

Philosophy 335:
Philosophy of Social Groups and Identities
Spring 2023

Last updated: 15 January 2023

Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)
Time: T Th 3:30–4:45 PM
Location: 1007 Wescoe
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Description

The first part of the course is on clubs, teams, and the Supreme Court. We will discuss whether these groups exist in addition to their members, what sorts of thing they are, whether they can act, and whether they can be responsible for their actions. The second part of the course is on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and intersectionality. We will discuss whether to be a member of these groups is to have certain biological features, occupy a certain social position, or identify as a member, and we will discuss the identities that members have. The third part of the course is on how we should talk about groups and their members. We will discuss gendered and racialized language, particularly pronouns (e.g. ‘she’, ‘he’), honorifics (e.g. ‘Ms.’, ‘Mr.’), and generics (e.g. ‘White men’ in ‘White men can’t jump’).

We will read work by Luvell Anderson, Matthew Andler, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Elizabeth Barnes, Sara Bernstein, Talia Mae Bettcher, Robin Dembroff, E. Díaz-León, David Friedell, Sally Haslanger, Rae Langton, Katherine Ritchie, Quayshawn Spencer, Deborah Perron Tollefsen, Gabriel Uzquiano, and Daniel Wodak.

Requirements

Quizzes	15%
Short group assignment	15%
First paper	25%
Reflection piece	10%
Second paper	35%

There will be roughly one quiz each week on Canvas. Each quiz will be short. The quizzes will largely cover material that we have already discussed. Late quizzes will not be accepted, but only the 10 quizzes on which you score the highest will be counted.

The short group assignment should be less than a page. The reflection piece should be about 1 or 2 pages. The first paper should be about 2 or 3 pages. The second paper should be about 3–5 pages.

The short group assignment will ask you to present an argument. The first paper will ask you to discuss that argument and provide an objection or reply to it. (You should begin the first paper by revising the short group assignment in light of feedback.) The reflection piece is an opportunity to think about a group that you are a member of or an identity that you have. The final paper will ask you to argue for or against one of the views discussed in class in light of something that you know first-hand, about either a group that you are a member of or an identity that you have. (The final paper can, but need not, incorporate a revised version of the reflection piece.)

Due dates will be announced in class and on Canvas. Due dates for quizzes will be announced at least five days in advance (e.g. the Thursday before a Tuesday). Due dates for the short group assignment and the first paper will be announced at least one week in advance. You may complete the reflection piece at any point during the semester before **Thursday, 27 April 2023**. The second paper will be due at **4:00 PM on Wednesday, 10 May 2023**.

You will be required to consult with me before submitting each of your two papers. The goal is to ensure that the decisions that you make in each case (about topic, approach, etc.) will allow you to write a well-structured paper that best reflects your ideas and interests.

Readings

Readings are, or will be, available on Canvas. Sometimes we will carefully read small amounts of text in class. This will make more sense if you have the relevant text in front of you.

Academic misconduct

The university policy on academic misconduct is set out in Article II, Section 6 of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) “giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations ... or other assignments,” “knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work,” and “plagiarizing another’s work.” Penalties for academic misconduct include receiving a failing grade for the course, being suspended from the university, and being expelled. For further details, see <https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6>.

Grading

Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades using the following scheme.¹

From	To	Letter grade
93.50	100.00	A
90.00	93.49	A-
86.50	89.99	B+
83.50	86.49	B
80.00	83.49	B-
76.50	79.99	C+
73.50	76.49	C
70.00	73.49	C-
66.50	69.99	D+
63.50	66.49	D
60.00	63.49	D-
00.00	59.99	F

Grades will be recorded on Canvas, but I won't be using Canvas to calculate your final grade; rather, I'll be using my own spreadsheet. If you're curious about your grade at any point, please email me.

Accessibility

I'm committed to making this class as accessible as possible. If you have any particular accommodation requests, please let me know as soon as possible.

Electronic devices

You are permitted to use electronic devices (e.g. laptops, tablets, phones) in class for legitimate academic purposes (e.g. consulting the readings, taking notes). But please use electronic devices responsibly. There's empirical evidence to suggest that laptop and tablet use in class negatively affects student scores.²

Concealed carry

If you carry a concealed handgun, familiarize yourself both with the relevant state and federal laws and with KU's weapons policy. See <https://concealedcarry.ku.edu/information>.

