

## Brief Course Outline

**Course Title:** **Social Construction of Institutions**

**Course Number and Section:**

PHILOSOP

3880G 550

**Instructor Name(s):** Dr. Jennifer Epp

**Instructor Email(s):** jepp6@uwo.ca

Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

### Course Description:

Social ontology can be understood as the study of the social components of reality. This statement implies that there are both natural and social components to reality – a disputed claim. Alternatively, one might say that social ontology is the study of the nature of social reality.

Questions in this field include: What are the parts of our social world/s? How do those parts relate to each other? What is the source of their existence? Are social worlds, or aspects of them, constructed? If so, how? Could they have been constructed differently? Can they be changed? Are there natural kinds or other aspects of social reality that are not constructed? Do social worlds or aspects of social reality depend on minds for their existence or are they mind-independent? If they are mind-dependent, in what way? Are the minds in question individual or collective? How does the operation of power influence social reality? What do language, ideology, representation, ignorance, emotion, memory, and conversation or dialogue have to do with “what there is” or “what there could be?”

The course will address these questions in part by focusing on the ontology of race.

### Learning Outcomes:

- 1) To develop student’s abilities to identify, understand, construct and critique philosophical arguments. Students will enhance their oral and written communication skills, active listening skills, analytical ability and potential for creative problem solving via written assignments, collaborative exercises in interpretation and class discussion.
- 2) To familiarize students with a central debate in contemporary metaphysics and to illuminate connections between metaphysics and social and political philosophy. To meet this objective, students will read relevant literature and engage in written exegesis, conceptual analysis, and respectful debate. Discussions will directly address connections between different areas of philosophical thought and touch on methodology.
- 3) To provide students with resources that may help them to identify, and think critically about, assumptions about “the way things are” in their social milieus. To meet this objective, students will consider the social ontology of race with a focus on anti-Black racism and Whiteness. They will also enhance their ability to formulate theoretical and practical questions about both course material and the current global and local political landscapes in which they are situated. Questions will be discussed in class.

### **Textbooks and Course Materials:**

All readings can be found either on the internet, via UWO Libraries, or in the Resources section of OWL at no cost. Addresses for web-based readings are given in the reading list below.

Depending on class interest and Museum availability, I may organize an experiential learning trip to visit the Josiah Henson Museum of African-Canadian History. This would take place on a Friday, at no cost to students. Together, we will decide whether to pursue this option by the second week of class.

### **Methods Of Evaluation:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date mm/dd/yy</b>	<b>Weight - %</b>
Participation		10%
Class Leading	TBA (but before Mar. 19)	10%
Group Presentation (Story Assignment)	Mar 25, 27, Apr. 1, 3	25%
Essay	before Mar. 16	25%
Exam		30%

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Monday, January 27, 2025