

Manfred Henningsen

Polsc. 610

Theory and Analysis

Spring 2016

Th 6:00-8:30

Saunders 624

I. Description:

The major focus of this class will be the discourse of race. This discourse emerges in 16th century Europe, responding to the diversity of human beings coming into view after the discovery and conquest of the pre-Columbian civilizations in America and the encounter with Africa at the same time. With the mass dying of the native people as a result of genocidal killings and the lack of immunity against European germs, Africa becomes raided since 1519 for the purpose of getting cheap labor for the mine and plantation economy in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and later the English and American slave economy in the Northern part of the continent. For the Nigerian Nobel Prize winner in literature, Wole Soyinka, this was, long before the so-called uniqueness of the Jewish Holocaust in the 20th century, the first unique rupture of civilization in history. He discusses this phenomenon in *The Burden of Memory*. The Anglo-African sociologist Paul Gilroy has described this process of large scale human trafficking over many centuries in his book *Black Atlantic* and discusses in the book *Against Race* the impact this process had on Western consciousness. He broadens the discussion by including Nazi race ideology and various derivatives in Europe and the Americas. In this context he also touches on Hannah Arendt's controversial attempt in her *Origins of Totalitarianism* to explain the mind-set of European colonizers by sympathetically reenacting the mentality of Boer South Africans. Arendt's more than problematic attempt becomes seen by Kathy Gimes in her book on *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* as being symptomatic for her failure to understand African and African-Americans. We will raise the question whether Arendt and other members of the European intellectual exile community had internalized the hierarchical race map with Caucasians on top of the scale that was created by Kant, Hume, Hegel and others in the 18th and 19th centuries to such an extent that they were incapable of recognizing their own racist blinders. In the case of Arendt, we will add the discussion of her most controversial book, namely *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and raise the question why she didn't notice the racist core convictions in the banal man on trial, which Bettina Stangneth has made us appreciate in her book on *Eichmann before Jerusalem*.

Three publications will round off the program: Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*; Ayu Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race*; and the issue of the Graduate Philosophy Faculty Journal of the New School on *Philosophy and Race*.

II. Requirements:

Students have to write one research paper of more than 10 pages on a subject matter related to at least one of the books that will be discussed in the class. In addition, each student has to introduce one or two of the books on the list to the class.

III. Texts:

Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*. Belknap Press.
Kathy T. Gimes, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*. Indiana University Press.
Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory*. Oxford Press.
Bettina Stangneth, *Eichmann before Jerusalem*. Vintage.
Thomas McCarthy, *Empire and the Idea of Human Development*. Cambridge.
Ayu Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race*. UH Press.
Graduate Philosophy Faculty Journal, *Philosophy and Race*.

IV. *Calendar of the Class:*

1/14 General introduction to the class.
1/21 Discussion of the recurrence of the race discourse in contemporary American society.
1/28 Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*.
2/4 Continuation.
2/11 Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*.
2/18 Continuation.
2/25 Kathy Gimes, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*.
3/3 Hannah Arendt and the Holocaust.
Barbara Stangneth's book, *Eichmann before Jerusalem*, and the debate on Arendt's book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, from 1963.
3/10 Movie: *Hannah Arendt* (2014).
3/17 Continuation.
3/24 Spring Recess.
3/31 Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory*.
4/7 Continuation.
4/14 Ayu Soyinka, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race*.
4/21 Graduate Philosophy Faculty Journal, *Philosophy and Race*.
4/28 Continuation.
5/5 Last Class.