

Philosophy 3334: Philosophy of Biology
Summer 2021, Homework assignment #5 – paper on race

Instructions: Write an argumentative paper on some topic relevant to our discussion of race in class. The paper should be between roughly 1000 and 1300 words. If you double space and have natural fonts and margins, this would be about 3-5 pages.

The paper must critically engage at least some assigned readings from the class. If you talk about a topic and one of our readings in class directly discusses that topic, you must discuss it. For example, if you argue that there is no meaningful biological category of race, you should say what is wrong with Andreasen's view that races are historical groups united by ancestry. If you say that race is a social construct and is therefore not real, you should address Mills' view that it is a social construct and also objectively real.

You may wish to read additional material that was not assigned, however, this is not necessary and not expected. But if you want to do that, I would be happy to help you find relevant readings. Several things that our authors reference or that I think would be helpful are already on the website as 'extra readings'.

Due Date: You should upload this paper into Blackboard before 11:59pm on Saturday, July 3.

While I normally prefer to grade papers anonymously, I feel that this semester it is best if I am able to easily track who is turning in work when and grading anonymously slows this process down immensely. So please put your name on your paper.

Grading: This paper will be worth 14 points (14% of your final grade).

References: All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. Now that you are writing a longer paper dealing with issues discussed in multiple places in our class, it is more important to be careful in this regard. "Properly referenced" does not mean that there is any particular format that I care about, but it does mean that if you say "according to Andreasen" or have a formal or informal quote referring to something one of our authors wrote, I should be able to very easily find exactly what they did say. So page numbers are essential for example. And if you use the words of an author or even their direct ideas, you should say it is from them. To not say so is to imply they are your words and so this would constitute plagiarism.

Topic:

You may choose to write about any topic relevant to biology and race. The most natural thing to do (and probably the easiest) is to take two of our authors who disagree on some point, explain each of their views carefully, and then critically join in the debate by giving a further argument in favor of one of them and/or against one of them. For example, here are some natural topics:

- 1) Appiah and Mills seem to agree that there cannot be a biological underpinning to our ordinary concept of race. But Appiah thinks that means that there is no such thing as race while Mills thinks that race is real, this just shows that it is not biological. Who is right?
- 2) Look at Mills' 10 problem cases. After making your judgments in several of the cases, what do you think this shows about what criteria underlie our concept of race?
- 3) Andreasen thinks that population history can underpin a scientific concept of race. But how? Which groups of humans are races on her view? She seems to think [from the interview] that there doesn't need to be a specific answer to this question. Does that make sense?
- 4) Is pluralism about race possible? Could we have a scientific conception and a social conception that aren't exactly the same and yet both are real?
- 5) Is 'Hispanic' a race? Or is "Middle Eastern"? Or "Indian"? Why or why not?
- 6) David Reich claims that race is a social category and not a biological one. But could the genetic differences he discusses be used to show that race is real and biological? Why or why not? (look at the 'extra readings' section)
- 7) Should race be used in medicine? How? Why or why not? (look at the extra readings)

If you are not sure if your chosen topic is relevant, ask me.