***Sample Syllabus* (200-level)**

**Africana Univeralisms:**

**Négritude and Beyond**

When/Where: TBD

Instructor: Carmen De Schryver

Office Hours: TBD

**Course Description**

This course provides a historical overview of key philosophical and literary texts which deal with questions of Eurocentrism, decolonization and universalism within Africanist thought. Beginning with the writings of Paulette Nardal, Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire, we will critically engage with an underdiscussed dimension of the Négritude movement, namely, its interest in affirming the orientation of particular African cultures to universalism. We then trace how this strand of Négritude is taken up in the writings of Frantz Fanon, Paulin J. Hountondji and a number of contemporary African philosophers. The readings form the theoretical background to enable us to engage in weekly discussions regarding universality and decolonization, such as: how and in what ways does Eurocentrism continue to inflect universality? Is decolonization necessarily connected to the assertion of particularity, and in what way? Are difference and universality in conflict, or do they in fact complement one another? Beyond writing up weekly reflections on the readings, students are evaluated on the basis of (i) a final presentation which utilizes the course materials to reflect critically on a contemporary, public article of their choosing on the broad themes of universality and decolonization which will then form the basis for (ii) a final paper.

**Learning Outcomes**

* Gain familiarity with seminal texts in Africana philosophy, including the Négritude movement and modern African philosophical debates
* Develop a critical perspective on debates about the decolonization of academia and the use and misuse of universality in that context
* Think critically about what constitutes “philosophy” and its implicit geographical biases
* Develop skills in closely reading and evaluating technical philosophical material
* Constructively engage with the work of peers by providing written feedback on a presentation

**Course Assessment**

Grades for this course are based on:

* Participation (15%). Your participation grade is based on:
  + (i) Initial one-on-one meeting with instructor. The aim is for us to get to know each other and for me to get a sense of your background interests as they relate to the course. You will not be graded on what you say during the meeting; you just need to show up!
  + (ii) Weekly submission of a short (one sentence) question about the reading *in advance* of the class meeting.
  + (iii) Participation in the classroom. This can take on a variety of forms and should not depend on your confidence. I encourage you to meet with me during office hours if speaking up in larger group settings is uncomfortable.
* Final presentation (30%) and written commentary (one-page) on a peers’ presentation (10%). This presentation should utilize the course materials to reflect critically on a contemporary, public article on your choosing on the broad themes of and decolonization
* Final paper (45%) of no more than 5 pages. This can build on the presentation or develop a novel argument on a topic of your choosing.

**Note on Office Hours**

I encourage you to come to office hours regularly. I particularly encourage you to come to my office hours with any questions, ideas, or worries that were raised for you during the lecture; any difficulties that you are experiencing with the material or your own learning process; or additional help and guidance you might need for assignments.

**Course Materials**

All the readings will be made available in PDF.

**Note on the Readings**

In order to get the most out of the course, it is necessary that you read the assigned texts closely *in advance* of the class meeting. Do not be discouraged if you find the readings difficult or even confusing. Our class discussion is designed to (i) collaboratively make sense of the text and (ii) equip you with the skills that you need to fully comprehend and critically interrogate the course material. I will not expect you to understand everything that you read. I do, however, expect you to make a good-faith effort to interpret the text on your own, and to participate in the class discussion on this basis. I would also like to emphasize that raising clarificatory questions is not just okay but very much encouraged; if you are confused about something, it is likely your peers will be as well, and your questions will be welcomed!

**Course Schedule**

The following is a tentative schedule for the semester. Changes to the schedule will be announced in class.

**Week 1:** Africana Universalisms? Background to the Course and Discussion of the Syllabus

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “On the Post-Colonial and the Universal?”, pp. 7-18

**Week 2:** Introduction to Négritude

Irele, “Négritude: Literature and Ideology”, pp. 499-526.

**Week 3:** Foundations: The Women ofNégritude

Nardal, “The Awakening of Race Consciousness Among Black Students”, pp.180-185

S. Césaire, “Frobenius and the Problem of Civilizations” and “The Malaise of Civilization”, pp.3-10; pp. 28-33

**Week 4:** Leopold Senghor and Negritude as Universal Humanism

Senghor, “Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century”, pp.55-65.

**Week 5:** Aimé Césaire: Negritude and the Critique of European Universalism

A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, pp.31-64

**Week 6:** Aimé Césaire continued

A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism,* pp.65-78

A. Césaire, “Interview with René Depestre”, pp.81-94

**Week 7:** The Itineraries of Négritude: Fanon and Négritude as Dialectic

Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” (*BSWM),* pp.29-43

**Week 9:** Fanon continued: Particularity

Fanon, “On National Culture” (*WE),* pp.145-170

**Week 10:** Fanon continued: Reclaiming Universality

Fanon, “Medicine and Colonialism” (*DC*), pp.121-145

Fanon, “Conclusion” (*WE),* pp.235-239.

**Week 11:** Paulin J. Hountondji: African Philosophy and the legacies of eurocentrism

Hountondji, “History of a Myth”, pp.47-54.

Hountondji, “African Philosophy: Myth and Reality”, pp.55-70.

**Week 12:** Paulin J. Hountondji: Philosophical Marginalization and Enclosure in the Particular

Hountondji, “Knowledge as a Development Issue”, pp.529-537.

Hountondji, “Constructing the Universal: A Transcultural Challenge”, pp.1-12.

**Week 13:** Contemporary Views I **–** Nadia Yala Kisukidi’s Black Universalism: The Aporia of Specificity and Universality

Nadia Yala Kisukidi, “Black Universalism”, pp.1-12.

**Week 14:** Contemporary Views II - Ato Sekyi-Otu’s Transcendental Universality

Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Left Universalisms, Africacentric Essays,* pp.1-57

**Week 15:** Contemporary Views III **-** Seloua Luste Boulbina and Pluralistic Universalism

Seloua Luste-Boulbina, *Kafka’s Monkey and Other Phantoms of Africa,* pp.269-282.