
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

The City University of New York

Institute for Criminal Justice Ethics

Summer Seminar in Philosophy 2013

Professor Myisha Cherry

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Student Blog Page: www.philosophy2013.wordpress.com

Syllabus

Course Description

Because we believe that philosophy helps you to see the world differently and respond and interact with people in a critical yet stimulating way, we want to encourage multiple voices to engage in the discipline. We also believe that philosophy helps people build strengths in self-reflection and self-understanding that can help us live a much better life.

The seminar will introduce participants to issues of character, agency, and identity through seminar topics such as: Radical Virtues, Themes of Existentialism, Identity, Naming, and the Black experience, and John Dewey on Habits and Character. The seminar will also provide a stimulating and supporting space for participants to reflect and respond to the course presentations and readings. Each session includes lectures, readings, multimedia presentations, small group discussions, and a day set aside for participants to research, get help with writing, and talk with fellow students and practitioners of philosophy about philosophical issues and the field.

While not every philosophy student will go on to become a professional philosopher, we agree with the results of empirical research. Study in philosophy prepares students for the world by improving their problem solving, writing, and analytical skills, thus enabling them to understand themselves and their goals in life more clearly. These skills are good preparation for careers in business, law, journalism, public service, education – and necessary for informed citizens. As a result, the skills taught in philosophy are considered the ultimate “most transferrable work skills” for their ability to prepare students for a variety of jobs and activities.

Upon the conclusion of the seminar it is our hope that students will:

- Be acquainted with the discipline of philosophy and some of its important questions
- Improve their reading comprehension and analytical and argumentative writing skills
- Be exposed to the ways that a group of philosophers individually understand and reason about the questions
- Consider philosophy as a practical discipline of study inside and/or outside the classroom
- Feel confident to publish their philosophical voices online
- Feel confident about articulating their ideas and also open to other voices

- Have a desire and willingness to stay connected with the project as a student ambassador
- Have a plan to pursue higher education

Dates and Locations

Monday-Wednesday July 1-24, 2013

5-6 PM: (EAT & GREET): 8th Floor Lounge Area, New Building

6-8 PM: Seminar: (Mon-Tues. New Building, RM 08.61)

Blog Activity: (Wed. New Building, Computer Lab RM. 06.64)

Weekly Topics & Assignments

Theme: Agency, Character, and Identity

Week One:

July 1, Critical Thinking and Argumentative Writing: Part One (RM 08.61 NB)

Myisha Cherry, John Jay College

July 2, Critical Thinking and Argumentative Writing: Part Two (RM 08.61 NB)

Myisha Cherry, John Jay College

Reading: Judith Boss, *Think*. Pgs. 133-147

(Homework pgs. 148-149: a-j)

July 3, Critical Thinking and Argumentative Writing: Part Three (RM 06.64 NB)

Myisha Cherry, John Jay College

Reading: Judith Boss, *Think* (pgs. 185-191)

(Construct an argument based on *Stop and Access Yourself #4* on pg.191. Bring it in on Wednesday so that you can continue to work on it, revise, and publish it online.)

Week Two:

July 8, Themes in Existentialism (RM 08.61 NB)

Douglas Ficek, Ph.D. John Jay College

Reading: Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*

(Read as much as you can, focusing on anguish, forlornness/abandonment, and despair)

July 9, John Dewey on Habits and Character (RM 08.61 NB)

Fernando Zapata, Hunter College

Reading: John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*

(Read "Introduction" and "Habits as Social Functions" pgs.1-23)

July 10, Culminating Writing Activity (Computer Lab, RM. 06.64 NB)

Week Three

July 15, Race, Gender, and Mass Incarceration (RM 08.61 NB)
Shaeeda Mensah, Penn State University

Reading: Judith Butler, *Violence, Mourning, and Politics*

July 16, Identity, Naming, and the Black Experience (RM 08.61 NB)

David Clinton Wills Ph.D, Columbia University

Reading: Plato, *Timaeus*

July 17, Culminating Writing Activity, (Computer Lab, RM. 06.64 NB)

Week Four

July 22, Radical Virtues (RM 08.61 NB)

Nathifa Greene, Stony Brook University

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (pg. 106-109)

Malcolm X, *The Ballot or the Bullet*

Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter From A Birmingham Jail*

July 23, Choice, Agency, and Freedom (RM 08.61 NB)

David McClean Ph.D, Molloy College

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Summary of Chapters)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

July 24, Culminating Writing Activity (Computer Lab, RM. 06.64 NB)

BACKGROUND OF PHILOSOPHY LECTURERS

Myisha Cherry holds a B.A. in philosophy from Morgan State University and an MDIV from Howard University. She teaches philosophy at John Jay College and is a Faculty Associate at the Institute for Criminal Justice Ethics at John Jay. Her research interests are broad but she is presently doing work in moral psychology and ethics, with special interests in the nature and role of moral emotions, political emotions and attitudes and in the role cognitive science plays in how we approach morality in general and character and moral responsibility specifically.

Douglas Ficek is a former graduate student under Manning Marable and doctoral student of Lewis Gordon. He currently teaches philosophy at John Jay College and Africana studies at Borough of Manhattan Community College. His philosophical interests are in the intersection between philosophy and black studies. Douglas recently defended his dissertation "Man Is a Yes: Fanon, Liberation, and the Playful Politics of Philosophical Archaeology."

Nathifa Greene is a doctoral candidate in philosophy at Stony Brook University, and an undergraduate instructor. Her research focuses mainly on topics in the critical philosophy of race and feminism, including regional interests in the history of philosophy in the Caribbean, and early 20th century thought in Europe and North America. Her dissertation project examines social identity in terms of habit and the nonlinguistic expression of implicit bias, to observe the impact of stereotypes on students' academic performance.

David E. McClean holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the New School for Social Research and he is a member of the N SSR Board of Governors. He teaches philosophy at Rutgers University in Newark, NJ and Molloy College in Rockville Centre, NY. Dr. McClean has published a number of articles and book reviews in peer-reviewed journals, including *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, and *Philosophia Africana*, and he has contributed chapters to books on subjects of which range from business ethics to race theory.

Shaeeda Mensah is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Philosophy at Penn State. She received her B.A. in Sociology from Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. She currently is a lecturer in the philosophy department at Morgan State University. Her areas of specialization include Social and Political Philosophy, Critical Philosophy of Race, African American and Feminist Philosophy. Her research focuses on the familial and communal consequences of the mass imprisonment of African American men. Specifically, Shaeeda focuses on the implications of the removal of African American men from their families and communities in conjunction with the communal effects of formal political disenfranchisement.

David Clinton Wills is a recent Ph.D. of Stony Brook University's Department of Philosophy. He also holds a Certificate from the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University. His research interests are in Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Race, and Africana Biopolitics. His current research is on contemporary applications of historical notions of race in the question of the 'post-racial'. Currently, he teaches at Columbia University in the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. His dissertation is entitled "Decolonize Philosophy/Being Life: The Power of Discourse in Western and Africanist Epistemologies of Life and the Revolution of Language in HIV/AIDS Narratives."

Fernando Zapata is a doctoral candidate in Philosophy at Binghamton University, in the graduate program for Social, Political, Ethical, and Legal Philosophy (SPEL). He obtained an MA in philosophy, with a concentration in aesthetics, from Stony Brook University, and received a BA in philosophy from Queens College of the City University of New York. He teaches philosophy at Hunter College. His research interests and prospective areas of specialization are in American philosophy (particularly the work of John Dewey) and social and political philosophy. Currently, he is working on a dissertation that analyzes Dewey's mature political philosophy and contemporary problems of racial segregation.