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The Colorado College  
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PHILOSOPHY 452

**JUNIOR SEMINAR:**  
**CHARLES W. MILLS & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Junior Seminar is a required course for all declared philosophy majors, normally taken during the junior year after completing the history of philosophy sequence (Greek and modern). Juniors and seniors in related majors may enroll, if they have a comparable background and receive consent of the instructor. The seminar always examines the works of a living philosopher, with a focus on how that philosopher rereads or relates to a figure from the history of philosophy or to themes central to that history. When possible, the philosopher in question will participate in the seminar.

The 2010 seminar will investigate the works of Charles W. Mills, the John Evans Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Northwestern University, focusing initially on Professor Mills's critique of the liberal tradition of political thought, generally, and the highly influential revival of social contract philosophy by the late John Rawls, specifically. The heart of the course will examine Professor Mills's innovative effort to define and develop an alternate radical democratic approach to social contract philosophy that he calls "non-ideal" theory. As is the case with most forms social and political philosophy, the project of non-ideal theory is both an intellectual and political endeavor. In this case, the fundamental political project concerns Professor Mills's efforts to challenge what he sees as the racist (and sexist) character of modern liberalism. After working through the critique of what Professor Mills calls "racial liberalism," the seminar will turn to his related effort to develop a racially-sensitive form of critical theory.

A special element of this course is the participation of our subject and primary author, Charles Mills, who will visit the College at the end of the second week of the block. Professor Mills will attend the seminar on the second Thursday and Friday, participating in our discussions of his work. He will also give the Department's annual J. Glenn and Ursula Gray Memorial Lecture at 7 p.m. on Thursday night, 25 February, and lead a Phi Beta Kappa – Crown Faculty Center Workshop at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, 26 February. Attendance at these events will be mandatory for seminar members.

The Junior Seminar offers both students and faculty an opportunity to study in depth an influential effort to innovate philosophically. As such, we can expect to be challenged, inspired, and, perhaps, disappointed – very likely all at once. Rethinking received wisdom is always challenging, and new perspectives can be both inspiring and enlightening. However, as with all innovations, particularly ones that aim to be provocative, we may encounter some misfires – arguments that may not persuade some or all of us. Our aim here is embrace the risks of the new with open but not uncritical attitudes. Throughout the course, we will question how effectively Professor Mills's critique of racial liberalism and recasting of critical theory help us to understand better the history of Western philosophy and the political and philosophical challenges we face today. In the end, we may or may not agree, with each other or with Professor Mills. However, we all will have become intimately knowledgeable about a highly influential current in contemporary political and philosophic thought.

COURSE GOALS

The primary aim of the course will be to provide students with a comprehensive overview of the works of an influential living philosophy. During the block, we will examine the background to Professor Mills's

works, focusing first on the mainstream liberal tradition that he critiques and second on the radical democratic and racially-sensitive forms of thought that he builds on. The center of the term will examine his critique, begun with the award-winning book, *The Racial Contract*. The course will then turn to Professor Mills's efforts to connect his work to that of feminist theorists, on the one hand, and critical theorists, on the other.

A secondary aim of the course will be to build on, review, and critique the history of Western philosophy, situating Professor Mills's work as both a critique of much of that tradition and an affirmation of the project of radical enlightenment and democracy.

Consequently, an essential aim of the course will be the development of critical thinking and self-clarification. Against the backdrop of both the traditions of Western philosophy and politics and the innovations of Professor Mills's works, the course will prompt students to make sense for themselves of some key contemporary challenges: clarifying moral and political questions that dominate the horizons of American life, particularly with reference to power and democracy; understanding the problems of identity and politics today, especially those concerning race and gender; and developing an articulate perspective on how to address those questions and problems.

Throughout the term, the course will offer students opportunities to develop their own critical reading and writing skills.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

*Reading.* This course will have a heavy yet quite rewarding reading list. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the block. Plan to spend a fair amount of time reading *before* attending class and, at times, re-reading after class. In general, texts are to be brought to our meetings so that they may be referred to in our discussions.

*Course Meetings and Discussion.* Most course meetings will consist largely of discussion, with some lecturing from time to time. Individual students may be assigned to lead discussions or to take part in debates on particular topics periodically. Students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually; and to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner. Performance in discussions will strongly influence the participation grade.

