

THEORIES OF HUMAN FREEDOM:

Race & Racism - Equal Freedom & Democratic Practice

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INTRODUCTION: This is and always has been an “experimental” course. In a sense it must be, since freedom as our most fundamental way of being is never complete or reducible to a fixed understanding, or in a sense, it would be self-contradictory. To be free must necessarily be a part of our way-of-being-in-the-world and is thus continually the source of changing possibilities. This of course, does not mean that the being-free is illusory and empty, only that it must be approached in a special way.

Getting clear on the meaning of freedom and the way it is constituted by different vocabularies in different discussions is very relevant to our understanding of both individual and collective action. In the political world such discussions usually begins with a mode of discourse that has already assumed it's ground, that is, has already accepted a variety of unexamined assumptions which control in advance the conclusions that can be arrived at. This often leads to extreme paradox where a terminology that assumes freedom is indiscriminately mixed with one that denies it.

The objective of this course is to engage a discussion of freedom at the most basic level possible. We shall try to identify the commitments constituent to the various vocabularies people we use to make sense out of human activity. Then we shall use the Continental philosophical tradition to provides a critical arena that invites consideration of the most fundamental work done on this question.

Then we will apply what we have learned to a particular field of considerable import to the issue of freedom: Race and Racism. We shall explore how in a democratic society such as the United States, one in which claims to equal freedom are advanced to legitimate political authority and a vast array of institutional structures, race and racism continue to disrupt the practice of equal freedom. The course will approach the problem of freedom variously because it is at the same time a theoretical, historical and personal issue. To do so we will use visiting lecturers, films, biographies, class discussions and personal presentations as well as critical readings and philosophical and historical texts. Although a subject that is ultimately never fully graspable in its many-sided and ever changing nature by a distant and detached intellectuality. It can be illuminated. To do so the mind, heart and soul must all work in concert for one to move beyond the limits of one inherited historical horizon to an empathetic embrace of the disadvantage that racism in the United States has visited upon people of color and consider genuine alternatives to current practices.

Finally, the course will concentrate on the African-American experience, but clearly our conclusions will have import for all peoples and indeed individuals who must deal with prejudice and disadvantage. My hope is to grow our understanding how issues of equal freedom in the actual world of lived experience. Is equal freedom a possibility and at what level of practice? In what measure is freedom merely a subject's experience or conversely merely a set of political rules, and how does that play out in our collective relationships both negatively and positively. Clearly, exploring racism provides a fruitful real perspective on this issue.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: As already noted, this has always been an experimental course in which a variety of new techniques are regularly introduced in order to build the student's ability to analyze critical texts, in this case, they deal with the meaning of human freedom and how this question relates to the way in which we use language to constitute the world. Because it is an experimental course and its structure is continually under development, the grading policy will reflect in part the willingness of the student to participate in the “experiment.” The interest and good will he or she shows in making the class successful will be reflected in the overall assessment of their work.

The formal part of the grade will be based upon A) mid-term and final (50% of grade), these examinations will be mostly essay and will explore your understanding of all facets of the course and B) Class Lecture Précis (30%) will be required for each class lecture. This is not merely a rehash of the previous day's lecture, but rather a critical rethinking of the lecture. The informal part of the grade will measure C) class participation (20%). Although these 20 points for class involvement will be subjectively determined, with approximately 40 students in the course, it will be easy to see by the end of the Semester where each student stands in their willingness to fully participate in class discussion and activities, and in their regular preparation to read the lecture summaries for the previous classes lecture at the beginning of each new class period.

□ Note on Précis or Class Lecture An analytical Précis of each class lecture should be written after careful consultation with the text material covering the same area. The précis should extract and organize the fundamental concepts and arguments from the day's lecture and assigned reading material to make a clear and concise analytical summary by 1) identifying and analyzing the central arguments along with essential secondary contentions and concepts; then, 2) show the limit within which the foregoing positions works due to design, basic assumptions and/or possible errors. The précis will be submitted for final grading by internet, on the day following the last day of class. Sent to: davidbohn308@gmail.com. In "subject" box write: Last name, initial of first name, 308 (section number) and Précis. [Bohn D 308 H Précis] ALSO: ON YOUR COMPUTER, Please name your précis as follow: [308 Precis Bohn D] it is so much easier for me to download that way. Thanks in advance

How Summaries should be written. Be both concise and precise. Avoid slang and casual language. Keep précis to no longer than a half a page single spaced in a 12 point font such as Times Roman or CG Times, single spaced, one inch margins on all sides and page numbers at the top right corner. Breaks between lectures should only be three lines. The final summaries should include a title page with the student's name, student number, the course, teacher and class section, followed by a table of contents with the date, number, title, and page of each précis. The should conform to University standards for English composition. Warning: plagiarism will result in a failing grade. Software now exists that makes it possible to detect this kind of plagiarism.

☐ Students are liable to read or hand in their summary of the previous lecture at the start of each class. Multiple précis can be called in with a weekend's notice; all summaries to that given date may be requested.

