

## PHIL 3---: Africana Philosophy

**Class Time:** TBD

**Class Location:** TBD

**Instructor:** Chris Rahlwes

**Email:** TBD

**How to reach me:** *Please drop by my open office hours (TBD) or email me to make an appointment (either in-person or online). Always include PHIL 3--- in the subject of your email for a quicker response. I will respond within 48 hours Monday-Friday.*



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### **Course Description:**

Africana philosophy (or African diasporic philosophy) addresses the problems of the underside of Western philosophy and serves as a critique of “rationality” and colonialization. In this course, we have three questions of concern: (i) What does it mean to be human in a world that challenges one’s humanity? (ii) What is freedom in a world governed by enslavement? (iii) Is reason legitimate in a world that uses it to rationalize injustice and misrepresentations of reality? In answering these questions, we will engage with pre-colonial African philosophy (the Pyramid Texts and Zera Yacob), Afro-Caribbean philosophy (esp. Fanon), and African American philosophy (esp. Cooper and Du Bois).

### **Course Goals:**

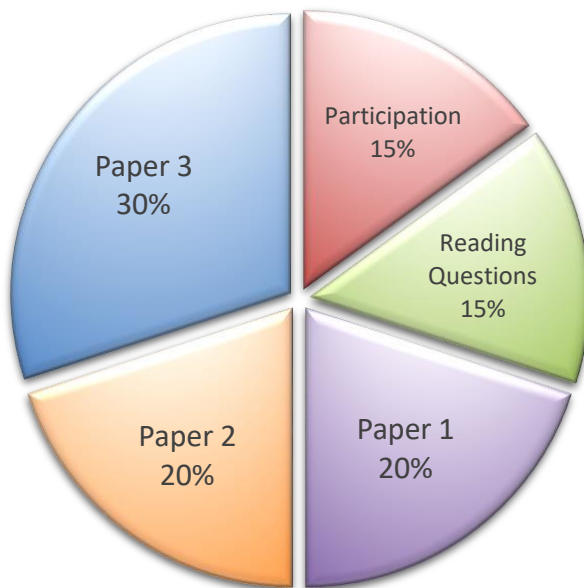
By the successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Answer the three questions that concern the course.
  2. Evaluate and analyze the Africana and decolonial critique of rationality and what this means for “Western” philosophy.
  3. Engage in interpretive debates surrounding issues in the texts covered.
  4. Advance positions based on these texts using the tools of philosophical argument.
  5. Develop a research project focusing on one of the three questions, in which you put forward an answer based on one of the Africana philosophical texts covered in the course.
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## Means of Evaluation

- **Participation (15%).** Participation will be measured through active class engagement as well as group questions and workshops.
- **Reading Questions (15%).** The Sunday before each class you are required to email two questions you have regarding the readings for the week (at least one question must be on the primary text). These will help guide the lecture throughout the week.
- **Paper 1 (20%) 4–6 Pages.** This paper focuses on your ability to explain a key philosophical principle clearly and precisely from one of our texts. Your grade is determined by your accuracy in demonstrating you understand the author’s position, the structure of your paper, and if your argument is compelling. You are allowed up to two revisions of this paper.
- **Paper 2 (20%) 4–6 Pages.** Same as Paper 1, but you must focus on a different author or text.
- **Paper 3 (30%) 8–10 Pages.** This paper is a revision of Paper 1 or Paper 2, in which you further develop your explanation, ideas, and/or argument. This paper is the culmination of the course and shows your ability in designing a research project that is philosophically fruitful. You will be asked to submit a brief prospectus for this paper.

**Weighted Grade**



**Letter Grade Cutoffs:**

Grade	Percentage
A	93%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	83%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	73%
C-	70%
D+	67%
D	63%
D-	60%
F	Below 60%

Note: These are cut-off points: *decimals will not be rounded up.* Temporary grades: N (no basis for grade), I (incomplete grade), X (final assessment absence)

### Required Materials:

- All course readings will be available online.  
(When possible, I will include the readings as an audiobook as well.)
- You will need to bring material to write, take notes, and access the internet during class.
- You will need a word processor (such as [Google Docs](#) or [Microsoft Word](#)), a pdf reader (such as [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)), and a web browser.