*Writing and Oral Presentations.* Students will write three short informal summary and reaction papers, as described at the end of this syllabus. Each student will be assigned to a group, with a required paper about once every week. The major assignment will be a research paper of 10-15 pages in length, due at the end of the term. In preparation for the paper, students will present a 2-3 page project proposal during the third week, and take part in a writing workshop, presenting their own work and reading those of others, on the last Monday of the block. The research papers are to be typed (i.e., word-processed), double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Unexcused late papers will be downgraded one step every four hours tardy.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

*All have been ordered by the Colorado College Bookstore.*

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Belknap/Harvard, 2001)  
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Hackett, 1992)  
 Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell, 1997)  
 Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Cornell, 1998)  
 Carol Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Polity, 2007)  
 Charles W. Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003)

ADDITIONAL READINGS – ON THE COURSE PROWL SITE

Other supplemental readings may also be assigned as the block unfolds. All additional and supplemental readings will be available as in digital form on the course's PROWL site:

- Jean Hampton, "Contract and Consent," in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, eds. Goodin and Pettit (Blackwell, 1993, 1995), pp. 379-393.
- John Locke, selections from the *Second Treatise*, pp. 1-56.
- Immanuel Kant, selections from *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 1-25.
- Frantz Fanon, Introduction," "The Fact of Blackness," and "By Way of Conclusion," in *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 9-14, 109-140, 223-232
- Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract" and "Women and Consent," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford, 1989), pp. 33-53, 71-84.
- William Outhwhite, "Critical Theory," *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought* ed. David Miller (Blackwell, 1987), pp. 106-109.
- Albracht Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (MIT Press, 1985), pp. 35-66.
- J.L.A. Garcia, "The Racial Contract Hypothesis," *Philosophia Africana* 4:1 (March 2001), pp. 27-39.

<https://prowl.coloradocollege.edu/course/view.php?id=1010>

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Grades will be assigned on a 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner:

1. Three reaction papers (2 pages each)	Various dates	6%
2. Gray Memorial Lecture attendance	Thurs., 25 Feb.	1%
3. Phi Beta Kappa workshop participation	Fri., 25 Feb.	1%
2. Project proposal and presentation (2-3 pages)	Tues., 2 March	5%
3. Draft presentation and workshop participation	Mon-Tues., 8-9 March	10%
4. Research paper	Wed., 10 March	50%
5. Participation and attendance	all term	<u>27%</u>
TOTAL:		100%

Regular, timely attendance and active participation in discussion are essential parts of the course – worth 27% of your final grade. Unexcused absences and regular tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. Students who miss three or more classes for any reason may be required to withdraw from the course. If you have a good reason to be absent or late, notify me as soon as possible. Be sure to write a note (so that I remember!), as well as to speak to me.

The schedule of assignments appears above and below. You will be expected to meet all of these deadlines. Exceptions will be made only in extreme and unavoidable circumstances. If you expect to submit a paper late, contact me immediately. Either see me in my office, or give me a note or an e-mail message explaining your circumstances. If religious observances or other serious obligations conflict with the course schedule, let me know as soon as possible, and we can work out an alternate schedule for you.

Plan to attend class for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. "Attending for the whole period" means, among other things, that you will not leave class to visit the restroom, get a drink of water, chat with friends, and the like. We will take a break about after about an hour and 15 minutes – that is when you may leave class (except in an emergency, of course). If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving early, please notify me in advance. ***As a courtesy to all, please turn off all telephones while in class. You may use a notebook computer, if you promise both not to surf the web during class and to make regular eye contact with the class.***

#### HONOR CODE

Students will be expected to abide by the Honor Code. Among other things, the Honor Code specifies that you will be responsible for producing all of your own work and that you will always cite the works or ideas of others used in your work. However, discussing your ideas and your writing with others is *not* a violation of the Honor Code. In fact, it is a good idea to compare your ideas and writings with those of others and to ask others for criticisms of your work. Using other people's ideas can also be a good idea – *if* their ideas are good *and* you credit the authors for developing the ideas.

#### DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you believe you are eligible for learning accommodations as the result of a qualified disability, please contact me privately. If you believe you may have a disability that impacts learning, and you have not identified yourself to the College's Disabilities Services Office, please do so immediately. You will find their office in the Colket Student Learning Center at Tutt Library. You may also contact the College's learning consultant, Dr. Bill Dove, at the Learning Center or directly at extension 6168. I will make appropriate learning accommodations in accordance with the Disabilities Service Office's instructions.

