

## PHIL 417: THE METAPHYSICS OF RACE AND GENDER

Summer 2020 (*online*), Tuesdays & Thursdays 10am-12pm PDT

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION.** This is a 400-level philosophy seminar on the metaphysics of race and gender. This term our seminar meetings will be held **online via Zoom**.

**TOPIC.** It is now commonplace to claim that gender and race are socially constructed. But what does that mean? Are gender and race socially constructed in the same way? Are these things “just in our heads”? What does it mean to say that race and gender are *real*? How do the ways in which we talk about gender and race play a role in shaping what race and gender are like? In this seminar, we’ll discuss these questions.

**400-LEVEL SEMINAR.** This course will resemble a first-year graduate seminar, and as such it will be more rigorous than most undergraduate philosophy courses. This course will be discussion-based and much of that discussion will be student-led.

**INSTRUCTOR.** My name is **Dee Payton** and I’m a PhD student in the Philosophy Department at Rutgers University in NJ. **You can call me ‘Dee’**. My research focuses primarily on topics at the intersection of analytic feminist philosophy and metaphysics. For me, this means I think a lot about questions like: “What is it for something (like gender) to be socially constructed?”, “What is it for something to be social in the first place, rather than biological/natural?”.

**OFFICE HOURS.** My office hours will be held **by appointment over Skype or over the phone** this term. If you would like to set up a meeting with me, send me an email (d.payton@rutgers.edu), and we can set something up!

- **You can ask me about anything course-related during my office hours!** You *do not* have to have your question completely worked out before you come to office hours, and you *do not* have to bring some idea/project/etc. that you think will “impress” me (although if you do, that’s cool, too). I’ve set aside office hours so that you can come to me with anything course-related that you need help with/want to chat about/etc.

**WEBSITE.** We will use **Canvas** in this course. Course announcements and reading materials will be posted on the course website. You can access the course website here:

<https://www.instructure.com/courses/1389753>

**ACCESSIBILITY.** Please get in touch with me if you require any disability accommodations. For further resources, contact the **Disability Access Center (DAC)**: <https://disability.wvu.edu/>

## REQUIREMENTS.

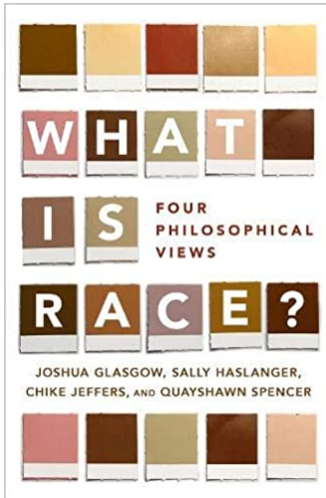
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Write-Ups 75% (15 pts each)	<p>Over the course of the term you need to turn in <b>10</b> write-up assignments.</p> <p><i>Write-up requirements</i></p> <p>Each of your write-ups should be between <b>500-550 words</b> long. In each of your write-ups you should . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Clearly state the main claim of the reading for the day</li><li>✓ Clearly summarize the main argument(s) of the reading for the day</li><li>✓ Weigh in on a point made in the reading</li></ul>
Write-Up Revisions	<p>I will give you comments on your write-ups. Two of the ten write-ups you turn in should be write-ups which were previously turned in to me, and which have since been <b>revised</b> in light of the comments I gave you when you first turned them in.</p>
Participation	<p>This is a student-led, discussion-based course. So you should plan to talk in class quite a bit! In order to encourage discussion, <b>I will only grade your write-up for the day if you contribute to class discussion that day.</b> For example, if you do a write-up for class on Tuesday, 6/30, and you want points for that write-up, then you have to contribute to class discussion at least once on Tuesday, 6/30.</p>
Designated Discussant 5% (5pts each)	<p>With the exception of the first week, each time we meet I will pick one or two students to be our designated discussants for class meeting. The designated discussants will be responsible for asking the first question(s) in the question and answer period after the class presentation on that day. You will only have to be a designated discussant twice during the term.</p>
Presentations 20% (40pts)	<p>Each of you will be responsible for a <b>30-40 minute zoom presentation</b> on one of the course readings. Presentation dates will be assigned by first week of class.</p> <p><i>Presentation requirements</i></p> <p>In your presentation, you should not do a page-by-page summary of the reading. You will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Distilling the main argument(s) presented in the reading into a concise, premise-conclusion format. (If you need help with this, ask me <i>before</i> you put together your presentation!)</li><li>✓ Explaining the core ideas in the reading in accessible terms</li><li>✓ Raising at least one <i>substantive</i> comment or criticism of the reading</li><li>✓ Answering questions from the class about the reading</li></ul> <p><i>Note.</i> It's ok if you don't get to every point that was made in the reading! The goal of these presentations is to give you some practice cutting straight to the <b>essence</b> of a philosophical project and presenting it in accessible terms to your peers.</p>
Term paper	<p>There is <i>no</i> term paper in this course.</p>

