

Diversifying Syllabi 2018 Text Summary and Teaching Tips

SECTION ONE: to be completed by presenter (1-2 pages max.)

Article/Essay Title: “Racial Realism II: Are Folk Races Real?”

Author: Quayshawn Spencer

Readability: Easy/**Moderate**/Difficult

The article is very technical, but Spencer outlines the argument very clearly, restating the relevant points multiple times and defining important terms. Definitely not the first article to introduce metaphysics of race, but makes clear how the argument fits into the overall literature.

Thesis: “I focus on two broad groups of racial realisms in this article: biological racial realism and social racial realism...I end by sketching a new, radical pluralist way of being a racial realist, and I provide some empirical motivation for why it’s promising” (1).

Key Definitions:

“minimalist concept of race” for Hardimon – In “ordinary uses of the English word ‘race’ and its cognates, a ‘race’ is a group of human beings (C1) that, as a group, is distinguished from other groups of human beings by *patterns of [racial] visible physical features* (C2), whose members are linked by a *common ancestry* peculiar to members of the group, and (C3) that originates from a *distinctive geographic location*” (2)

“non-biological social racial realism” for Haslanger – “a group is racialized (in context C) if and only if (by definition) its members are (or would be) socially positioned as subordinate or privileged along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) (in C), and the group is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region” (6)

“radical racial pluralism” – “there’s no single correct answer to the question of what race is and whether race is real in a particular context...and there isn’t even a dominant answer to this question.” (12)

Brief Summary:

Spencer takes Hardimon (*Rethinking Race*, 2017) to be a good example of biological racial realism; Hardimon claims 1) “that the ordinary concept of race is the minimalist concept of race” and 2) “minimalist race is biologically real” (4). Spencer disagrees with both.

1. Hardimon had claimed that 17 archetypical races from various “ordinary” sources were aligned with his three criteria for minimalist concept of race. However, Spencer argues that only 4 of those 17 actually are. Therefore, his concept of race isn’t the ordinary concept of it.

2. Then, even for the five most likely suspects for races that Hardimon highlights, Spencer argues that there is too much overlap in those sets to satisfy the criteria.

Spencer then takes Haslanger (*Resisting Reality*, 2012) to provide a useful example of a social racial realism. In response, he considers several lines of objection

1. Spencer goes back and forth about whether referentialism about meaning is a) right and b) relevant as an assumption for her arguments. (7-8)
2. Spencer criticizes the scientific evidence that Haslanger relies on to dismiss biological racial realism. (8-9)
3. Spencer argues that there are other candidates for the referents for ‘race’ that Haslanger ignores.(9-10)
4. Spencer points out that Haslanger’s evidence for popular belief that Hispanic is a race is only her own intuitions, and other empirical studies are inconclusive. (11)

Spencer concludes by offering the view of “radical racial pluralism”

SECTION TWO: to be completed by note taker during discussion

Article/Essay Title: “Racial Realism II: Are Folk Races Real?”

Author: Quayshawn Spencer

Possible Applications:

- Metaphysics
- Philosophy of Race
- Political Philosophy
- Intro to Philosophy
- Upper level Social

Complementary Texts/Resources:

- Haslanger – “Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?”
- Haslanger – “A Social Constructivist Account of Race”
- Andreasen – “Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?”
- Hochman - “Replacing race: Interactive Constructionism about Racialized Groups”
- Spencer - “Philosophy of race meets population genetics”

Possible Class Activities:

- Find a copy of the latest census to see what questions have been asked.
- Before you start the class, collect anonymous sheets responding to what they think race is, write down races they consider, then address the subjects.
- Lecture series (people talking about why they identify how they identify).