Instructor: Lawrence Ware
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Texts: *Martin, Malcolm, and America* by J. Cone
Nat Turner by Kyle Baker

Course Description:
What is distinctive about the African-American experience? How does that distinctiveness bear on the theory and practice of philosophy and philosophical thinking? And how does the African-American philosophical tradition alter conventional philosophical accounts of subjectivity, knowledge, time, language, history, embodiment, memory, and justice? In this course, we will read a range of African-American thinkers from the twentieth century in order to develop an appreciation of the unique, critical philosophical voice in the black intellectual tradition. Our readings of works by W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Martin Luther King, Jr, and Malcolm X will open up crucial issues that transform philosophy’s most central problems: knowing, being, and acting. As well, we will consider the cluster of thinkers with whom those works are critically concerned, including key texts from nineteenth century German philosophy, American pragmatism, and contemporary existentialism and postmodernism. What emerges from these texts and critical encounters is a sense of philosophy and philosophical practice as embedded in the historical experience of African-Americans in the twentieth century. Since Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X are widely accepted as the apex of the two major strains of Black-American philosophy, this course will closely read their works.

Prerequisites: None

Structure of the course:
Classes will combine lectures and discussion. I will make initial introductory comments on the readings, and then we will have discussion. Therefore, students must come to each class and be prepared to discuss the readings.

Course Requirements:
Policy on Attendance and Participation: Philosophy is a method of question- and-answer by which one investigates the deepest puzzles of life’s existence and meaning. Since this investigation will be a class effort and a group discovery, students are expected to attend class lectures, discussions, and debates; attendance will be taken every class. Moreover, students are expected to engage in class activities and to bring to class questions and concerns from the readings and topics being dealt with. The instructor will excuse an absence for a doctor’s appointment, an athletic event, or family emergency with a note, but after two unexcused absences a student’s attendance/participation grade will drop 7 points per missed class. There will also be group assignments that will contribute to participation points. Attendance and Participation is worth 100 points.
There will be two take-home essay exams. Students will have a week to complete each exam. Each take-home exam is to be 5-7 pages in length and critical. By critical I mean that the student will respond to one of the questions posed on the exam by analyzing the problem posed in the question and presenting and defending a clearly defined thesis in response. Each exam is worth 100 points each for a total of 200 points.

There will be 2 short exposition papers that will serve to keep students up with the readings in the course and to give me some familiarity with the student’s writing ability and understanding of the material. These papers are to be about 1-2 pages in length, and students are asked to present and explain the central argument of the paper in their own words. I will give continual feedback on how to improve the student’s writing. Each of these exposition papers is worth 50 points for a total of 100 points.

Policy on Late Work:
Timely submission of the take home exams and the exposition papers and completion of the in class presentation is required for successful completion of the course. Late exams will not be accepted unless there is a legitimate reason provided by the student and I accept those reasons. If you think you will not turn in the exam on time, you must discuss the situation with me before the due date and I must approve the late exam. If you miss the due date or I do not accept your reason as legitimate, you will receive a grade of ‘0’ for the exam. Additionally, a late exam will be subject to a 5 point per day deduction from the grade on the exam. Late exposition papers will not be accepted. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Incompletes:
I will only give the grade of ‘Incomplete’ in extenuating circumstances. If for some reason you think you will not be able to turn in one of the exams, you must discuss the situation with me before the due date of the exam. If you do not discuss the situation with me or if I do not accept your reasons for turning in one of the exams, you will receive a grade of ‘0’ for the exam.

Tentative Readings Per Week¹

1. Introduction to class
2. Nat Turner: Graphic Novel
3. PDF: Nationalism*
4. Chapter 1 & 2: Cone
5. Chapter 3: Cone (Letter From A Birmingham Jail)*
6. Chapter 4: Cone (Ballot or the Bullet)*
7. Film—Give Take Home Test
8. Chapters 5 & 6: Cone
9. Chapters 7 & 8:Cone *
10. Dead Week—Give Take Home Test
11. Finals Week—test due

¹ An asterisk (*) denotes the week a one to two page paper over the reading will LIKELY be assigned.