## COURSE READINGS.

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All of our reading for the first half of the course will be posted on Canvas. During the second half of the course we will work from the text below. [An e-version of this text is available through WWU libraries.](#) Otherwise, you should be able to purchase it online. Please let me know if you are unable to acquire this text.



*WHAT IS RACE? FOUR PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS*  
*Glasgow, Haslanger, Jeffers & Spencer*

## VIRTUAL CLASSROOM POLICIES.

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- Late work** No late work will be accepted, except in case of emergency or prior arrangement.
- Extra Credit** No extra credit will be offered in this course.
- Communication** While I have a no late work policy in my class, if you get in touch with me *as soon as possible* to let me know what's going on, I'll be much more amenable than if you wait until the last minute to try to improve your grade. **So please, communicate with me!** Email me, talk to me after class, come to my office hours—let me know what's going on so that we can work together to figure something out.
- Respectful Disagreement** In this course, we will work through topics that will be personal and intimate for many of you, and topics that many of you will have strong personal and/or political views about. And unsurprisingly, there may be disagreement regarding some of these issues among members of our class. I expect that we will each engage each other **kindly, conscientiously, and respectfully**, regardless of whether we agree with each other.
- Academic Honesty** Please adhere to the WWU policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for not doing so can be severe: They include an automatic failing grade for the course, and possibly worse. A comprehensive overview of these policies can be found here <https://syllabi.wvu.edu/>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

- WEEK 1**      **INTRODUCTION TO THE METAPHYSICS OF RACE & GENDER**  
6/23      “[Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender](#)” by Mari Mikkola  
Presenter: Dee
- 6/25      “Cultural Constructionism” (pages 38-47) by Chike Jeffers  
Presenter: Dee
- WEEK 2**      **THE METAPHYSICS OF GENDER**  
6/30      “Gender and Race” by Sally Haslanger  
Presenter:
- 7/2      “Different Women” by Natalie Stoljar  
Presenter:
- WEEK 3**      **THE METAPHYSICS OF GENDER**  
7/7      “Elisabeth Spelman, Gender Realism, and Women” by Mari Mikkola  
Presenter:
- 7/9      “Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender” by Robin Dembroff  
Presenters:
- WEEK 4**      **THE METAPHYSICS OF RACE**  
7/14      *What is Race?* Chapter 1  
Presenters:
- 7/16      *What is Race?* Chapter 2  
Presenters:
- WEEK 5**      **THE METAPHYSICS OF RACE**  
7/21      *What is Race?* Chapter 3  
Presenters:
- 7/23      *What is Race?* Chapter 4  
Presenters:
- WEEK 6**      **THE METAPHYSICS OF INTERSECTIONALITY**  
7/28      “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex” by Kimberlé Crenshaw  
Presenters:
- 7/30      “The Metaphysics of Intersectionality” by Sara Bernstein  
Presenter:

*[Note: important information about grades on the next page!]*

## SUMMER 2020 GRADING.

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Because of the coronavirus pandemic, WWU has instituted different grading policies this summer.

- **If you want a letter grade for this course, you need to email me to request that by July 24<sup>th</sup>.**

Otherwise, if you would have received a D+ or higher, you will see an “EP” (pass) on your transcript in place of a grade. If you would have received a D or lower, you will see an “NP” (no pass) on your transcript.

For more information about this, please visit <https://www.wvu.edu/spring-guide/summer>

### GRADING SCHEME. *No rounding.*

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#### *Letter grades.*

92.5-100 A  
90-92.4 A-

87.5-89.9 B+  
82.5-87.4 B  
80-82.4 B-

77.5-79.9 C+  
72.5-77.4 C  
70-72.4 C-

67.5-69.9 D+  
62.5-67.4 D  
60-62.4 D-

0-59.9 F

#### *Non-letter grades.*

D+ and above	Pass [EP]
D and lower	No pass [NP]