Writing and Power (Phil 111)

This class is about the interplay of voice and authority. While exploring different ways of writing and doing research, students will critically engage questions about the way gender, race, and power intersect in determining what can be said and who is entitled to say it.

The class is divided into three main sections: 1) 'Critical Race Theory'- an inquiry into the contemporary controversy surrounding the place of Critical Race Theory in public education, 2) 'Oppressive and Transgressive Voices'- a study of Colonialism & Black Feminist authorship, 3) 'Policing and Power'- a study of the black body as an object of power.

Required Texts

Not-Required Texts (digital access to relevant selections of the following will be provided as pdfs)
1. Franz Fannon. The Wretched of the Earth (any version).
3. Ta-Nehisi Coates. Between the World and Me. One World Press, 2015 (any version is fine).

Class Trajectory
We will start by reading Critical Race Theory (CRT) and compare it to contemporary controversies over the teaching of CRT in public and private schools (weeks 1-3). We will then deepen our understanding of authorship. First we will look at France Fanon and his analysis of power, emphasizing the way that the colonized peoples' struggle to find their own voice is inherently connected with a political practice (week 4). On this same point we spend a week discussing the role murals had in the Chicano movements in California. We then turn to a reading of Bell Hooks' great work Talking Back (weeks 6 & 7). Exploring the way that writing and voice intersect in the practice of critical thinking that recognizes the racism and sexism embedded in cultural political practices, we will also draw from the works of Audre Lorde whose academic-poetic voice charts paths of action beyond the identification of the personal as political (Week 8). We conclude with selections from Ta-Nehisi Coates' inspired work Between the World and Me (week 9). Written as letters to his son, he provides us a window into the way power has historically "coded" or "oriented itself" towards the black body.