¹ See Ben Eggleston, "Plus/Minus Grading," available at benegg.net/plus-minus_grading.pdf.

² Susan Payne Carter, Kyle Greenberg, and Michael S. Walker, "The Impact of Computer Usage on Academic Performance: Evidence from a Randomized Trial at the United States Military Academy," *Economics of Education Review* 56 (Feb. 2017): 118–132.

Schedule

The precise schedule will depend on the pace at which we work through the material in class. Information about what we're doing on any given day will be available on Canvas.

The first day of class is Tuesday, 17 January 2023. There is no class on the following dates: Thursday, 23 February 2023 (Central APA); Tuesday, 14 March 2023 (Spring Break); and Thursday, 16 March 2023 (Spring Break). The last day of class is Thursday, 4 May 2023. The final paper is due during finals week, on Wednesday, 10 May 2023 (at 4:00 PM).

Tentative outline

The outline is tentative. I might make changes, depending on what we're interested in and how things go. I'll announce changes in class and on Canvas.

Clubs, teams, and the Supreme Court

Distributive, collective, and group-level predicates

Katherine Ritchie, "Plural and Collective Noun Phrases," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality*, ed. Marija Jankovic and Kirk Ludwig (New York: Routledge, 2018), 464–475, esp. pp. 464–468.

Are groups identical to their members?

Gabriel Uzquiano, "The Supreme Court and the Supreme Court Justices: A Metaphysical Puzzle," *Noûs* 38.1 (March 2004): 135–153; esp. pp. 135–138, 141–146.

Katherine Ritchie, "What Are Groups?," *Philosophical Studies* 166.2 (Nov. 2013): 257–272.

Can groups act? Are groups responsible for their actions?

Deborah Perron Tollefsen, "Interpreting Groups" and "The Moral Responsibility of Groups" from *Groups as Agents* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), pp. 97–112, 113–136, 141–142.

Race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and intersectionality

Race and racial identity

Sally Haslanger, “A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, ed. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson, Rutgers Series in Medical Anthropology (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 56–69.

Quayshawn Spencer, “A More Radical Solution to the Race Problem,” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volumes* 93 (2019): 25–48.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Classification” and “Color” from *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity—Creed, Country, Color, Class, Culture* (New York: Liveright, 2018), pp. 3–32, 107–134.

Gender and gender identity

Talia Mae Bettcher, “Through the Looking Glass: Trans Theory Meets Feminist Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone (New York: Routledge, 2017), 393–404, esp. pp. 395–398.

Elizabeth Barnes, “Gender without Gender Identity: The Case of Cognitive Disability,” *Mind* 131.523 (July 2022): 836–862.

Disability

Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2–6, 9–13, 33–36, 43–48.

Sexual orientation and sexual identity

E. Díaz-León, “Sexual Orientation, Sexual Desires, and Choice,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality*, ed. Brian D. Earp, Clare Chambers, and Lori Watson (New York: Routledge, 2022), 102–116.

Matthew Andler, “Queer and Straight,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality*, ed. Brian D. Earp, Clare Chambers, and Lori Watson (New York: Routledge, 2022), 117–130.

Opting out?

David Friedell, “Becoming non-Jewish,” forthcoming in a volume on social ontology (Palgrave Macmillan).

Intersectionality

Sara Bernstein, “The Metaphysics of Intersectionality,” *Philosophical Studies* 177.2 (Feb. 2020): 321–335.

Talking about groups and their members*Should language be gendered?*

Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “How Much Gender is Too Much Gender?,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Social and Political Philosophy of Language*, ed. Justin Khoo and Rachel Katharine Sterken (New York: Routledge, 2021), 362–377.

Should we use generics?

Rae Langton, Sally Haslanger, and Luvell Anderson, “Language and Race,” in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, edited by Gillian Russell and Delia Graff Fara (New York: Routledge, 2012), 753–767, esp. pp. 760–765.

Katherine Ritchie, “Should We Use Racial and Gender Generics?,” *Thought* 8.1 (March 2019): 33–41.