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/](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)


**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](https://geo.coop/content/bell-hooks-love-practice-freedom))


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


**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](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


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.


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


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:


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

Dionne Brand, lecture: “Writing Against Tyranny and Toward Liberation” (2017): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ychlzoeeElm0


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)


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.


March 24 – Power – part 2

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


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

April 7 - Solidarity – part 2


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