

Philosophy 366: African, Latin American, and Native American Philosophy

Tuesday and Thursday: 1:10pm to 2:30pm

Murray Hall, Room 204

Professor Alexander Guerrero

Email: alex.guerrero@rutgers.edu

Office: Department of Philosophy, 106 Somerset, Office 516

Office Hour: Tuesday, 11am to 12pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophical work from Africa, Latin America, and the indigenous peoples of North America, covering topics in ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, aesthetics, social philosophy, and political philosophy. We will cover philosophical views from the Akan, Aztec/Nahua, Dogon, Igbo, Lakota, Navajo, Ojibwe, and Yoruba traditions, among others.

This philosophical work has largely been excluded from the study and practice of philosophy in North America, Europe, and Australia. The course aims to give work from these traditions greater exposure and to provide a chance for students to encounter work that might spark an interest in future research.

Throughout, we will also engage with related meta-philosophical issues that emerge with work from all three areas, allowing for interesting cross-discussion. Are these really proper subfields of philosophy? How do we make sense of the idea of African (or Latin American, or Native American) Philosophy as a field? Are there philosophically important differences between oral traditions and written traditions? What kinds of texts and artifacts can present philosophical views? How should we understand ethnophilosophy and cultural worldviews as philosophical contributions? How should we distinguish philosophical views from religious ones? How should we think of the “sage” figure in relation to philosophy? How do these traditions engage discussions of identity, autonomy, and post-colonialism? Should this work be incorporated into the mainstream philosophical canon?

Required Texts

There are no required texts. Readings will be made available online through the Sakai site for the course.

There are several books that will get more substantial focus, and which you might consider purchasing (links are to Amazon sites for the relevant editions):

- Gloria Anzaldúa, [Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza](#)
- James Maffie, [Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion](#)
- Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, [Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture](#)
- Carlos A. Sanchez, [Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism & the Place of Philosophy](#)
- J. Olubi Sodipo and Barry Hallen, [Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy](#)
- Wub-e-ke-niew, [We Have the Right To Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought](#)

Method of Assessment

- (A) 2 Short Papers (15% each, 30% total)
 - 1000 to 1500 words
 - details to follow in class
- (B) 3 Quizzes (10% each, 30% total: on 2/14, 3/28, 4/30)
 - multiple choice, true-false, short answer
- (C) In-Class Group and Individual Participation (15% total)
 - Attendance is necessary, but not sufficient!
 - Based on engagement and effort in argument groups (more on this in class)
- (D) Longer Paper (25% total)
 - 2000-2500 words
 - details to follow in class

Learning Outcome Goals for the Course

- (1) to be able to read and understand philosophical views presented in a variety of forms
- (2) to be able to present (in discussion and in writing) views that differ from your own, and to do so in a way that is fair to the proponents of those views
- (3) to acquire the critical skills necessary for evaluating ideas and arguments
- (4) to be able to construct coherent arguments in support of your views
- 5) to be able to write clearly and in an organized manner
- (6) to be able to discuss complex philosophical ideas with others in ways that are respectful to each other and to the material

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

Accessibility

I want this class to be a great and educational experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers.

Disabled students are encouraged to speak with me if that would be helpful and to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Respect

In the classroom, we respect and refer to people using the names and personal pronouns that they share; we invite and encourage people to share them. Please be respectful of all members of the class at all times. Lively discussion is good; disrespectful or domineering discussion is not. Please help make room for all members of the class to be heard.

Plan for Course and Readings

All readings will be posted on the course website.

Day	Topic	Reading
1/22	Introduction: What is Philosophy? Is there really _____ Philosophy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Susana Nuccetelli, “Latin American Philosophy,” in <u>A Companion to Latin American Philosophy</u>, pp. 343-355
Part I – African Philosophy		
1/24	The Long History: What is “African” Philosophy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Barry Hallen, <u>A Short History of African Philosophy</u>, “The Historical Perspective,” pp. 3-12 •Ptah-hotep, <u>The Maxims of Ptah-hotep</u>: http://www.humanistictexts.org/ptahhotep.htm •Zera Yacob, <u>Treatise of Zera Yacob</u>, Chapters 4 and 6
1/29	The Early 20 th Century: Anthropology or Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Marcel Griaule, <u>Conversations with Ogotemmêli</u>, pp. 1-23, 91-98
1/31	Anthropology, Philosophy, and “Ethnophilosophy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Placide Tempels, <u>Bantu Philosophy</u>, Chapters 1 and 2 •Paulin Hountondji, <u>African Philosophy: Myth and Reality</u>, pp. 47-54
2/5	Independence and Ordinary Language Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •J. Olubi Sodipo and Barry Hallen, <u>Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft</u>, pp. 1-14, 127-141
2/7	Independence and Ordinary Language Philosophy: Yoruba Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •J. Olubi Sodipo and Barry Hallen, <u>Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft</u>, pp. 40-41, 45-81
2/12	Sage Philosophy, Experimental Philosophy, and Worldviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Kibujjo Kalumba, “Sage Philosophy: Its Methodology, Results, Significance, and Future,” in <u>A Companion to African Philosophy</u>, pp. 274-281 •Stephanie Wykstra, “Out of the Armchair”
2/14 Quiz #1	Persons and Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Didier Njirayamanda Kaphagawani, “African Conceptions of a Person: A Critical Survey,” in <u>A Companion to African Philosophy</u>, pp. 332-342 •“Introduction to Personal Identity,” <u>Norton Introduction to Philosophy</u>, pp. 538-544