#### OFFICE HOURS/COMMUNICATION

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3 p.m. I am also generally in my office (124 Armstrong) in the afternoon. The easiest way to meet with me would be to make an appointment after class, or contact me via e-mail ([dmcennerney@coloradocollege.edu](mailto:dmcennerney@coloradocollege.edu)). I can also be reached at my office phone (extension 6564).

*Note that this entire syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: All assignments are to be completed *before* class.

Class will meet from 9:20 a.m. to about noon, with a 15-minute break, unless otherwise indicated.

\* Indicates electronic PROWL reading

Monday, 15 February

**\*\*Class meets 9-9:40 AM\*\***

**and**

**\*\*11 AM – noon\*\***

### Introduction

*Class meets 9-9:40 a.m.:*

a. Syllabus review, followed by a short break to read.

*Class meets again, 11 a.m. – noon for a discussion:*

b. Mills, “Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience,” in *Blackness Visible*, pp. 1-19.

### ***I. Philosophy and the Ideal Contract***

Tuesday, 16 February

#### Ideal Contracting , Ideal Contractors

Group 1

- a. \*Hampton, “Contract and Consent,” in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 379-393.
- b. \*Locke, selections from the *Second Treatise*, pp. 1-56.
- c. \*Kant, selections from *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 1-25.

Wednesday, 17 February

#### Rawls: The Original Position and Practical Utopianism

Group 2

- a. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, pp. 1-66.
- b. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, pp. 66-106.

Thursday, 18 February

#### Rawls: Liberalism as a Neo-Kantian Political Project

Group 3

- a. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, pp. 106-79.
- b. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, pp. 180-202.

### ***II. Philosophic Critiques of Non-Ideal Realities***

Friday, 19 February

#### Rousseau: The Bad Contract

Group 4

- a. Rousseau, *Origins of Inequality*, part I, pp. 1-44.
- b. Rousseau, *Origins of Inequality*, part I, pp. 44-71.

*Note: Be sure to glance at his notes!*

Monday, 22 February

#### Recognizing Domination

Group 1

- a. \*Fanon, “Introduction,” “The Fact of Blackness,” and “By Way of Conclusion,” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 9-14, 109-140, 223-232.
- b. \*Pateman, “The Fraternal Social Contract” and “Women and Consent,” in *The Disorder of Women*, pp. 33-53, 71-84.

Tuesday, 23 February

#### Race and the Historical Development of Western Polities

Group 2

- a. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, pp. 1-40.
- b. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, pp. 41-62.

*Afternoon: Individual appointments to begin discussing projects.*

- Wednesday, 24 February The Racial Polity and Contemporary Life Group 3  
 a. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, pp. 62-89.  
 b. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, pp. 91-133.  
*Afternoon: Individual appointments to begin discussing projects.*
- Thursday, 25 February Race and Metaphysics (with Charles Mills attending) Group 4  
**\*\*Class Meets Morning\*\***  
*and*  
**\*\*Evening\*\***  
 a. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, pp. 21-66.  
 b. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, pp. 66-118.  
*Evening event:*  
 J. Glenn and Ursula Gray Memorial Lecture, 7 p.m., Gates Commons, Palmer Hall
- Friday, 26 February Pateman: Feminist Critiques (with Charles Mills attending) Group 1  
**\*\*Class Meets Morning\*\***  
*and*  
**\*\*Afternoon\*\***  
 a. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, pp. 118-166.  
 b. Pateman and Mills, "Contract and Social Change: A Dialogue between Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills," in *Contract and Domination* (Polity, 2007), pp. 10-34.  
*Afternoon event:*  
 Phi Beta Kappa – Crown Faculty Center Deliberation Workshop, 3:30-6:15 p.m., Gates Commons, Palmer Hall
- Monday, 1 March The Reparative Project Group 2  
**\*\*Class Meets 12:45-3 PM\*\***  
 a. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, pp. 167-200.  
 b. Mills, "The Domination Contract" and "Contract of Breach: Repairing the Racial Contract," in *Contract and Domination*, pp. 79-133.
- Tuesday, 2 March Reading Day  
 a. Work on projects.  
 b. Small group meetings throughout the day to present project proposals.
- III. Engaging Critical Theory**
- Wednesday, 3 March The Project(s) of Critical Theory Group 3  
 a. \*William Outhwhite, "Critical Theory," *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, pp. 106-109.  
 b. \*Albracht Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," in *Habermas and Modernity*, pp. 35-66.  
 c. Mills, *From Class to Race*, pp. 89-114.
- Thursday, 4 March Making Critical Theory Really Critical? Group 4  
 a. Mills, "Intersecting Contracts," in *Contract and Domination*, pp. 165-199.  
 b. Mills, *From Class to Race*, pp. 121-172.
- Friday, 5 March Critical Race Theory Open  
 a. Mills, *From Class to Race*, pp. 173-218.  
 b. \*Garcia, "The Racial Contract Hypothesis," pp. 27-39; and Mills, *From Class to Race*, pp. 219-249.

