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“Philosophy and Race: The Whiteness of Being”
Thursday, March 10th
7:30–9:00 PM
Humanities 250

Abstract: Philosophy is one of the “whitest” of the humanities, both demographically and conceptually. The demographic claim is undeniable, but the conceptual claim may seem more dubious and controversial. In this talk, I will try to demonstrate its accuracy, as well as giving some possible recommendations about how to make philosophy a more inclusive and welcoming discipline for racial minorities.

The Thursday talk is co-sponsored as a “Think!” lecture by the Center for Values and Social Policy in the Philosophy Department of the University of Colorado at Boulder and funded through the generosity of The Collins Foundation.

“De-Racializing Rawls”
Friday, March 11th
3:15–5:00 PM
Old Main Chapel

Abstract: 2011 marks the 40th anniversary of the publication of John Rawls’s A Theory of Justice, a book widely credited with resurrecting Anglo-American political philosophy. Rawls’s work has generated a vast secondary literature, both favorable and critical, so that this subsection of the discipline is now thriving. Yet there is a paradox: in a country where racial injustice has been perhaps the most salient of all injustices (Amerindian expropriation and genocide, black slavery and subsequent segregation, Mexican annexation, Asian exclusion), it is barely mentioned as a theme either in Rawls himself or in the secondary literature. In this paper, I discuss what this says about the “whiteness” of the profession, and its dominant conceptual frameworks. I then try to make a case that a Rawlsian apparatus can nonetheless be “de-racialized” so as to produce a superior normative apparatus better designed for addressing not merely racial injustice but other kinds of “non-ideal” problems also.