2/19	Identity, Community, and Politics	▪Julius Nyerere, “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism”
2/21	Community, Sex, and Politics	▪Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, <u>Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture</u> , 1-21, 209-229, 233-239
Part II – Latin American Philosophy		
2/26	Latin American and Native American	▪James Maffie, “Pre-Columbian Philosophies,” in <u>A Companion to Latin American Philosophy</u> , pp. 9-21
2/28	Aztec (Nahua) Metaphysics	▪James Maffie, <u>Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion</u> , pp. 1-12, 21-42
3/5	Aztec (Nahua) Metaphysics	▪James Maffie, <u>Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion</u> , pp. 43-62
3/7	Aztec (Nahua) Ethics	▪L. Sebastian Purcell, “Eudaimonia and Neltiliztli: Aristotle and the Aztecs on the Good Life”
3/12	Latin American Identity	▪Jorge J.E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, “Defining Latin America: National versus Continental Approaches,” in <u>Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century</u> , pp. 219-229 ▪Simón Bolívar, “Jamaica Letter,” in <u>Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century</u> , pp. 63-66 ▪José Martí, “Our America,” in <u>Selected Writings</u> , pp. 288-296
3/14	Mexican Existentialism	▪Carlos Alberto Sanchez, <u>Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy</u> , pp. 1-5, 15-42
3/26	Mexican Existentialism (2)	▪Carlos Alberto Sanchez, <u>Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy</u> , pp. 65-92
3/28 Quiz #2	Identities and Complexities	▪Gloria Anzaldúa, <u>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</u> , pp. 21-61
4/2	Identities and Complexities	▪Gloria Anzaldúa, <u>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</u> , pp. 75-113
4/4	Identities and Complexities	▪María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception” ▪Mariana Ortega, <u>In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self</u> , pp. 17-46

Part III – Native American Philosophy		
4/9	Native America and Native American Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, <u>An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States</u>, pp. 1-31 ▪Charles Mann, <u>1491</u>, pp. 18-31 ▪Anne Waters, “Structural Disadvantage and a Place at the Table”
4/11	<i>An Ahnishinahbæótjibway</i> Perspective: Introduction	▪Wub-e-ke-niew, <u>We Have the Right To Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought</u> , pp. xiii-liiii, 1-9
4/16	<i>An Ahnishinahbæótjibway</i> Perspective: Identity and History	▪Wub-e-ke-niew, <u>We Have the Right To Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought</u> , pp. 34-38, 54-107
4/18	<i>An Ahnishinahbæótjibway</i> Perspective: Metaphysics, Language, Ethics	▪Wub-e-ke-niew, <u>We Have the Right To Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought</u> , pp. 194-243
4/23	Native American Epistemology and “Eco-Philosophy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Brian Yazzie Burkhart, “What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology,” in <u>American Indian Thought</u>, pp. 15-26 ▪Gregory Cajete, <u>Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence</u>, pp. 57-83
4/25	Ethics and Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Kyle Whyte, “Critical Investigations of Resilience: A Brief Introduction to Indigenous Environmental Studies & Sciences” ▪Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, “Values, Land, and the Integrity of the Person: Cross-Cultural Considerations,” in <u>Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal</u>, pp. 83-139 ▪Kent Nerburn, <u>Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder</u>, pp. 39-51, 73-81
4/30 Quiz #3	Politics and the Choice of How to Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Sa-Go-Ye-Wet-Ha, “Speech at Council at Buffalo Creek,” in <u>American Philosophies: An Anthology</u>, pp. 11-14 ▪John (Fire) Lame Deer, “Talking to the Owls and Butterflies,” <u>Seeker of Visions</u>, pp. 119-126 ▪Robert Yazzie, “Life Comes from It: Navajo Justice Concepts,” in <u>Navajo Nation Peacemaking: Living Traditional Justice</u>, pp. 42-58 ▪Charles Mann, <u>1491</u>, pp. 379-392

5/2	Indigenous Identity, Philosophy, and the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects” in <u>Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples</u>, pp. 143-164<li>▪Anne Waters, “Ontology of Identity and Interstitial Being,” in <u>American Indian Thought</u>, pp. 153-170
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