

 THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING A PROGRAM OF EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY	CRITICAL QUESTIONS IN ANTIRACIST ACTIVISM PAX 693 SPI 2023 Session 2: May 22nd-26th <i>Course meeting location and time: TBD</i>
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INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The language of Antiracism permeates the pages of best-selling books, institutional strategic plans, social movements, and business conferences. Why now? Who benefits from the popularity of antiracism activity? What does this language mean? What world, or worlds, are antiracism educators, organizers, and practitioners trying to imagine and build?

Equipped with years of teaching, organizing, and scholarship, we aim to discover the conversations that will most enliven participants in this course during our time together. What questions, challenges, and themes in antiracism feel pressing to us in this particular moment and space? By exploring the collective wisdom in the room, what we talk about will be relevant to our lives and our work. This course is not a workshop or training. Instead, we want to get off script to reflect on practices, definitions, stories, and assumptions that comprise antiracism education, action, and organizing. For example:

- What terms have become antiracism jargon and what assumptions and histories inform them? (eg. intersectionality, identity politics, racism, woke, etc.)
- What's the difference between call-outs and cancellations, or call-ins and accountability? What roles do shame, guilt, rage, and anxiety play?
- How does antiracism relate to decolonization?
- What tensions might exist between antiracism as therapeutic psychology and antiracism as political struggle?
- Is it possible, or desirable, to move beyond race? Is there race without racism? What do we imagine are the crucial markers of a community that can provide the freedom for folks to discover the beauty of their unique humanity and flourish as a result?

Through roundtable conversations, careful reading, and unsettled silences, we invite organizers, educators, and caregivers to join us as we engage these and other critical questions at the heart of antiracist struggle for a world where everyone, and every community, can express and thrive in their full humanity.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

During and after, we hope participants will be able to:

- Name important tensions in antiracism education and organizing.
- Discuss the ethics of antiracist activism.
- Gain understanding of competing definitions of antiracist language.
- Practice passionate, curious, and challenging conversations about potent themes.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND OTHER RESOURCES:

Our readings and resources will be a collection of voices, some agreeing, others disagreeing, all provocative and revealing. We will have several required books to be read before this course. Additional readings and resources for each day will be available on Moodle. Readings are a major element of this course and form the basis of the roundtable conversations during each session!

We're still discerning which texts fit the focus and scope of this course, but required books might include:

brown, adrienne maree (2020). [*We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice*](#). AK Press.

Kendi, Ibram X. (2019). [*How To Be An Antiracist*](#). Random House Publishing Group.

Táíwò, Olúfẹ́mi O. (2022). [*Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics \(and Everything Else\)*](#). Haymarket Books.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

"The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom." -bell hooks

Educate means "to draw out," not "to fill in." As educators and facilitators, we're interested in drawing out your passions and natural curiosity to make conversation and learning flow as easily as possible. This class will be highly participatory, guided by our collective questions and starting on the first day by collaboratively crafting intentions for how we want to be in relationship for this week. The daily roundtable conversations are inspired by popular education: the playful practice of learning what we need to know to be who we want to be. That means education is about practicing freedom, about understanding that we have power to use, about knowing ourselves and others, and about waking up.

Readings are assigned before the SPI session and some daily to encourage deeper engagement with class questions. A portion of each class will have dedicated time for students to reflect together on these readings.

Most SPI classes can be taken for 2 or 3 credits during SPI 2023. **We will outline clear assignment expectations for 2 and 3 credit students in a revised version of this syllabus.**

All SPI 2023 coursework should be due no later than August 20, 2023 for ALL students.

These are brief descriptions of required graded assignments for the course. More details for each assignment can be found on the "Guidance Notes" that will be provided in class.

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE:

This course meets Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 5PM with a 2 hour lunch break from 12-2PM.

Day 1: Welcome and Introductions, Crafting Intentions for Group Conversation

Guiding Question: What terms have become antiracism jargon and what assumptions and histories inform them? (eg. intersectionality, identity politics, racism, woke, etc.)

Looking Ahead

Possible Resources: *Elite Capture* by Táíwò
How To Be An Antiracist by Kendi

Day 2: Check-in and Review

Guiding Question: What's the difference between call-outs and cancellations, or call-ins and accountability? What roles do shame, guilt, rage, and anxiety play?

Looking Ahead

Possible Resources: ["Building Resilient Organizations"](#): Toward Joy and Durable Power in a Time of Crisis" by Maurice Mitchell
We Will Not Cancel Us by brown

Day 3: Check-in and Review

Guiding Question: How does antiracism relate to decolonization?

Looking Ahead

Possible Resources: ["Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor"](#) by Tuck and Yang
["Decolonizing Antiracism"](#) by Lawrence and Dua

Day 4: Check-in and Review

Guiding Question: What tensions might exist between antiracism as therapeutic psychology and antiracism as political struggle?

Looking Ahead

Possible Resources: *Elite Capture* by Táíwò
["We're Gonna Get Through This Together"](#) by Z. Hanna Mahon

Day 5: Check-in and Review

Guiding Question: Is it possible, or desirable, to move beyond race? Is there race without racism? What do we imagine are the crucial markers of a community that can provide the freedom for folks to discover the beauty of their unique humanity and flourish as a result?

Gratitude and Closing

Possible Resources: ["Reparations Toward the End of the World"](#) by Linda Quiquívix
["Belonging: A Culture of Place"](#) by bell hooks

SPI ATTENDANCE POLICY:

It is expected that individuals registering for an SPI session will attend the entire course (barring unforeseen travel delays or emergencies). Please contact SPI directly at spi@emu.edu before registering if you know you will have to miss any days of a course. SPI certificates are provided to participants only if they miss no more than one class day unless prior arrangements have been made with the SPI Director. For-credit participants are expected to attend all class sessions unless they are given permission from the instructor to miss a session. SPI courses rely on active student participation in a learning community. If a participant misses class repeatedly and this disrupts the learning for others, they will be asked to leave the course and no money will be refunded for remaining course time.

GRADING CRITERIA AND OTHER POLICIES:

SPI provides all students taking the course for graduate credit some supplemental information that will serve as a resource after SPI when students are working on course assignments. This includes information on library resources, EMU's academic integrity policy, and guidelines for writing graduate papers, information regarding the grading scale and course deadlines, and then some suggestions we have for you in order to make your experience of taking SPI courses for graduate credit as successful as possible! These [documents](#) are all available online.