THE LECTURE SCHEDULE

1. Introduction: Review of class requirements & brief discussion of philosophy & the historical question of freedom. Assignment for next period: Ch. 1&2 D.E.Bohn, The Origin & the Power of Modern Political Thought. Bonds paper Due: January 25th

2. Philosophical analysis: A model drawn from continental philosophy providing class members with a critical language capable of more directly and fundamentally interrogating the question of freedom. Assignment for next period: Chap 3 & 4 D.E.Bohn, The Origin and the Power of Modern Political Thought. Plus Rousseau's Second Discourse on the Origin of Inequality.

3. Deconstruction of concept of Freedom p. I: Examination of the modern notion of freedom, focusing particular attention on the ideas of the metaphysical individual and the subject-object distinction as it appears in Descartes, Locke, Kant and Mill. Assignment for next period: Ch 5 & 6 D.E. Bohn, The Origin & the Power of Modern Political Thought - J.S. Mill, On Freedom.

4. Deconstruction of concept of Freedom p. II: Freedom and its relationship to our historical and social relatedness and the interconnection of freedom and equality. Rousseau and then Hegel and Marx. Assignment or the next period: Handouts on German Thought and Emmanuel Levinas

5. Finitude and Freedom & Intentionality, World & Possibility: Review of Nietzsche and his radical critique of traditional metaphysics-then Husserl and Heidegger, post-World War II Existentialist, and contemporary Post-modernists thinking: particularly Derrida, Levinas and Foucault. Presentation of of intentionality, world, finitude as possibility and a redefinition of the concept of freedom. Assignment for the next period: Handout

6. Deconstruction of the concept of Race I: a) Race as socially constructed not "objective category," & its relation to the shared world, and how freedom as possibility appears within it's finite limits. b)History of Race and Slavery in the US Film: Amistad Assignment for the next period: Jay Gould, The measure of Man, pp 51-150.

Mid-Term Examination--Testing Center – First of Week in March

6. Deconstruction of the concept of Race II :The genealogy of the concept of race: a)The language of race has a genealogy in which the retrieval of its meaning has undergone significant changes in modern time. These changes are associated with the practices of slavery and modern science, particularly biology. Here we will explore how slavery and race were historically not associated, but came to be in relationship to the more or less uniform use of blacks as slaves in America. As slavery came under pressure in America it became mixed with permutations of Darwinian biology, color as the central racial indicator. b) Discussion c)Lecture on Race, biology and Darwin and reflections on History of Race and Slavery in the US Deconstruction of race III. The genealogy of the idea of "Whiteness"; Concealed under the seemingly objective biological claim of the modern concept of race is the construction and privileging of the concept of whiteness, the unexamined ground of unequal social and political practices and thus, unequal possibilities. Assignment for next period: Second Levinas handout and James McBride, The Color of Water : A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother

7. Freedom, possibility, practices & race part I: A summary of the preceding arguments of race and freedom within the limit of finitude and possibility. Part II: Unicity and totalizing languages of race: Levinas' critique of how discourse and related practices totalize the other, concealing it's irreducible unicity. "Blackness" and "Whiteness" as totalizing concepts, reducing the other to a moment in the understanding of racial discourse. Assignment for next period: WEB DuBois, The Souls of Black People, pp. ix-164

08. Race & the Civil Rights Revolution I: Film: Tthen lecture & discussion of Post-Slavery Civil Right. Assignment for next period: Handout

Catch-Up Day a little space in the schedule in case we fall behind.

09. Race & the Civil Rights Revolution II: Film: Malcolm X Assignment for next period: handout packet on LDS Church and Blacks, Additional handouts.
10. Race & the Civil Rights Revolution III: Discussion of Malcolm X and civil rights in Utah: Race and Religion Film: PBS Documentary: Race, in Utah Guest: Reverend John Miller Assignment for next period: Shelby Steele & Cornell West.
11. Race & The Civil Right Revolution IV: Film: Do the right Thing—then discussion
Assignment for next period: Jay Gould, The Mismeasure of Man. 176-365, Brookings Review, spring 1998, 4-50 and Brookings Review, Black America: Progress and Prospects. spring 1998, 4-50
12. Race & equal freedom in Today's America I: Education, Class & Connectedness (cont >>)
Assignment for next period: 47 page handout of issue related articles plus KKK and White supremacist website assignment.
Review Gould, The Mismeasure of Man, 366-427
13. Race & equal freedom in Today's America II: Justice, Profiling, the Police and the Correctional system
Guest: — Discussion. Assignment for next period. 52 pg handout on positive directions in race relations. Cornell West Handout
14. Race & equal freedom in Today's America III: Summary: Race, Whiteness, and possible solutions to the problem of Equal Freedom in the United States, concluding with a discussion of Race and our duty as Christians and Mormons.

FINAL: Final Exam in the Vesting Center.

READINGS:

Bohn, The Origin and the Power of Modern Political Thought.
Brookings Review, spring 1998, 4-50
West, Cornell
DuBois, The Souls of Black People.
Gould, The Mismeasure of Man,
Hand out on positive directions in race relations.
Handout of issue related articles on affirmative action.
Handouts on Post-Modernism
Levinas Text (handout)
Rousseau, Second Discourse on the Origin of Inequality.(download from the web)
Shelby Steele
Warner, Terry, The Bonds that Make us Free

Note on Academic Honesty and Appropriate Behavior

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. See <http://www.byu.edu/honorcode> for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism, and fabrication, falsification.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 422-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.