

Social & Political Philosophy II:

Black political thought on race and justice (in the era of #BlackLivesMatter)

revised MARCH 1, 2022

Code and section: PHIL 6610 (01)

Term: Winter 2022

Instructor: Professor Monique Deveaux

Course Synopsis:

This course centers on contemporary political philosophy on race and justice, mainly in connection with the #BlackLivesMatter movement/the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). We will read recent work that addresses the structures and practices of racial injustice, and activist/social movement responses to these injustices. Some of the course readings speak to the thinking and organizing associated with the M4BL and adjacent Black political struggles against racist oppression (like the prison abolition movement). It is not a complete overview of the building of the M4BL but rather situates current philosophical writing on racial justice against the background of political struggles against anti-Black racism.

When our political activism isn't rooted in a theory about transforming the world, it becomes narrow; when it is focused only on individual actors instead of larger systemic problems, it becomes shortsighted. We do have to deal with the current crisis in the short term. That's important. We have to have solutions for people's real-life problems, and we have to allow people to decide what those solutions are. We also have to create a vision that's much bigger than the one we have right now.

- Patrisse Khan-Cullors, cofounder #BlackLivesMatter

Schedule of Readings and Topics *(subject to change)*

Introduction: Overview of the M4BL/BLM movement (Jan 10-14)

Alicia Garza on why there is a Black Lives Matter Movement:

<https://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>

Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twentieth Century* (2018), ch's 1 & 3 (pp. 11-28 and 47-80)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2021/2nd edition): short foreword by Angela Y. Davis, and Ch.'s 4 & 6 (pp. 107-133 and 153-190).

Deva Woodly, Ch. 1 (“Emergence: A Contemporary History”) in *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 20-46.

Desmond Cole, “Justice for Abdirahman” and “Direct Action,” in *The Skin We’re In* (2020) - pp. 39-60 and 61-78.

Jan. 20 - Movement Values, Visions, Framing – part 1

bell hooks, “Love as the Practice of Freedom” (various places – e.g.: <https://geo.coop/content/bell-hooks-love-practice-freedom>)

Deva Woodly, Ch. 2 (“Political Philosophy: Radical Black Feminist Pragmatism”) of *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 49-88.

Tommy J. Curry, “He Never Mattered: Poor Black Males and the Dark Logic of Intersectional Invisibility,” in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 59-89

Jan. 27 - Movement Values, Visions, Framing – part 2

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “How Do We Change America?” *New Yorker* (June 8, 2020): <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-do-we-change-america>

Chris Lebron, “Where is the Love? The Hope for America’s Redemption” ch. 4 of *The Making of Black Lives Matter* (2017), pp. 97-125

Dana Francisco Miranda, “The Violence of Leadership in Black Lives Matter,” in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 243-262.

Robin D.G. Kelley, “Why We Won’t Wait” (2014): <https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/11/25/why-we-wont-wait/>

Feb. 3 - Power – part 1

Martin Luther King Jr., “Black Power Defined” (1967) – I will supply link or pdf

Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (1963), chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 – (on course reserves, but I will also supply a PDF)

Some news/commentary contextualizing MLK Jr’s thought that you may find interesting:

Victoria Walcott, “The public has underestimated the radicalism of Martin Luther King Jr.’s early work”, *Washington Post*, Jan 17/22: <https://wapo.st/345PcuX>

Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King”, *Princetonian*, Jan. 17, 2022: <https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2022/01/martin-luther-king-day-radical-thinker-keeanga-yamahtta-taylor>

Dr. Meena Krishnamurthy, “What Martin Luther King Jr. Really Thought About the Riots”, *Jacobin* (2020): <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/09/martin-luther-king-riots-looting-biden>

1967 NBC News interview with Dr. King: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xsbt3a7K-8>

Feb. 10 – Justice – part 1

Tommie Shelby, “Prisons of the Forgotten: Ghettos and Economic Injustice” – Ch. 9 of *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.*

Deva Woodly, Ch. 3 (“The Politics of Care and the Idea of Healing Justice”) of *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 89-126

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Ch. 7, *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

Feb. 17 - Anger

Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage* (2021), Ch’s 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

Lorde, Audre. 1997. “The Uses of Anger.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 25, nos. 1–2: 278–85.

If you have time, take a look at:

Interview with Myisha Cherry: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/q-and-a/a-philosophers-defense-of-anger>

Winter break: Feb 21-25

If you have time, take a listen to:

The Burning of Black Tulsa – podcast episode, New York Time’s *The Daily*
<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/the-daily/id1200361736?i=1000523764755>

Talking While Black – podcast episode, This American Life (Jan. 7, 2022) – by Emanuele Berry:
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/758/talking-while-black>

March 3 – Organizing, Protest, Freedom – part 1

Rinaldo Walcott, *Moving toward Black Freedom* (2021), Ch. 1 (“Moving Toward Black Freedom”), 14 (“No Happy Story”), 15 (“I Really Want to Hope”) and 22 (“The Long Emancipation Revisited”). *These are short chapters, and total about 20 pages.*

Dionne Brand, lecture: “Writing Against Tyranny and Toward Liberation” (2017):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ychlzoeelm0>

Chris Lebron, “Afterword: Nobody’s Protest Essay,” (pp. 153-65) in *The Making of Black Lives Matter* (2017)

Deva Woodly, Ch. 4 (“The Art of Organizing”) in *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (2021), pp. 127-157

March 10– Justice – part 2

Malcom X, *The Ballot or the Bullet* (speech, 1964), available in many places online (e.g.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLQLUpNGsc>)

Charles Mills, Ch. 7 (“Racial Exploitation”), in *Black Rights/White Wrongs* (pp. 113-135)

Olúfémi O. Táíwò, “Reconsidering Reparations: The Movement for Black Lives and Self-Determination,” in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021)

March 17 – Organizing, Protest, Freedom – part 2

Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2016), chapters 1, 2, and 5.

Neil Roberts, “Angela Y. Davis: Abolitionism, Democracy, Freedom”, in *African American Thought: A Collected History* (2021): pp. 660-684.

March 24 - Power – part 2

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (1997) – Introduction, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 (pp. 1-89)

Charles Mills, “White Supremacy” in the *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race* (2018), pp. 475-487

Vanessa Wills, “‘And He Ate Jim Crow’: Racist Ideology as False Consciousness,” in *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. B. Hogan et al. (2021), pp. 35-58

March 31 - Solidarity – part 1

Tommy Shelbie, *We Who Are Dark: the Philosophical Foundations of Black Political Solidarity* (2005), Introduction, ch. 2, ch. 6, & Conclusion

Olufemi Taiwo, “Elite Capture” in *The Boston Review*:

<https://bostonreview.net/articles/olufemi-o-taiwo-identity-politics-and-elite-capture/>

April 7 - Solidarity – part 2

Desmond Cole, “Honoured Group,” in *The Skin We’re In* (2020), pp. 83-106.

Sandy Hudson, “Indigenous and Black Solidarity in Practice: #BLMtoTentCity,” and “Conclusion: the Palimpsest”, in *Until we are free: reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada*, eds. Syrus Marcus Ware et al (2020) - pp. 295-307 and 315-17

Myisha Cherry, “State Racism, State Violence, and Vulnerable Solidarity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (2017)