipment, etc. **You are not permitted to use a laptop, tablet, phone, etc. during class.** Unfortunately, they are too great a distraction for a discussion-oriented class.

Accessibility:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Disability Services

I. RACE**1. Introduction**

Sept. 4

Introduction to the course

Sept. 6

Documentary: "Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement"

Washington Post website: Fatal Force

Ta-Nehisi Coates – "The First White President"

2. Racism and Oppression

Sept. 11

Lawrence Blum – "Racism: Its Core Meaning"

Sept. 13

Sally Haslanger – "Oppressions: Racial and Other"

Philip Lewis – "What is Reverse Racism?"

Peggy McIntosh – "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack"

3. Slavery and Criminal Justice

Sept. 18

Michelle Alexander – *The New Jim Crow* Ch. 1

Ta-Nehisi Coates – “The Case for Reparations”

Sept. 20

Michelle Alexander – *The New Jim Crow* Chs. 2-3

4. Standpoint Epistemology

Sept. 25

Charles Mills – “White Ignorance”

Sept. 27

This American Life podcast – “The Problem We All Live With”

Elizabeth Anderson – *The Imperative of Integration* Ch. 1

5. Segregation

Oct. 2

Jia Tolentino – “All the Greedy Young Abigail Fishers and Me”

Elizabeth Anderson – *The Imperative of Integration* Ch. 2

Oct. 4

Vi Hart & Nicky Case – “Parable of the Polygons”

Elizabeth Anderson – *The Imperative of Integration* Ch. 3

BREAK

Oct. 9 – NO CLASS (Columbus Day)

Oct. 11 – NO CLASS

6. Implicit Bias

Oct. 16

Complete IATs on Race and Gender/Career online at Project Implicit

Chris Mooney – “The Science of Why Cops Shoot Young Black Men”

Jennifer Saul – “How Should We Tell Implicit Bias Stories?”

Oct. 18

LAB MEETING: **Tessa Charlesworth (Harvard)**

7. Film

Oct. 23

Begin watching *Get Out*

Oct. 25

Finish watching *Get Out*

Essay 1 due: Friday, Oct. 26, 8:00pm

II. GENDER

8. Oppression and Violence

Oct. 30

Rachel Syme – “Selfie”

Marilyn Frye – “Oppression”

Nov. 1

Jia Tolentino – “The Rage of the Incels”

Amia Srinivasan – “Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?”

Kate Manne – *Down Girl* (excerpt)

9. Feminist Epistemology

Nov. 6

Rebecca Solnit – “Men Explain Things to Me”

Rebecca Solnit – “Cassandra Among the Creeps”

Lili Loofbourow – “The Male Glance”

Nov. 8

Miranda Fricker – “Testimonial Injustice”

Regan Penaluna – “Sexism Killed my Love for Philosophy, Mary Astell Brought it Back”

10. Intersectionality

Nov. 13

Andrea Long Chu – “On Liking Women”

Kimberle Crenshaw – “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait”

bell hooks – “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory”

Nov. 15

LAB MEETING: **Jessica Remedios (Tufts)**

BREAK

Nov. 20 – NO CLASS

Nov. 22 – NO CLASS - Thanksgiving recess

11. Emotional Labor

Nov. 27

Jess Zimmerman – “Where’s my Cut? On Unpaid Emotional Labor”

METAFILTER thread on emotional labor [long, curated testimony]

Nov. 29

METAFILTER thread on emotional labor

12. Critique

Dec. 4

Freddie Deboer – “When Good Political Arguments Go Bad: On Critique Drift”

Jia Tolentino – “When Everything is Bullying, Nothing is Bullying”

Jia Tolentino – “No Offense”

Dec. 6

LAB MEETING: **Speaker TBA****WRAP-UP**

Dec. 11

No assigned reading

Essay #2 due: Dec. 15