## Tentative Schedule (Subject to Change)

	Date	Topic/Readings	Assignments
<b>Introduction</b>			
<b>Week 1</b>		<b>Introduction to the Course</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gordon, “Decolonizing Philosophy”</li> <li>• Gordon, “An Introduction to Africana Philosophy”</li> </ul>	
<b>Module 2: Classical African Philosophy</b>			
<b>Week 2</b>		<b>Kemet (Egypt) Philosophy</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obenga, “Egypt: Ancient History of African Philosophy”</li> <li>• <i>The Debate Between a Man and His Soul</i>, selections</li> <li>• <i>The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Week 3</b>		<b>Yoruba Philosophy</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hallen and Sodipo, <i>Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft</i>, selections</li> <li>• Oyěwùmi, <i>The Invention of Women</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Week 4</b>		<b>Ethiopian Philosophy</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sumner, “The Light and Shadow: Zera Yacob and Walda Heywat”</li> <li>• Kiros, “Zera Yacob and Traditional Ethiopian Philosophy”</li> <li>• Zera Yacob, <i>Hatata</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Module 2: Colonialization and Decolonialization</b>			

<p><b>Week 5</b></p>		<p><b>Anton Wilhelm Amo</b>  <u>Required Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abrahams, “Anton Wilhelm Amo”</li> <li>• Wiredu, “Amo’s Critique of Descartes’ Philosophy of Mind”</li> <li>• Amo, <i>Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body</i>, selections</li> </ul>	<p>Weekly Questions</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p>		<p><b>Anna Julia Cooper</b>  <u>Required Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gordon, “Three Pillars of African-American Philosophy”</li> <li>• May, Anna Julia Cooper’s Philosophy of Resistance</li> <li>• Cooper, <i>The Status of Woman in America</i>, selections</li> </ul>	<p>Weekly Questions</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p>		<p><b>Anténor Firmin</b>  <u>Required Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beckett, “The abolition of all privilege: Race, equality, and freedom in the work of Anténor Firmin”</li> <li>• Bernasconi, “A Haitian in Paris: Anténor Firmin as a philosopher against race”</li> <li>• Firmin, <i>The Equality of the Human Races</i></li> </ul>	<p>Weekly Questions</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b></p>		<p><b>W.E.B. Du Bois</b>  <u>Required Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gordon, “What does it Mean to be a Problem? W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Black Folk”</li> <li>• Bernasconi, “‘Our Duty to Conserve’: W.E.B. Du Bois Philosophy of History in Context”</li> <li>• Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i></li> </ul>	<p>Paper 1 Due  Weekly Questions</p>

<b>Week 9</b>		<b>Frantz Fanon</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gordon, <i>What Fanon Said</i>, selections</li> <li>• Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>, selections</li> <li>• Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Module 3: Contemporary Africana Philosophy</b>			
<b>Week 10</b>		<b>bell hooks</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hooks, <i>Ain't I a Woman</i></li> <li>• hooks, <i>Yearning</i></li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Week 11</b>		<b>Mabogo P. More</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More, <i>Biko: Philosophy, Identity, and Liberation</i>, selections</li> <li>• More, <i>Looking through Philosophy in Black: Memoirs</i></li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Week 12</b>		<b>Mogobe Ramose</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramose, "The struggle for reason in Africa"</li> <li>• Ramose, <i>African Philosophy through Ubuntu</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Paper 2 Due Weekly Questions
<b>Week 13</b>		<b>Lewis Gordon</b> <u>Required Readings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gordon, <i>Fear of Black Consciousness</i>, selections</li> <li>• Gordon, <i>Freedom, Justice, and Decolonization</i>, selections</li> </ul>	Weekly Questions
<b>Finals Week</b>			Paper 3 Due

Resources Available to All Students: **TBD**

College is a challenging time in your life.

Here is a list of resources that can help you navigate your experience as a student at TBD. It is important to remember that you are not alone, and these resources are there for you when you need help to achieve your academic goals.