Monday, 8 March

Writing Day/Writing Workshops

*Afternoon:*

Small group meetings to present and discuss drafts.

Tuesday, 9 March

Writing Day/Writing Workshops

*Morning:*

Small group meeting to present and discuss drafts.

Wednesday, 10 March

Papers Due

No class.

FINAL PAPERS DUE AT NOON ON PROWL.

### TWO-PAGE SUMMARY AND REACTION STATEMENTS

Throughout the block, students will write three short, informal summary-and-reaction statement. Students will be assigned to one of four groups, listed above in the schedule, and expected to write papers on the readings assigned to their group. Each student's piece should be divided into two parts:

- a) Summary: stating what strikes you as the most significant or interesting point (or two points) made in the assigned text (½ – 1 page); and
- b) Reaction: explaining what that aspect of the reading leads you to think about (1 – 1 ½ pages).

These statements should be the equivalent of two word-processed, double-spaced pages – so about 375-525 words long. The format is informal: your statement should list **your name**, the **date**, the assignment (**the authors, titles, and chapters/pages discussed**), and **your own title** at the top. You should divide the statement into two parts (“Summary” and “Reaction”), one summarizing the reading's most important point or points and the other giving your reaction to the reading. You need neither quote nor cite the text, though you can, if you think it important to do so. The statements should be written in clear, Standard English prose. The style may be informal.

As you write, don't try to summarize *all* the points made in the reading. Focus on one or two points that seem highly significant *to you*. This point or these points ought to have led you to think about something that seems important, significant, or meaningful. This point or these points need not be central to the reading, although in most cases I expect they will be. You may well write about some minor aside that an author makes, if that aside has led you to begin thinking. Just be sure to **explain clearly and accurately what the author says** when you claim the authors argue something. Also, explain your reaction, your interest, your thought process. When I say, “explain,” I don't mean saying that something is “interesting” or it has “made you think.” Instead, **identify what in particular strikes you as interesting, or what specific problems or ideas the reading raised for you, and then give the reader some sense of why any of these ideas seem important or significant to you.** What has led you to react in the way you have?

This assignment is meant to focus both on the reading and on your thoughts insofar as they relate to the reading. For the second half of the paper, you may explain why the authors' claims seem to you wrong-headed, or really cogent; why they excite or repel you; why they have made you think of something in a new way, or why they seem to point to a dead end. You may explain why the piece seems really bad or really good to you. This assignment lets you think aloud, as it were. However, the first part of the paper should accurately summarize what the author says.

The assignment also, I hope, will give you a chance to work on mastering the reading, as well as to demonstrate to me that you have done the reading. If there are parts of the reading that you don't understand, then write about the problems you have in seeing the author's points. I'll try to address those problems, either directly, by commenting on your paper, or indirectly, in class.

These papers will be graded minimally: check, check/minus, minus, zero. I may add no or only a few comments.

- Check: a) the paper clearly and coherently develops an idea; b) it also accurately and fully summarizes what the reading says; and c) it convincingly and clearly shows why this point or line of thought is significant to you.
- Check/minus: the paper demonstrates some effort, but it is incomplete or unbalanced.
- Minus: the paper is just thrown together, it lacks careful thought, or it is wildly inaccurate about the reading.

Checks will earn full credit (**2%**), check/minuses partial credit (**1.25%**) and minuses (**0.75%**) minimal credit. A check is the equivalent of an “A+” already for 2% of your final grade.

No late papers will be accepted. However, student will be able to submit a fifth paper on the final day of the course to make up for missed papers, at 50% credit. Finally, all papers will be posted to the course PROWL site and available to the entire class, for use in our discussions and preparing papers.